Home at Last: The renovations are finished!

By Pamela Coles

The English Department is finally at home in the Jackman Humanities Building. Three years of extensive renovations are coming to a welcome close and the feeling is overwhelmingly one of relief. Walking through the newly painted corridors, sitting in one of our spacious meeting rooms, or visiting the Graduate student activity room, one might easily forget the challenges of the move. The transition from 7 King’s College Circle, the Department’s former home, has not exactly been a smooth one but the bumps seem to have gradually lessened in size and frequency. This past summer, dust filled the Department’s hallways and the crashing of sledgehammers against tile, wood and drywall made even thinking a laughable pursuit. For months, two of the three elevators in the building were encased in plywood, giving the ride up and down a singularly post-mortem feel. At one point during the renovations, bathrooms, and therefore water became a scarce commodity on all floors and no one could have foreseen that the faces of contractors working in the building would become nearly as well known to students as the faces of faculty.

Discussions to move the

Alumni Spotlight: Anthony De Sa

By Pamela Coles

When I meet him, the Canadian writer Anthony De Sa is sitting in his favourite Junction area café in jeans and a t-shirt, quietly working away on a draft of his second book. His warmth is immediate and his engagement in our ensuing conversation is as earnest as it is entertaining. Straight away, he tells me that, despite being shortlisted in 2008 for the prestigious Giller Prize, he has lingering doubts about the legitimacy of his claim to the title of author and that his adoption of fame is a reluctant one. Self-effacement is not a new addition to the list of the perceived quintessential attributes of Canadian novelists. Nor is the persistent collaboration of pathos and
My grandparents’ house at Lamesley was full of books. Before I could read them I loved their feel, their smell, the colours of the bindings, the rough-cut edges, the way you could actually finger the impression of the type. I learnt to read turning their pages again and again, the words fixing their shape and in time their meaning in my mind. This was one of my favourites. It is not a children’s book, not particularly suitable for a child, and no-one ever read it to me, yet it became a part of me. I learned to love the diary format, the songs of the owls and nightingales set out in musical notation, the lists of the names of roses, the humour and bad temper of the husband, the Man of Wrath, and, just as much, the thick yellowing pages, the width of the margins, the quick flow of the story, so that even as a child I could read it in a day.

With the copy I now own in my hands, the green cloth covers, the almost magical first page that I have read thousands of times, I can recapture that time. It might be far-fetched to say that this book shaped my work researching and teaching bibliography and book history, yet the things I loved about it as a child, colour, cloth, paper, words, type, motifs, patterns, repetitions, are indeed the fundamentals of the study of books as physical objects.

I suspect my grandmother’s copy eventually disintegrated from my enthusiastic use, so it gave me great pleasure a few years ago to find this first edition presentation copy in a used book store for only £6.

continued on page 4
Anthony De Sa continued from page 2

writer. “I still tell people when I meet them”, he admits “that I am a teacher and a writer.”

Most successful authors will tell you that if you want to be a great writer you need to read great writing. Despite growing up in a house that was devoid of the written word, De Sa has always been a reader. From a young age, books offered a refuge, a world to escape to from the intense, often crazy reality of his family life. Unwittingly then, De Sa began grooming himself for future literary success by enrolling in an undergraduate program at the University of Toronto that added critical industry to what had always been a labour of love.

When I asked him what courses, books or professors he enjoyed most during his student days he made it emphatically simple. “I liked them all.” As most English students do, he found the required reading for multiple literature courses both exhilarating and overwhelming. He remembers thinking that it was humanly impossible to make it through the protracted list for John O’Connor’s course on Canadian Literature. Unfortunately, the reading lists proved to be the least of his challenges. During his first year at the University of Toronto, his father, his grandfather, his grandmother and his best friend all passed away within months of each other. His best friend’s sudden death was particularly devastating but he recalls feeling wholly supported throughout the ordeal by administrators and professors at the University. Ultimately, he says, of that darker time, the U of T became an extension of home to him.

