

Chapter 1 : The Concise Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature by William Toye

The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature (2 ed.) William Toye and Eugene Benson The second edition of the acclaimed Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature has been thoroughly updated with more than new entries on new writers, new books, and extended entries on established authors.

Where are we in our literary history? People want to know. They see Canadian novels sprouting like never before, they notice Canadian writers finding foreign readerships, winning international prizes. Soon to produce a Nobel laureate? Headed for a crash? Then again, the economical thing might just be to retrofit that very scale to service CanLit. So, then, that would put usâ€¦? Which would bring us to the Cenozoic. Which, of course, means either that the ice caps have long since formed orâ€¦ absolutely nothing. Come to think of it, G. Or people will say that Canada should soon produce a literature; which is like saying that Canada must soon grow a moustache. Yes, I suppose you could conclude, as several reviews did in when the first edition appeared, that the very existence of such a volume is testament to the maturity of our literature. But what would that tell you? That literary dotage is next? An accompanist rather than a soloist. A Boswell rather than a Johnson. A companion is a sidekick, support staff. In their introduction, Toye and Benson more or less echo Harvey: Be that as it may, the new bigger book is definitely a new better book. The original edition contained entries by writers over pages. This time out, there are new entries, new contributors, more pages. Original entries have been updated across the board, and there are many more essay entries amplifying such significant themes as Caribbean-Canadian literature, censorship, gay literature, and lesbian literature. Interesting this Companion also is: Many of the entries are as brisk and businesslike as you please, but many make room for the tint of telling anecdote. If I was going to complain â€” well, here it is: Toye and Benson are unaccountably taciturn in providing their terms of reference, their rules of engagement. Their introduction is given over largely to acknowledgments: That much, editors and readers alike tacitly agree on. Without any kind of explicit editorial explanation, this can be confusing. Is this in the interest of detached trendspotting, a faithful reporting of the stumblings of the literary young? The most extreme example â€” and the only baffling inclusion â€” I came across was that of Richard Rohmer. That would allow them to add another layer of entries, entries that are less orderly and predictable. We need them to stay on top of things. The way I see it, the next few years are going to be critical ones in the growth of Canadian literature.

Chapter 2 : Oxford Companions - Wikipedia

The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature was first published in to great acclaim. In the fourteen years since its publication Canadian literature has enjoyed an explosion of creative talent. In the fourteen years since its publication Canadian literature has enjoyed an explosion of creative talent.

Oxford University Press, , pp. It derives from bread as in the sense of food. This massive book, then, is either food for the mind, nourishment for the spirit, or a huge production machine churning out reams of information from every possible point of view or perspective on Canadian Literature. Once, not so very long ago, it was possible for one person, the tireless, assiduous, dedicated Norah Story to put together not only a Companion to Canadian Literature but to Canadian History as well. A companion, in truth. That was in Ten years later, a whole team of writers, scholars, critics, had to be assembled to produce a Supplement, and now an army is needed. There are, we are told, contributors to this Companion. Recently, our pre-eminent scholar-critic, Northrop Frye, noted wryly in his essays an Canadian Culture, Divisions on a Ground, about the vast MLA programme, "Surely nothing else in modern civilization can be quite like it. Elsewhere Frye notes that "wherever there is a cult of productivity there is a good deal of hysteria" and while the only answer to the increasing strain on the scholarly economy seems to be the Detroit answer: In fact, the assembly line methodology of the Companion appears to have come into being as a result of the extraordinary publication surge in Canadian writing over the past fifteen years, an explosion in poetry and fiction accounted for in part by cultural nationalism, contemporary technology in publication methods and distribution, and as William Toye notes, "growing interest in Canadian writing abroad", the development of Canadian Studies Programmes is such diverse areas as the Scandanavian Countries, Italy, Japan, India. Canadian literary publication has become, in the language of the day, a "phenomenon" requiring a huge infrastructure of information, interpretation, commentary, bibliography, biography, scholarly apparatus to sustain and nourish it. And to say this, is to say nothing against it. To a certain extent, the Companion is the inevitable and necessary consequence. As William Toye puts it, rightly, I think: What could easily have broken apart into incoherent fragments has somehow been brought together in a virtually seamless whole, miracu ously of a piece. How the many were forged or woven into the one is no doubt the secret of superb editorship. William Toye is one of the few major editors who could have accomplished the task. And one suspects the tone of the Companion as a whole, intelligent, reasonable, civilized, results from his steady hand controlling the immense machine he has launched. Consider the variety of entries, the possibilities for heresies, for subversion, even of formlessness. No doubt, the Companion had to rely on some editorial direction in at least guiding the form of critical and biographical entries of major Canadian writers in English and French. The Companion too treats in its roughly formulaic way what it calls the strains of most if not all of other cultures of the Canadian mosaic, and foreign writers who settled in Canada in their maturity or who have strong Canadian ties. The whole is kept together, I think, in two ways: It is also given unity by its ingenious system of cross references and sufficiently detailed coverage to include constant reminders of subjects still needing coverage or further study and references to important available studies and series. As a bibliographical aid, in fact, the Companion is respectable, if not always flawless. Toye draws attention to two matters in particular in his Introduction: It seems fairly obvious that the decision was to be as fair-handed as possible and to allow the length of entries to be determined by historical and documentary as well as literary considerations. But that still leaves unanswered the question as to how to determine literary significance, in other words, evaluation. Canadian literature then appeared as innocent of literary intention as a mating loon. Ten years later Professor Frye was to call for a more subtle criticism. And presumably that is what we should now ask for too. There are some odder decisions that have been pointed out by other reviewers so Toye was right to feel uneasy about "relative length". But the critical problem to which I am drawing attention becomes acute, I think, with respect to the first matter raised by Toye, the means of evaluating and developing a critical theory adequate to the extraordinary development of writing in the modern period in Canada. And in fact, a matter crucial to the Companion is nothing less than the adequacy of its account of contemporary criticism as well as the adequacy of its own critical theory and

