

A HISTORY OF CANADIAN FICTION

A History of Canadian Fiction is the first one-volume history to chart its development from earliest times to the present day. Recounting the struggles and the glories of this burgeoning area of investigation, it explains Canada's literary growth alongside its remarkable history. Highlighting the people who have shaped and are shaping Canadian literary culture, the book examines such major figures as Mavis Gallant, Mordecai Richler, Alice Munro, Margaret Atwood, Michael Ondaatje, and Thomas King, concluding with young authors of today whose major successes reflect their indebtedness to their Canadian forbears.

DAVID STAINES is the former dean of the Faculty of Arts and now Professor of English at the University of Ottawa. He has authored and/or edited more than twenty books on medieval culture and literature and Canadian culture and literature. In 1998, he received the Lorne Pierce Medal from the Royal Society of Canada for outstanding contribution to Canadian criticism, and in 2011, he was awarded the Order of Canada and the Order of Ontario for his services to Canadian literature.

A HISTORY OF CANADIAN FICTION

DAVID STAINES

University of Ottawa



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
 978-1-108-41808-9 — A History of Canadian Fiction
 David Staines
 Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
 103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.
 It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of
 education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108418089
 DOI: 10.1017/9781108284554

© David Staines 2021

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
 and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
 no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
 permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2021

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ Books Limited, Padstow Cornwall.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Staines, David, 1946– author.

TITLE: A history of Canadian fiction / David Staines.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2021. |
 Includes bibliographical references.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2021024528 (print) | LCCN 2021024529 (ebook) | ISBN 9781108418089
 (hardback) | ISBN 9781108406468 (paperback) | ISBN 9781108284554 (epub)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Canadian fiction—History and criticism. | BISAC: LITERARY
 CRITICISM / Canadian

CLASSIFICATION: LCC PR9I92.2 .S73 2021 (print) | LCC PR9I92.2 (ebook) |
 DDC 813.009/971—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2021024528>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2021024529>

ISBN 978-1-108-41808-9 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy
 of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication
 and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain,
 accurate or appropriate.

For Noreen

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>Chronology</i>	ix
Introduction	i
1 The Beginnings	4
2 From Romance towards Realism	21
3 Emerging into Realism	58
4 The Foundational Fifties	90
5 The Second Feminist Wave	118
6 The Flourishing of the Wests	151
7 Canada's Second Century	172
8 Indigenous Voices	222
9 Naturalized Canadian Writers	248
10 Canadian Fiction in the Twenty-First Century	270
Afterword	292
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	294
<i>Index</i>	299

Acknowledgements

David Eso, Thomas Hodd, Helen Hoy, Wolfgang Klooss, Eva-Marie Kröller, and W.H. New commented on the manuscript. Neil Besner, Mary Rubio, Carl Spadoni, Natalia Vesselova, and Katherine Walton answered many queries. I am grateful to all of them for their time and their patience.

I am also grateful to Cambridge University Press, in particular to Sarah Stanton, who initiated the project, and to Emily Hockley, who saw it to completion.

A History of Canadian Fiction is a belated acknowledgement of a conversation with Jerry and Elizabeth Buckley on Dunster Street in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1974; they suggested that I introduce Canadian literature courses at Harvard University. To them, I remain indebted.

Chronology

Date	Historical and Cultural	Literary
BC		
11500	Earliest records of human habitation on Haida Gwaii	
11000	Earliest records of the Bluefish Cave people in the Yukon	
9000	Earliest records of the Fluted Point people in Ontario	
7000	Earliest records of human habitation on the west coast of Canada	
AD		
1000	Viking settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland	
1390	Mohawk, Oneida, Cayuga, Onondaga, and Seneca establish the Iroquois Confederacy	
1497	Jean Cabot sails from Bristol to Newfoundland	
1534	Jacques Cartier sails from St Malo to the Gulf of St Lawrence	
1576–8	Martin Frobisher sails from England on his three Arctic explorations	
1605	Samuel de Champlain founds Port-Royal, Acadia	
1608	Champlain founds Quebec City	
1610	Henry Hudson sails to Hudson Bay	
1625	Jesuits arrive in New France	
1632		<i>Jesuit Relations</i> , an annual, begins and continues until 1673
1670	Hudson's Bay Company begins operations	
1751	First printing press in Nova Scotia	
1752		First newspaper in Canada, <i>Halifax Gazette</i>
1759	Battle on the Plains of Abraham	
1763	Treaty of Paris cedes New France to Britain	
1764	First printing press in Quebec	