But even home away from home could be fraught with a familiar sense of alienation. In an exaggeratedly WASP English Department, the surname De Sa stood out amongst the McKinnons, the Clarkes and the Turners who, by dint of their heritage, seemed simply to be laying claim to what was naturally, rightfully and already theirs. And although he identifies the front door of his childhood home on Palmerston Ave as the threshold between his Portuguese life and his Canadian life, he admits that he relied on his uncharacteristic blond hair and blue eyes to help him outwardly “pass” as a legitimate heir to those same predominantly Anglo cultural and literary rights. He smiles when he learns that the concern of “passing” was one he unknowingly shared with one of his professors at the time, Linda Hutcheon. The self-described “cultural hybrid” often jokes that taking her husband’s surname allowed her to shed some of her early anxieties of influence as a burgeoning Italian-Canadian literary theorist in a predominantly Anglo-Canadian academic environment. De Sa’s nominations for the 2008 Giller Prize and the 2009 Toronto Book Award certainly lay to rest any question of his Canadian literary pedigree and his worries of “passing” are certainly a thing of the past but it becomes evident, as we finally move to the subject of his upcoming book, that alienation and longing remain dominant forces in his work.

Tentatively titled Carnival of Desire, this new novel takes off from the latent exploration, in Barnacle Love, of the ramifications for various Toronto communities of the brutal rape and murder, in 1977, of shoe-shine boy Emanuel Jacques. Those readers who found themselves easily caught up in the intimate narrative of his first project will find themselves hooked once again by the chiaroscuro revelation of events that transform protagonist, Antonio Rebelo and the entire city in which he lives.

More information on Anthony De Sa’s upcoming novel is available on the author’s website: www.anthonydesa.com

For more information on The Scotiabank Giller Prize, visit: www.scotiabankgillerprize.ca
The admission is not one a professor is usually willing to make; not publicly anyway, and it serves as yet another example of why his approach to teaching has earned him the highest of accolades. And his intellectual generosity and humility don’t end there. Each spring he shares the spotlight when he invites three contemporary authors to discuss their work with him in an informal interview format. The medium is one that resonates strongly with a student body that counts intelligent talk shows as an important source of information. Of course, it doesn’t hurt that Mount also knows how to pick a winner. Richard Powers, the esoteric young American author of *The Echo Maker*, was named a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize shortly after his in-class visit in 2007. Mount cheekily suggests that the two events are likely unrelated. Professor Mount’s mordant sense of humor is never far from any discussion one might have with him and one can imagine that, in the classroom, this same wit plays a significant role in his designs on his students interest in whatever subject is at hand. Literature, according to Professor Mount, should speak to us and not at us and hence, the titular emphasis on Literature.

**Nick Mount: The Feast is the Thing**

By Pamela Coles

We get a preliminary idea of just why Nick Mount won a President’s Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2009 just by reading the description for his course, ENG 140Y1Y Literature of our Time. In the second line, the reading list is treated less as an inventory than an invitation to discover the way we portal through literature to “London Bridge on a foggy winter morning, a lighthouse off the west coast of Scotland, a roadside ditch in Georgia, and the bean green waters off Nauset, Massa-chusettts.” Unlike other first-year literature courses, ENG 140Y1Y isn’t meant to be a sweeping survey where students are exposed to sparse offerings of a multitude of genres and titles. “The course is meant to be a banquet,” says Professor Mount. And it’s a sumptuous one.

Drama, poetry and fiction are the staples on offer in generous portions that evoke the fuller context of individual works. The poem “Daddy,” for example, may be the feature piece of a lecture on Sylvia Plath, but *Ariel*, the book in which the poem is found, is read in its entirety. As far as food for thought goes and in keeping with Mount’s banquet model, you don’t just get to eat dessert. All the other stuff on the plate counts in equal measure. It’s a pedagogical concept that can get lost in other anthology-based courses.

