

When Architecture and Literature Collide:**Metaphorically enhanced bridge depiction from the River Kwai to Madison County****Daniel C. Strack****The University of Kitakyushu, Japan****Abstract**

Because novels tend to rely on realistic depiction to camouflage metaphorical subtexts, real-life settings lend fictional works greater credibility. It is for this reason that bridges find their way into literature. Because novelists excel at identifying the latent symbolic potential in everyday objects, bridges are ideal for concretely depicting abstract ideas such as apposed human relationships, dialectical progress, and metaphysical paradoxes. What happens, however, when details relating to a physically existing bridge conflict with the metaphorical undercurrents an author hopes to express? This presentation will compare details of actual bridges with the depictions of those bridges in literary works to demonstrate how discrepancies between the two often uncover an author's goals for the story.

For example, in Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, an actually existing span in the Guadarrama mountains of Spain has been transformed from a rustic stone bridge over a small stream into a towering steel arch over a deep gorge. Similarly, in Pierre Boulle's *Le Pont de la Rivière Kwai*, not only have two British POW-built railroad bridges been distilled into one, but the strategic importance of this bridge has been systematically enhanced to maximize psychological impact at its destruction. In the same way, to facilitate characterization in *The Bridges of Madison County*, Robert James Waller describes the covered bridges as dilapidated and "taken for granted" when in fact they were well-maintained tourist attractions at the time of the story.

In each of these cases, differences between depictions and the actual bridges clearly point to literary artifice for the purpose of highlighting a specific metaphorical subtext. Consequently, when bridges appear in novels and other artistic works, details of depiction warrant close attention; for while bridges are symbolically replete entities in and of themselves, their metaphorical possibilities cannot be fully exploited without careful elaboration.