*Chronology**(cont.)*

Date	Historical and Cultural	Literary
1769		Frances Brooke, <i>The History of Emily Montague</i>
1774	Quebec Act reinstating Roman Catholic religious freedom and French civil law	
1812–14	War of 1812	
1821		Thomas McCulloch, <i>The Letters of Mephibosheth Stepsure</i>
1824		Julia Beckwith Hart, <i>St. Ursula's Convent, or The Nun of Canada</i>
1829	The last of the Beothuks dies in Newfoundland	
1832		John Richardson, <i>Wacousta</i>
1836		Thomas Chandler Haliburton, <i>The Clockmaker</i> Catharine Parr Traill, <i>The Backwoods of Canada</i>
1839	Lord Durham's Report	
1847		George Copway, <i>The Life, History and Travels of Kah-ge-ga-gab-bowh</i>
1852		Susanna Moodie, <i>Roughing It in the Bush</i>
1864		Rosanna Leprohon, <i>Antoinette de Mirecourt</i>
1867	British North America Act, bringing into Confederation the provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario (formerly Upper Canada), and Quebec (Lower Canada)	
1870	Manitoba and North-West Territories join Confederation	
1871	British Columbia joins Confederation	
1873	Prince Edward Island joins Confederation	
1876	Indian Act	
1877		William Kirby, <i>The Golden Dog: A Legend of Quebec</i>
1888		James De Mille, <i>A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder</i>
1896		Gilbert Parker, <i>The Seats of the Mighty</i>
1898		Ralph Connor, <i>Black Rock</i> Ernest Thompson Seton, <i>Wild Animals I Have Known</i>

Chronology

xi

(cont.)

Date	Historical and Cultural	Literary
1900		Norman Duncan, <i>The Soul of the Street: Correlated Stories of the New York Syrian Quarter</i>
1903		Norman Duncan, <i>The Way of the Sea</i>
1904		Sara Jeannette Duncan, <i>The Imperialist</i>
1905	Saskatchewan and Alberta join Confederation	
1908		Nellie McClung, <i>Sowing Seeds in Danny</i> Lucy Maud Montgomery, <i>Anne of Green Gables</i>
1910		Stephen Leacock, <i>Literary Lapses</i>
1911		Pauline Johnson, <i>Legends of Vancouver</i>
1912		Stephen Leacock, <i>Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town</i>
1914–18	World War I	
1922		Frederick Philip Grove, <i>Over Prairie Trails</i>
1923		Mazo de la Roche, <i>Possession</i> Lucy Maud Montgomery, <i>Emily of New Moon</i> Laura Goodman Salverson, <i>The Viking Heart</i>
1925	United Church of Canada brings together Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational Churches	Frederick Philip Grove, <i>Settlers of the Marsh</i> Martha Ostenso, <i>Wild Geese</i>
1926		Robert J.C. Stead, <i>Grain</i>
1927		Mazo de la Roche, <i>Jalna</i>
1928		Morley Callaghan, <i>Strange Fugitive</i> Raymond Knister, ed., <i>Canadian Short Stories</i>
1929		Raymond Knister, <i>White Narcissus</i>
1932	Founding of the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Corporation	
1934		Morley Callaghan, <i>Such Is My Beloved</i>
1936	Founding of the Governor General's Literary Awards	Morley Callaghan, <i>Now That April's Here and Other Stories</i>
1939		Howard O'Hagan, <i>Tay John</i>
1939–45	World War II	
1941		Hugh MacLennan, <i>Barometer Rising</i> Sinclair Ross, <i>As for Me and My House</i>