That doesn’t mean, though, that Professor Mount doesn’t have his favourites. Chris Ware’s graphic novel *Jimmy Corrigan* is one of them, but not for all of the reasons we might suspect. “Having that particular book on the syllabus,” he admits “means that students often have more to say on the material than I do.” The admission is not one a professor is usually willing to make; not publicly anyway, and it serves as yet another example of why his approach to teaching has earned him the highest of accolades. And his intellectual generosity and humility don’t end there. Each spring he shares the spotlight when he invites three contemporary authors to discuss their work with him in an informal interview format. The medium is one that resonates strongly with a student body that counts intelligent talk shows as an important source of information. Of course, it does not hurt that Mount also knows how to pick a winner. Richard Powers, the esoteric young American author of *The Echo Maker*, was named a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize shortly after his in-class visit in 2007. Mount cheekily suggests that the two events are likely unrelated. Professor Mount’s mordant sense of humour is never far from any discussion one might have with him and one can imagine that, in the classroom, this same wit plays a significant role in his designs on his students interest in whatever subject is at hand. Literature, according to Professor Mount, should speak to us and not at us and hence, the titular emphasis on Literature.

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By Pamela Coles

At the age of nineteen, my life was hell, well, the *Inferno* of Dante Alighieri. Hell is not usually considered the kind of place that opens up literature’s possibilities for undergraduates, but this one made me want to be a scholar of language and literature. Intrigued from the famous opening lines, “Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita / mi ritrovar per una selva oscura...”, two cantos and many dictionary consultations later, I was hooked-on the opulence of the terza rima verse, on the astute portraits of the damned sinners, punished in a manner fitting their crimes, on the moving story of the pilgrim seeking salvation, on the allegorical complexities of the medieval Christian world. I eventually made it to *Purgatorio* and even *Paradiso*, but my true intellectual life began in hell.
**Nick Mount: Literature For Our Time 2010 continued**

For Our Time rather than of our time. If you are among the 500 students at this award-winning banquet table count yourself lucky but if you missed this year’s seating, there’s always next.

The following is next spring’s line up of Literature For Our Time Guest Speakers:

**LYNN CROSBIE 29 January**

“Not since Margaret Atwood’s Power Politics has the love poem been this honest, this intelligent, this gripping. Imagine yourself in the middle of an autopsy, only to find the heart still beating.” —Michael Turner, author of Hard Core Logo

Montreal-born Lynn Crosbie is the author of five books of poetry, including *Queen Rat*, *Missing Children*, and our featured work, *Liar* (Anansi, 2006), a confessional poem about the mother of all breakups. She is also the author of two controversial novels, *Paul’s Case*, based on the Bernardo-Homolka sex crimes, and *Dorothy L’Amour*, inspired by the murder of Playmate Dorothy Stratten. Crosbie writes the “Pop Rocks” column for the *Globe and Mail*.

**STEPHEN MARCHE 5 March**

“With Raymond and Hannah I knew this guy was up to something brilliant. Shining at the Bottom of the Sea tells me I hadn’t the faintest idea.” —Daniel Handler, aka Lemony Snicket

Stephen Marche published his first novel in 2005, the long-distance, digital love story of Raymond and Hannah. Our featured work is Marche’s second book, the anthology of an imaginary island nation called *Shining at the Bottom of the Sea* (Viking Canada, 2007). The *New York Times* Book Review called it “Maybe the most exciting mashup of literary genres since David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas.*” Marche lives in Toronto and is a columnist for the *National Post* and *Esquire* magazine.

**JON MCGREGOR 19 March**

“A sensationally accomplished debut…a convincing and moving vision of contemporary Britain.” —Sunday Times

Born in Bermuda, British author Jon McGregor landed in Nottingham, where he wrote his first and our featured novel, the story of one street somewhere in the North of England. *If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things* (Bloomsbury, 2002) made McGregor the youngest contender and the only first novelist for the 2002 Booker Prize. It won the Somerset Maugham Award, and has since been selected by Waterstone’s Books as one of their top 100 books of the last 25 years.

*Enjoy an hour of talk and conversation on Fridays from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the Bader Theatre of Victoria University, 93 Charles Street West.*

**Literature For Out Time** is hosted by Professor Nick Mount, from the Department of English, University of Toronto.

All are welcome to attend.

