On Saturday, January 28, 2017, Professor Andrew Lass from Mont Holyoke sent this sad note: “Professor Lubomír Doležel (1922-2017) succumbed to several heart attacks and passed away in Verona, Italy. He was in his 95th year, having finished another book and several articles this past year.”

This is sad news indeed as Lubomír was a dear friend, a respected colleague and a mentor for many at the University of Toronto and elsewhere; he was a role model for scholars interested in narratology, the theory of fictional worlds, postmodern, and counterfactual narratives of the past. The International Society for the Study of Narrative (ISSN) acknowledged the significance of his many contributions to the study of narratology by giving him its 2016 Booth Wayne Lifetime Achievement Award for narratology. He received the prize last July at the 2016 Narrative Conference, in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Although a linguist by training, in his first book O stylu moderní české prózy (About the Style of Modern Czech Prose; 1960) published in Prague, he explored the questions of stylistics. It was the first book that revived the legacy of the Prague Linguistic Circle, a group founded in 1926 and modeled on the Moscow Linguistic Circle founded about a decade earlier. Also known as the Prague School, the group anticipated contemporary interdisciplinary and transnational tendencies because of the multinational, multidisciplinary, intercultural focus of linguists (B. Havránek, V. Mathesius, R. Jakobson), ethnographers (P. Bogatyrev), literary scholars (Jan Mukařovský), and practitioners like O. Fischer and many others. Together they produced a remarkable body of work, which explored questions of general aesthetics and linguistics as well as specific problems of folklore, literary theory, drama and theater. (The latter was researched mostly by the second generation, including F. Vodička, J. Veltruský, K. Brušák.)

By the 1950s, however, in Czechoslovakia structuralism was considered a
methodological aberration while narrow ideologically driven scholarship was the norm. It will come as no surprise then that Lubomír entered a scholarly and ideological minefield. Everyone acquainted with the peculiar conditions of the early 1960s in Czechoslovakia will appreciate the dance those involved had to perform in order to award him his academic degree and allow his work to be published.

Lubomír became a part of what became the third generation of the Prague structuralists that celebrated assorted aspects of the Prague School in a collection *Knížka o jazyce a stylu soudobé české literatury* (The Book about the Language and Style of Contemporary Czech literature; 1962). In another volume in which the word *Structure* appeared in the title as *Structure and Meaning* [*Sense*] of the Literary Work (*Struktura a smysl literárního díla*; 1966), Lubomír presented his study of structural analysis of the literary work.

He switched continents following an invitation to teach at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor in 1965 and stayed there until 1968. He co-edited (with Richard W. Bailey) a collection of studies *Statistics and Style* (American Elsevier, 1969). Following the abrupt end of the so-called Prague Spring, Lubomír joined the Slavic Department at the University of Toronto in 1969 and became a member of the Center for Comparative literature when cross-appointed in 1982.

Since his bibliography is too extensive to mention all his publications –most of them are listed in the František A. Podhajský and Bohumil Fořt’s “Bibliography of Lubomír Doležel:1954–2016 (Narrative January 2016 24(3): 231-250) – I will comment on a few. The title of his *Narrative Modes in Czech Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973; revised edition in Czech 1993) is misleading as it laid the ground for his narrative theories. Compared with its Czech version, it was broadened by changing the language and also by
including John Amos Comenius and Milan Kundera as the subjects of an astute and well-received analysis.

While he taught Russian writers at the Slavic Department, his studies of Kafka revealed a broadening of his research interests in the direction of comparative literature that was intensified after his appointment as a core faculty member at the Centre of Comparative literature founded by Northrop Frye. As Lubomír writes in his memoirs (Život s literaturou: Vzpomínky a rozhovory [Life with literature: Memories and Interviews]. Prague: Academia, 2013, 157) the Centre under the directorship of Peter Nesselroth became a big family in many ways. In 2010 he expressed his appreciation of the Centre in a letter to University of Toronto president Naylor urging him to keep it in its original form; ”What I found exciting about teaching at the Centre was the energy, devotion, curiosity and creativity of both its faculty and its students." (http://savecomplit.blogspot.ca/2010/08/lubomir-dolezel-emeritus-university-of.html).

Lubomír also helped to institute a new forum when the Toronto Semiotic Circle was established in 1973 as an interdisciplinary group open to interested scholars and students from all over the world. Another meeting point of this collaboration was the summer school of Semiotics organized for a couple of years by the Circle which was especially beneficial with regard to an exchange about narratology, the semiotics of drama, anthropology and other disciplines.

During his first decade in Toronto, Lubomír used many occasions to inform his new audience about the contributions of the Prague Linguistic Circle. The most inspiring result of this endeavor is his book Occidental Poetics: Tradition and Progress. (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1990), in which in a remarkable tour de force he traced the tradition of poetics from Aristotle to Frege, while the second part devoted to Structural Poetics culminated in the Prague School. The Czech edition (2000) pays respect to Mukařovský by alluding to the title of his
monumental work *Kapitoly z české poetiky* (Chapter from Czech Poetics; 1948). Lubomír kept the designation “Kapitoly” (Chapters) but his title – *Kapitoly z dějin strukturální poetiky* (Chapters from the history of structural poetic, 2000) – indicates the shift in the focus of the book. Obviously, there was no need to inform his countrymen, who already knew this, that the poetics developed on the Bohemian territory had firm roots in the aesthetics of the Western world.

His *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds.* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1998) illuminated various aspects of fictional existence as it introduced new and redefined existing terminology. His next book *Possible Worlds of Fiction and History: The Postmodern Stage.* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2010) uses linguistics to analyse Derrida and his approach to history. Although Mukařovský is mentioned in a footnote linking him with Peter Nesselroth, the book carries the tradition of the Prague Linguistic Circle further. Vodička’s focus on reception theory and literary history coupled with the Circle’s interest and co-operation with contemporary artists inform this book as well as *Heterocosmica II*, produced in Prague in Czech and dealing with Czech postmodern writings. *Heterocosmica III* is presently being published. Hence he had returned to his Czech roots and initiated the formation of another group, this time the narratological circle in Brno. He enjoyed the company of his young colleagues who profited from his support of their scholarly endeavors. Unfortunately, there will not be a new project.

Although Lubomír’s points of view are applicable to different genres (including drama) and have become the stable inventory of literary scholars everywhere, his erudition, intellectual curiosity and academic standards will remain a model for student and scholars. His papers and books are read all over the globe, often translated into several languages and always providing a source of inspiration for new ideas. Alas we will no longer have the pleasure of the countless heated and fruitful scholarly disputes he so much loved.