Date	Historical and Cultural	Literary
1942	Internment of Japanese Canadians	
1945		Hugh MacLennan, <i>Two Solitudes</i>
1947		W.O. Mitchell, <i>Who Has Seen the Wind</i> Ethel Wilson, <i>Hetty Dorval</i> Henry Kreisel, <i>The Rich Man</i>
1948		
1949	Newfoundland joins Confederation	
1950	Founding of the Canadian Opera Company	
1951	Founding of the National Ballet of Canada Report of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Science (Massey Report)	Robertson Davies, <i>Tempest-Tost</i> A.M. Klein, <i>The Second Scroll</i>
1952	Founding of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (Television)	Ernest Buckler, <i>The Mountain and the Valley</i> Norman Levine, <i>The Angled Road</i>
1953	Founding of the National Library of Canada and the Stratford Shakespearean Festival	
1954		Mordecai Richler, <i>The Acrobats</i> Ethel Wilson, <i>Swamp Angel</i>
1956	Founding of the <i>Tamarack Review</i>	Mavis Gallant, <i>The Other Paris</i> Adele Wiseman, <i>The Sacrifice</i>
1957	Lester B. Pearson wins the Nobel Peace Prize Founding of the Canada Council for the Arts and the New Canadian Library	
1959	Founding of <i>Canadian Literature</i> Opening of the Saint Lawrence Seaway	Mordecai Richler, <i>The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz</i> Sheila Watson, <i>The Double Hook</i>
1960	Beginnings of the Quiet Revolution in Quebec	Margaret Laurence, <i>This Side Jordan</i>
1962	Completion of the Trans-Canada Highway Founding of the Shaw Festival and the Neptune Theatre in Halifax	W.O. Mitchell, <i>Jake and the Kid</i> Rudy Wiebe, <i>Peace Shall Destroy Many</i>
1963	Founding of the Charlottetown Festival and the Vancouver Playhouse	Morley Callaghan, <i>That Summer in Paris</i> Leonard Cohen, <i>The Favourite Game</i>

Chronology

xiii

(cont.)

Date	Historical and Cultural	Literary
1964		Austin Clarke, <i>The Survivors of the Crossing</i> Margaret Laurence, <i>The Stone Angel</i> Jane Rule, <i>Desert of the Heart</i>
1965	Founding of the Citadel Theatre in Edmonton	Carl Klinck, ed., <i>The Literary History of Canada</i>
1966	The Maple Leaf flag adopted Medicare legislation passed (all provinces join by 1972)	Robert Kroetsch, <i>But We Are Exiles</i> Leonard Cohen, <i>Beautiful Losers</i> Harold Horwood, <i>Tomorrow Will Be Sunday</i>
1967	Canada's centennial Expo 67 in Montreal Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism	George Bowering, <i>Mirror on the Floor</i> Timothy Findley, <i>The Last of the Crazy People</i> Audrey Thomas, <i>Ten Green Bottles</i>
1968		Marian Engel, <i>No Clouds of Glory</i> Alice Munro, <i>Dance of the Happy Shades</i>
1969	Official Languages Act New Brunswick is officially bilingual	Margaret Atwood, <i>The Edible Woman</i> Graeme Gibson, <i>Five Legs</i> Ray Smith, <i>Cape Breton Is the Thought-Control Centre of Canada</i>
1970	Report on the Royal Commission on the Status of Women	Robertson Davies, <i>Fifth Business</i> Richard B. Wright, <i>The Weekend Man</i>
1971	Official Multiculturalism Policy	Alice Munro, <i>Lives of Girls and Women</i> Mordecai Richler, <i>St. Urbain's Horseman</i>
1972		Margaret Atwood, <i>Survival</i>
1973	Founding of the Writers' Union of Canada	Maria Campbell, <i>Halfbreed</i> Rudy Wiebe, <i>The Temptations of Big Bear</i>
1974		Margaret Laurence, <i>The Diviners</i> David Adams Richards, <i>The Coming of Winter</i> Sinclair Ross, <i>Sawbones Memorial</i>
1975		Robert Kroetsch, <i>Badlands</i> Lee Maracle, <i>Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel</i>
1976		Marian Engel, <i>Bear</i> Jack Hodgins, <i>Spit Delaney's Island</i> Alistair MacLeod, <i>The Lost Salt Gift of Blood</i> Michael Ondaatje, <i>Coming through Slaughter</i> Carol Shields, <i>Small Ceremonies</i>

