

JONATHAN HART

Milan V. Dimić
1933-2007



Milan V. Dimić, University Professor Emeritus, an eminent scholar and teacher, who served Comparative Literature, the Faculty of Arts, the University of Alberta, and the community locally, nationally and internationally, died earlier this month in the city of his birth, Belgrade. From 1963 to 1966, he had been an Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung (Foundation) Research Fellow in the Department of Alberta in 1966, when he became Assistant Professor in the Department of Germanic Languages and Interdepartmental Program in Comparative Literature. In 1968, Milan was made Professor of Comparative Literature, and he became founding editor of the Canadian Review of Comparative Literature in 1974. From 1988 to 1998, when Milan retired, he was appointed University Professor, which specified that the position was «beyond departmental and formal disciplinary boundaries». From 1998 to 2001, he served as University Professor Emeritus, with teaching assignments and graduate supervision. From February 2001, Milan was also Visiting Professor, Department of English, Shih Hsin University, Taipei, Taiwan, and in 2002-03 and 2003-04, his Visiting Professorship was sponsored by the National Science Council of Taiwan. These are the bare bones of an illustrious career as a teacher and a dedicated and innovative member of our profession, university and community.

For those who knew Milan and those who counted him as a friend, he was a remarkable person. His intellectual gifts, such as his ability to speak Serbo-Croat, English, German, French and Russian and to read a number of other dead and living languages, were apparent, but his capacity as a friend and teacher was perhaps even more distinctive. His teaching concentrated most on world literature, literature and the other arts, literary periods, motifs and themes, literary forms and genres, literary theory and criticism, literary history, and language and public speaking courses in English and German. Milan taught many graduate courses and supervised and co-supervised about 55 MA theses and 35 PhD dissertations in Comparative Literature and other areas.

Milan won many awards and distinctions. In 1983, he was elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, Academy of Humanities, and was the first scholar to be elected under the heading of Comparative Literature. In 1998, Milan was awarded, the Henry Kreisel Award for excellence in undergraduate and graduate teaching.

Milan's contributions to administration and the profession were also many. For instance, from 1969-1975, he was Founding Chair, the Department of Comparative Literature. In the International Comparative Literature Association, he was Vice-President from 1991-1994; was Special Advisor to the President and Executive Council (1997-2001); and was Chair of the Structures Committee from 2004 until his death. Milan's many articles and other contributions to the fields of theory, literature and folklore were well known internationally. He contributed in so many ways.

As a friend, I feel a great loss, and we have all lost a generous spirit and mind as well as a colleague and a member of the republic of letters. His son, Nicolas, a Canadian diplomat in Paris, sent me this in his message of 9 March 2007, the day after Milan's death:

«He had been visiting a dear cousin in Belgrade after a stay of about a month with the family in Paris where he delighted his granddaughter with beginners Russian lessons. He, above all, was delighted to renew with the Bibliothèque nationale to advance research into more publications that he was planning.

HART: Milan V. Dimić

He was taken ill a few days ago but we were all so used to considering him as a force of nature that we were not concerned.

...He will be buried next week in the family crypt in Belgrade.»

A friend, mentor and colleague, Milan Dimić will be sorely missed.

*Jonathan Hart
Art Faculty Council, University of Alberta*

(Author's title given as of the time of writing)