approach. This is to call special attention to the survey articles on fiction, poetry, and criticism and regional literatures. I refer here only to those concerning English writing since I have no special capacity to deal with the French. Surely by now it is a commonplace that one of the significant developments of contemporary writing is the impact on both literature itself and criticism of European critical theory, particularly as it has moved through the United States. This is one way in which to understand what is often spoken of as post modern or post structural criticism and writing, a development greeted either with delight or scorn or worse depending on academic status or its equivalent in literature. The regional part of this development has been recognized by the Companion in its regional entries. But there is a curious problem or difficulty about post structural writing worth taking note of. But as each entry approaches contemporary developments, its articulation collapses. Consider that rather than providing an historical account of the shift from thematic criticism to post structural thought, Bennett provides us with sections on: And Solecki is scarcely more coherent, writing of other talents, minority fiction, satire, the novel of childhood, women and fiction, regional fiction, urban Toronto. In , Professor Frye commented on the quantitative change that marked our literature and which the Companion now confronts in an even more acute form: All I can do here is try to characterize that crisis: In the end, I believe, the contributors to this Companion find themselves in the same position as Professor Frye. Of the contemporary situation, they can attempt no rounded general survey. All they can do is characterize the crisis.

Chapter 3 : The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature - Google Books

In , Norah Story's Oxford Companion to Canadian History and Literature, a landmark in the history of Canadian writing, www.nxgvision.com was followed in by a Supplement.