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Nick Mount, Department of English


Though not as well known (or as well titled!) as his earlier collection *Kicking Against the Pricks*, John Metcalf’s *Freedom from Culture* was my own first and most influential encounter with Metcalf’s spiky version of Canadian literary criticism. *Freedom from Culture* is partly what it’s usually remembered as: polemical essays about the exaggerations of Canadian canon-builders, the blind spots of Canadian critics, the perils of state support for the arts (a line from memory: “The Canada Council is the cultural counterpart to Meals on Wheels”). But it’s mostly a record of Metcalf’s love affair with the English language, of his conviction as a writer, editor, and critic that style, not ideology, is the measure of literature. I disagreed with much of what Metcalf said then, and would probably disagree with more of it now. But *Freedom from Culture* forced me to question many things about Canada and its arts that until then I had taken for granted. Of more lasting importance, it’s the first book of criticism that I actually enjoyed reading. For me, the lesson of *Freedom from Culture* was and remains this: criticism does not have to be boring.

*continued on page 6*
John D. Baird, Department of English


This book was recommended to me by my fellow graduate student at Princeton, George Will. George is now a well-known political journalist, with most of whose opinions I vehemently disagree, but I remain deeply grateful for this recommendation.

I was first drawn to the wit: "the really damned not only like Hell, they feel loyal to it." Then on rereading, I realized that what seems to be a loose bundle of character sketches is really a tightly-woven meditation on human nature, the human condition, and the relationship of art to life, "the philosopher's stone that turns knowledge into truth."

I have reread this book many times, to the point that my paperback fell apart and had to be replaced. In dark times it never loses its power to make me laugh, and, like other great comedies, to cry at the same time. More than any other novel that I know, this is a magical book.

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Home at Last continued from page 1

Department began nine years ago with a view to uniting faculty, staff and students in one building and various spaces on campus were considered for its new address. 1 Spadina Crescent, the huge gothic building that once housed Knox College, then the Connaught Medical Research Laboratories and the Canada Eye Bank, was the initial choice but the unmanageability of that move quickly became apparent. Apart from the question of the 39 million dollars it would have cost to renovate this gothic revival building, its corridors and stairwells took up far too much floor space and proffered too little flexibility for space management.

Ultimately, it was Toronto Philanthropist and former U of T Chancellor Henry N.R. "Hal" Jackman who saved the day by donating the funds necessary to purchase the landmark Medical Arts Building, which was renamed the Jackman Humanities Building (JHB). Since lease terminations began here seven years ago, the U of T has been gradually transforming the building, floor by floor and office by office. This storied example of the Art Deco architectural tradition, previously filled with doctors and other professionals now houses the Philosophy, Religion and English Departments as well as the Institute for Diaspora and Transnational Studies. The Jackman Humanities Institute, the crown jewel of Humanities studies at the University of Toronto sits on the topmost floor of the building.

Brian Corman, who championed the move from the outset, had hoped the move from 7 King's College Circle would all take place at once but it was not to be. Professors Michael Cobb, Uzoma Esonwanne, Daniel Justice, and Sara Salih, were the first of the intrepid pioneers to arrive on the North Shore of Bloor St. At that time, JHB defined the new campus frontier for the English Department and its rustic lack of infrastructure rightfully earned it, among central administrations and campus mail deliveryers the less than affectionate nickname "the outpost." Since then, most English faculty members whose offices were previously scattered throughout the campus in various colleges now find themselves in a much less isolating atmosphere. Retired faculty members also have dedicated office space here that allows them to continue their work and to stay connected with colleagues and campus life.

The building was not zoned for large classrooms though and with prime lecture-hall real estate on campus already saturated, the issue has been a recurring source of frustration. One of the great boons of the move, however, has been that graduate students have been allocated a host of beautiful new work-study-lounge spaces with enviable views to the South-East. And, in this new arrangement, their supervisors, lucky them, are also never too far away. With most of the paint dried and the majority of the appropriate signs affixed to the appropriate doors, the English Department is now fully operational. The 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th floors of JHB boast comfortable and inviting work spaces for faculty, students and staff that will serve to advance the Department’s academic success and to further foster its unique sense of community for years to come. With our boxes of books now unpacked, we are ready to make this building serve the mission of the Humanities with the same energy its previous occupants devoted to preserving the health of Torontonians.
The Annual Creative Writing Showcase: 4 March 2010

By Jeff Parker

The Department of English’s Masters in English in the Field of Creative Writing Program offers a unique combination of academic course work and creative writing mentorship in a one-on-one structure that is inspirational and challenging to aspiring authors. Students participate in exciting discussions about their craft with guest poets, novelists, and playwrights. The program also offers the opportunity to engage the more practical aspects of writing through master classes and meetings with publishers and agents.