Date	Historical and Cultural	Literary
1977	French is the official language in Quebec	Timothy Findley, <i>The Wars</i>
1979		Jack Hodgins, <i>The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne</i> Thomas Kusugaq, <i>Eight Inuit Myths/ Inuit Unipkaaqtuat</i> Pingasuniarvinilit
1980	Quebec votes against separation in referendum "O Canada" proclaimed official national anthem	George Bowering, <i>Burning Water</i>
1981		Timothy Findley, <i>Famous Last Words</i> Mavis Gallant, <i>Home Truths</i> Douglas Glover, <i>The Mad River</i> Joy Kogawa, <i>Obasan</i>
1982	Patriation of the Constitution Charter of Rights and Freedoms	Sandra Birdsell, <i>Night Travellers</i> Guy Vanderhaeghe, <i>Man Descending</i>
1983		Morley Callaghan, <i>A Time for Judas</i> Beatrice Culleton Mosionier, <i>In Search of April Raintree</i> Susan Swan, <i>The Biggest Modern Woman of the World</i>
1985		Jeannette Armstrong, <i>Slash</i> Margaret Atwood, <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> Neil Bissoondath, <i>Digging Up the Mountains</i> Wayne Johnston, <i>The Story of Bobby O'Malley</i>
1986	John Polanyi wins the Nobel Prize for Chemistry	Jane Urquhart, <i>The Whirlpool</i>
1987		Rohinton Mistry, <i>Tales from Firozsha Baag</i> Michael Ondaatje, <i>In the Skin of a Lion</i> Carol Shields, <i>Swann</i>
1988	Canadian Multiculturalism Act Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the United States	Dionne Brand, <i>Sans Souci and Other Stories</i> Bonnie Burnard, <i>Women of Influence</i> Barbara Gowdy, <i>Through the Green Valley</i>
1989		Frances Itani, <i>Pack Ice</i> M.G. Vassanji, <i>The Gummy Sack</i>
1990	Meech Lake Accord fails	Thomas King, <i>Medicine River</i> SKY Lee, <i>Disappearing Moon Café</i> Nino Ricci, <i>Lives of the Saints</i>
1991		Helen Humphreys, <i>Ethel on Fire</i>

Chronology

xv

(cont.)

Date	Historical and Cultural	Literary
1992		Steven Heighton, <i>Flight Paths of the Emperor</i> Lawrence Hill, <i>Some Great Thing</i> Michael Ondaatje, <i>The English Patient</i>
1993		Caroline Adderson, <i>Bad Imaginings</i> David Bergen, <i>Sitting Opposite My Brother</i> Elizabeth Hay, <i>Captivity Tales</i> Alootook Ipellie, <i>Arctic Dreams and Nightmares</i> Thomas King, <i>Green Grass, Running Water</i> Yann Martel, <i>The Facts Behind the Helsinki Roccamatios and other stories</i>
1994	Founding of the Giller Prize	Carol Shields, <i>The Stone Diaries</i> André Alexis, <i>Despair and Other Stories of Ottawa</i> Gail Anderson-Dargatz, <i>The Miss Hereford Stories</i> Alice Munro, <i>Open Secrets</i> Shyam Selvadurai, <i>Funny Boy</i> M.G. Vassanji, <i>The Book of Secrets</i> Richard Wagamese, <i>Keeper 'n Me</i> Michael Winter, <i>Creaking in Their Skins</i>
1995	Quebec votes against separation again in referendum	Wayson Choy, <i>The Jade Peony</i> Rohinton Mistry, <i>A Fine Balance</i> Lisa Moore, <i>Degrees of Nakedness</i>
1996	Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples	Margaret Atwood, <i>Alias Grace</i> Dionne Brand, <i>In Another Place, Not Here</i> Ann-Marie MacDonald, <i>Fall on Your Knees</i> Anne Michaels, <i>Fugitive Pieces</i> Eden Robinson, <i>Trap Lines</i> Miriam Toews, <i>Summer of My Amazing Luck</i>
1997		Mordecai Richler, <i>Barney's Version</i>
1998		Dennis Bock, <i>Olympia</i> Lynn Coady, <i>Strange Heaven</i> Michael Crummey, <i>Hard Light</i> Tomson Highway, <i>Kiss of the Fur Queen</i> Wayne Johnston, <i>The Colony of Unrequited Dreams</i>