Additional Information In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content: William Toye and Oxford University Press have split up those previously inseparable companions, Canadian history and literature. Here is the butterfly without the rock. What then are we jilted geologists to make of lepidoptery? First and foremost that it is an illuminating, intellectually demanding, and exciting field of inquiry. There is not much to be gained by bemoaning this disciplinary fragmentation. It happens in even the best of cultures. The great value of a Companion like this is precisely that it brings back the grand sweep of Canadian literature and its critical underpinnings into plainer view for the general reader, of course, but also for those irredeemably dispersed specialists in history, politics, anthropology, sociology, music, economics, and the arts who ought to know more of what their fellow poets, novelists, playwrights, and literary critics have been thinking all these years. At this stage, formal introductions are in order for most of us. The second triumph of this particular handbook is that it successfully accomplishes the undertaking begun with the last Supplement - also edited by William Toye - to give writing in French full and honest treatment. This will be seen as the crowning glory of the new, and now complete, Companion. For perhaps the first time all Canadian writing, English and French, has been brought together for description and appraisal in one handy volume. The resulting Companion will be of lasting value to historians, but also, I should imagine, to the separate specialists of English- and French-Canadian literature. It may be too early to rush to judgment as to whether Canada has one literature or many, but at least those who may be curious have an authoritative guide. Reading through from Acadian literature to Zieroth, Dale, I found a pleasing relationship between the scale of the volume and the corpus being reduced. The body of Canadian literature in English and French, while large, is not so overwhelmingly enormous as to force compression of all entries into breathless sketches or mere lists. There is a roominess about this book which gives ample scope for long entries, analysis, even substantial essays on themes and genres. In short, the proportions of this Companion are about right. It is not just that Canadian authors receive fuller treatment in the Canadian companion - that, after all, is to be expected - but rather that major authors receive longer, more thoughtful treatment. Toye is able to give his writers space to do more than simply list titles, space which Woodcock uses to great advantage in his Callaghan piece and many others. A comparison of the word count on authors such as Bird, Carr, Creighton, Frye, Garneau, Gelinas, Moodie, and Pratt indicates that entries have been expanded by twice to three times their former size. And of course the exclusive focus on literature makes for a much more comprehensive coverage of contemporary and earlier authors. The new Companion expands the essays on such themes as regional literature, journal, writing in New France, science fiction, and travel writing. This format makes for a certain amount of repetition which, in a reference book, is all to the good. Thomas McCulloch, for example, has an entry of his own as well as being discussed under Haliburton, Maritime writing, humour, and novels in English. The only trouble is that without an index there is no sure You are not currently authenticated. View freely available titles:

Chapter 4 : Southern Ontario Gothic - Wikipedia

As Sir Paul Harvey wrote when he introduced the first Oxford Companion to English Literature in , a literary companion does its duty if it proves helpful "to ordinary everyday readers of English literature," satisfying an immediate curiosity on a given subject, perhaps pointing them the way of further inquiry.

Additional Information In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content: As a basic work of reference, it is a major addition to Canadian studies, both French and English. It does not, however, stop with our two major literatures, but also includes sections on Yiddish and Ukrainian writing, as well as specific individual entries on Czech, Polish, German, Hungarian, Italian, Chilean, and other writers who have lived and worked in Canada. There are, in addition, sections on Inuit and Indian literatures. The latter, by Penny Petrone, not only is a valuable help to those interested in the history of Indian rhetorical and linguistic traditions and in the work in English by Christianized Indians in the last century, but also goes a long way to helping us understand the achievement of novelist Rudy Wiebe in portraying oral Indian speech in *The Temptations of Big Bear*. The new sections on regional literature are generally quite valuable. The genre sections have been expanded and, on the whole, are competently handled. Perhaps the very important Quebecois novel deserves more than a rather reductive set of plot outlines. The rather cursory treatment of an important recent phenomenon - popular fiction - would also have been avoided. While there are sections on mystery and crime fiction and on science fiction and fantasy, there is none on historical romance, the popular genre with the longest history in Canada. Other entries on philosophy, biography, and history raise the issue of the definition of the literary, but their presence here is both welcome and useful. The individual entries on writers are, perhaps unavoidably, uneven in quality and in degree of personal detail offered. Some more firm editorial decision should have been taken on the kind of biographical entry to be encouraged. With contributors, the quality of writing here is inevitably going to be uneven. Frequently the writer is an obvious expert in the field; the odd time, I really did wonder, however. What we should never forget, though, is how much research and time goes into writing even the shortest of entries. Some writers should probably be singled out either for the sheer number of entries contributed or for their fine quality: The list could, and should, go on and on. You are not currently authenticated. View freely available titles:

Chapter 5 : The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature by William Toye

There are more than 14, copies in print of the First Edition of The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature, edited by William Toye. This Second Edition has been prepared in response to the extraordinary growth and diversification of Canadian literature since the early s.

Chapter 6 : Two Views of the Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature

EMBED (for www.nxgvision.com hosted blogs and www.nxgvision.com item tags).

Chapter 7 : Oxford Companion to English Literature - Oxford Reference

The Second Edition of The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature, now in its third printing, is a landmark reference work. Reducing its pages by almost one half this concise edition will make the core contents of the original volume accessible to a much wider range of readers.

Chapter 8 : Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature - Oxford Reference

"The Concise Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature is an indispensable tool and guide for anyone interested in Canadian culture. William Toye has done a superb job of updating entries in the first [concise] edition, which appeared in

, and in adding many new entries.

Chapter 9 : The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature, 2nd Edition | Quill and Quire

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