We invite you to join us on 4 March 2010 for the Department’s Annual Creative Writing Showcase. Enjoy a night of reading that spotlights upcoming and established literary talent, and brings to life the many reasons this program has become such a tremendous success in such a short time. Second year student, Andrew MacDonald, will read with his mentor, Toronto novelist Michael Winter, and recent alum Brooke Lockyer will read with her mentor, Catherine Bush.

Catherine Bush is the author of three novels. Claire’s Head (M&S, 2004), shortlisted for the Trillium Award, and chosen as a Best Book of the Year by the Globe and Mail, The Rules of Engagement (HarperCollins, 2000), a national bestseller, was published internationally, shortlisted for the City of Toronto Book Award, and chosen as New York Times Notable Book and a Best Book of the Year by the LA Times and the Globe and Mail, Minus Time (HarperCollins, 1993), her first novel, was also published in the U.S. and the U.K., and shortlisted for the SmithBooks / Books in Canada First Novel Award and the City of Toronto Book Award.

Brooke Lockyer won the Hart House Review Literary Contest, the Peter S. Prescott Prize, and the Lenore Marshall Barnard Prize while pursuing degrees in literature and creative writing at Columbia University and U of T. Her short stories, articles, and reviews have been published in various magazines, including the Hart House Review, Helicon, Toronto Life, Toro, and Spacing. She graduated from the MA in English in the Field of Creative Writing Program at the U of T in 2009.

Andrew MacDonald was born in Edmonton and lives in Toronto. His fiction and non-fiction have been published in places like The Fiddlehead, Event, Existere, and Broken Pencil. He is currently a student in the MA in English in the Field of Creative Writing Program at the U of T in 2009, and shortlisted for the SmithBooks / Books in Canada First Novel Award and the City of Toronto Book Award.

Michael Winter has published five works of fiction. The Big Why won the Drummer General’s Award and was nominated for Ontario’s Trillium Book Award and the Atlantic Book Awards Thomas Head Raddall Fiction Prize, This All Happened won the Winterset Award and was nominated for the Rogers Writers’ Trust Fiction Prize. He was named the first winner of the Writers’ Trust of Canada’s new Notable Author Award in 2008. His most recent novel is The Architects Are Here.

Creative Writing Showcase:
Where: Room 100, Jackman Humanities Building, 170 St. George Street
When: 4 March 2010, 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 pm
The event is free and open to the public. There will be refreshments and a cash bar.

Paris Times Eight: Finding Myself in the City of Dreams

www.dmpibooks.com/book/paris-times-eight

A graduate of the MA Program, Deidre Kelly has published a humorous and poignant memoir of her life, as seen through a series of eight visits to Paris. For her, the city takes on a deeper meaning; not only is it a place of growth, but also takes on a maternal role as the nurturer of her imagination.
B2B: Helping our Graduates transition into Life

Presented by the Faculty of Arts and Science and the Departments of English, History, and Innis Cinema Studies, Backpack to Briefcase events (B2B) are opportunities for successful alumni to interact informally with students, to revisit their alma mater, and to share their knowledge of navigating the professional world.

For three evenings this year, three successful alumni from these areas have been invited to speak about their professional experiences. Our first evening, Screen Reel, was held in October at Innis College. It featured film and video shorts, and an informal, insightful and at times irreverent discussion between the speakers (critically acclaimed indie filmmaker and writer Ron Mann, and James Cullingham, educator, documentary filmmaker and seasoned national broadcaster) and the audience. Our second planned event, Skills for the Real World, will be held in the Massey College Common Room on Thursday, 21 January 2010. This event will be an evening focused on skills and an opportunity for students to acquire practical information pertaining to a career pursuit. Planned speakers include William Morassutti, Managing Director, Blank Angus Media (Toro Magazine); Lisa Khoo, CBC National TV News, “The Current”; and Susan Courtney, V.P. Group Media Director, Starcom MediaVest Group.