Date	Historical and Cultural	Literary
1999		Alistair MacLeod, <i>No Great Mischief</i>
2000	Founding of the Charles Taylor Prize for Literary Non-Fiction	Margaret Atwood, <i>The Blind Assassin</i> David Adams Richards, <i>Mercy among the Children</i>
2001		Darren Greer, <i>Tyler's Cape</i> Sheila Heti, <i>The Middle Stories</i> Yann Martel, <i>Life of Pi</i> Timothy Taylor, <i>Stanley Park</i> Madeleine Thien, <i>Simple Recipes</i> Jane Urquhart, <i>The Stone Carvers</i> Richard B. Wright, <i>Clara Callan</i>
2002	George Bowering is named Canada's first poet laureate	Robert Arthur Alexie, <i>Porcupines and China Dolls</i> Austin Clarke, <i>The Polished Hoe</i> Guy Vanderhaeghe, <i>The Last Crossing</i>
2003		Douglas Glover, <i>Elle</i> Frances Itani, <i>Deafening</i> M.G. Vassanji, <i>The In-Between</i> <i>World of Vikram Lall</i>
2004		David Bezmogis, <i>Natasha and Other Stories</i> Esi Edugyan, <i>The Second Life of Samuel Tyne</i> Anosh Irani, <i>The Cripple and His Talismans</i> Miriam Toews, <i>A Complicated Kindness</i>
2005	Same-sex marriage becomes legal throughout Canada	Dionne Brand, <i>What We All Long For</i> Audrey Thomas, <i>Tattycoram</i>
2006	Canada issues an official apology to Chinese Canadians for Headtax and Exclusion Act	Rawi Hage, <i>De Niro's Game</i> Heather O'Neill, <i>Lullabies for Little Criminals</i>
2007		David Chariandy, <i>Soucouyant</i> Elizabeth Hay, <i>Late Nights on Air</i> Lawrence Hill, <i>The Book of Negroes</i>
2008	Canada issues an official apology to former Indian Residential School students	
2009		Patrick DeWitt, <i>Ablutions</i>
2010		Emma Donoghue, <i>Room</i> Drew Hayden Taylor, <i>Motorcycles & Sweetgrass</i>
2011		Esi Edugyan, <i>Half-Blood Blues</i> Michael Ondaatje, <i>The Cat's Table</i> Steven Price, <i>Into That Darkness</i>

Chronology

xvii

(cont.)

Date	Historical and Cultural	Literary
2012	Department of Foreign Affairs cancels “Understanding Canada” programme	Thomas King, <i>The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America</i> Alice Munro, <i>Dear Life</i>
2013	Alice Munro wins the Nobel Prize for Literature	
2014		Michael Crummey, <i>Sweetland</i> Richard Wagamese, <i>Medicine Walk</i>
2015	Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission	
2016		Gail Anderon-Dargatz, <i>The Spawning Grounds</i> Emma Donoghue, <i>The Wonder</i> Anosh Irani, <i>The Parcel</i> Steven Price, <i>By Gaslight</i> Madeleine Thien, <i>Do Not Say We Have Nothing</i>
2018		Katherena Vermette, <i>The Break</i> Esi Edugyan, <i>Washington Black</i> Rawi Hage, <i>Beirut Hellfire Society</i>
2019		Margaret Atwood, <i>The Testaments</i>
2020	United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement of Free Trade The COVID-19 pandemic	Souvankham Thammavongsa, <i>How to Pronounce Knife</i>

The Chronology highlights important dates in Canada’s history and culture; the literary dates usually include the first publications of important writers as well as their major publications.