The final B2B event will take place here in the Department of English on 26 February 2010, when our department will host the Famous Alumni Cocktail Reception in the Jackman Humanities Building. As with all the other events, this evening is open to current students, faculty and alumni. It will be an opportunity to celebrate, socialize, and build networks for the future.

In addition to these three B2B events, the Department of English is also sponsoring a career skills evening specifically for our own MA students. This event is being planned to address the needs and concerns of our Masters candidates. It will also be held in the Jackman Humanities Building and is tentatively scheduled for 25 February 2010. Along with the other Backpack to Briefcase evenings, it is hoped that these evenings will provide our students with the skills, both professional and personal, to confidently and successfully secure rewarding employment, and help them to prepare for their future outside of the university. For more information on B2B please consult our website www.english.utoronto.ca.

Release of Dictionary of Old English Corpus

http://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doecorpus/

By Antonette diPaolo Healey and Andy Orchard

On Tuesday November 24 a wine and cheese reception was held at the Provost’s Lodge of Trinity College to celebrate the latest updated release of the monumental Dictionary of Old English Corpus. The DOE Corpus consists of at least one copy of every surviving Old English text, its total size not quite five times the collected works of Shakespeare or 49 MB. The reception was also a celebration of a homecoming, for the DOE has brought the Corpus home to Toronto, now residing on Robarts Library’s server, after being hosted by the University of Michigan for twelve years. Many friends and supporters of the crucial and groundbreaking work of Toni Healey and the rest of her wonderful team at the DOE were present to mark the ongoing achievement of everyone involved in what is without question the most important current research project in the history of our English language. A fine evening concluded with a silent auction of historical prints kindly supplied by Glenn Carter, President of RSC HistoricPrints, to help raise funds for the crucial and inspiring work of the DOE.
In Memoriam: Richard Van Fossen (1927–2009)

By JoAnna Dutka

A member of the Department of English from 1970, Dick Van Fossen was an exemplary scholar, teacher, and administrator. A man of principle, integrity, honour, and courtesy, he was committed to his family, to his Christian faith, to the arts, and to his profession.


Dick’s teaching career began before he went to Harvard: he was in the English Department at Clemson Agricultural and Mechanical College (now University) in South Carolina. Clemson admitted any white male student from any South Carolina high school – the Departments of English and Chemistry together failed about 30% of freshman. Some of his students could speak only Gullah, a Creole-based language. He met five sections of English and corrected one hundred papers each week. In 1956, he began teaching at Duke, where he received tenure and participated in revising the freshman curriculum so as to emphasize writing and seminar instruction. He moved to Mt. Vernon, Iowa, and Cornell College in 1959 where he gained tenure and became department chair. In 1970, along with other members of the faculty, he resigned his position – at Convocation – in protest against administrative threats to academic freedom in connection with the war in Viet Nam.

In the same year he was invited to the University of Toronto as Visiting Professor at Erindale College (now UTM) and was awarded tenure. At Erindale he served as Discipline Representative, Dean of Humanities, and Acting Principal. He also twice served as Acting Chair of the Department of English. His many other administrative responsibilities included a number of committees of the MLA, organizing an MLA conference in Toronto, and representing the University of Toronto at the Council of Ontario Universities.

On retirement in 1991, Dick and his wife Ann moved to Pagosa Springs, Colorado, where they both were involved in church and community activities and, particularly, in work at the Chimney Rock Archaeological Area. The Van Fossens, wanting to be nearer their children David and Rachel, who had remained in the East in New York and Quebec, returned to Canada in 2005 and settled in Montreal. Dick was diagnosed with dementia in 2006 and died of pneumonia on September 22, 2009. At his funeral, held in Trinity Memorial Anglican Church, hymns of his own choosing from Elizabethan poetry were sung. He is survived by Ann, by his sister Mary, by David and Rachel and their spouses, and by four grandchildren.

Dick’s work in Renaissance drama has been long lasting: his editions are widely used, and he was in the forefront of City Theatre studies and topographical understanding of Renaissance plays. He is recalled as having encouraged young scholars in what was then a new area of criticism. His openness to new ideas was also evident in matters of curriculum: he invited his colleagues at Erindale to present new courses that later became regular offerings in the department as a whole, and he welcomed innovations in teaching methods. Younger members of the English group were supported with wisdom and generosity as they went through the intricacies of tenure and promotion.

The intensity of his responses to music, to the culture of the early inhabitants of the Four Corners area, to the joys and difficulties of teaching and learning, and to the imperatives of compassion and faith was remarkable. As was his sense of humour and unforgettable smile, even in the last months of his life. His son David tells how Hailu, his friend and care-giver, would catch his attention by saying, “Me and Dick are going for a walk.”

Dick would turn to correct him with “Dick and I.”

Dick Van Fossen: colleague, friend, mentor, man of conviction. Sit tibi terra levis.

(My gratitude to the Van Fossen family for helping me with this tribute to Dick)
By Pamela Coles

Northrop Frye is often referred to as the founding father of literary criticism at the University of Toronto. His contribution to the field is immeasurable and his legacy remains indelible. Although his initial academic ties at the U of T were strongest to the Centre for Comparative Literature, much ongoing and contemporary critical engagement with Frye’s work has issued from the Department of English. Branko Gorjup, a retired U of T lecturer has recently edited a collection of critical essays entitled Northrop Frye’s Canadian Literary Criticism and Its Influence (University of Toronto Press, 2009). A very palpable tension arises between these essays that engage Frye’s work in both complimentary and contradictory ways. Contributors to the book include: Russell Brown, Eleanor Cook, Michael Dixon, Linda Hutcheon, Heather Murray, and Rosemary Sullivan, who are all current or former professors of the Department of English. In this volume, they engage with Frye’s work from a variety of critical frameworks and against the backdrop of their own unique contributions to the field of literary criticism and to the Canadian literary scene. For those of us more familiar with Northrop Frye’s larger, more global works such as Anatomy of Criticism (1957) and The Great Code: The Bible and Literature (1982) and less familiar with Frye’s earlier critical investment in Canadian literary culture, these essays provide a useful balance of praise and problematization of Frye’s labour to define and rhetorical tendency to confine the Canadian poetic imagination.

This is a must have resource for those interested in the ongoing dialogue and debate between Frye and contemporary scholars on the characterization and classification of a unique species.

Critiquing the Critic: Northrop Frye

Leslie Thomson, Chair, Department of English and Drama, University of Toronto Mississauga


As an undergraduate in English at U of T I studied King Lear and realized that even for Shakespeare it is something special. Then I studied it as an English graduate student and appreciated it even more. But only when I had taught it as a member of the English faculty did I really start to understand its importance as a piece of theatre and a work of literature. Each time I read it again, I see and learn something new about both Shakespeare’s genius and human nature. Because of its complexities, this play has been admired, dreaded, performed, reworked, and examined repeatedly over the centuries, but no approach will ever completely satisfy our sense of its value as a work of art or exhaust its ability to surprise.


Mississauga

Changing with the times: www.english.utoronto.ca

The Department of English has launched our newly re-designed website. The new address is www.english.utoronto.ca.

Although it is still undergoing modifications and additions, we encourage you to visit our new website and to take a look around. Until it is running perfectly, we will keep our old website at www.utoronto.ca/english up and running.

Contact marguerite.perry@utoronto.ca with your comments and suggestions.
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(Please complete and return to the Department of English - Alumni Information, 170 St. George St., Room 613)

Surname: _________________________ Given Name(s): _________________________

Degree attained: _________________________ Year: ___________ Student ID# (optional): ___________

Address: __________________________________________ City: _________________________

Province: ___________________________ Country: __________________________ Postal Code: ___________

Telephone(s): ______________________ Email: __________________________ Website: _________________________

Personal and professional news (please use a separate sheet if necessary, or email the information to the email address above, to the attention of the Newsletter Editor): ____________________________________________________________

Would you like to receive the Newsletter in digital or paper form?  Digital ☐ Paper ☐

Would you like to be contacted about upcoming Alumni activities?  Yes ☐ No ☐

Would you like to get involved in organizing Alumni events?  Yes ☐ No ☐

Would you like to get involved with the Newsletter?  Yes ☐ No ☐

Comments and/or ideas for the Alumni Association and the Newsletter: ____________________________________________________________