

Q&A with journalist, author Lev Grossman

Lev Grossman, book critic and technology writer at Time magazine, released the final novel in his “Magicians” trilogy, “The Magician’s Land.” He will talk at Flyleaf Books tonight. Staff writer Everett Handy spoke to him about the series.

THE DAILY TAR HEEL: How did you come up with the idea for the “Magicians” series?

LEV GROSSMAN: I was a big fan of “Harry Potter,” which is where at that point we were still in between “The Order of the Phoenix” and “The Half-Blood Prince,” which is where I could tell that fantasy story — a story about the education of a magician but for grown-ups. I was having a sort of personal crisis and I decided to try and work them out by writing this story. So I did, and it is a story about the education of a wizard, but it’s a completely different kind of story from the “Harry Potter” books in a sense that the characters deal with more adult issues with an adult aim. They deal with relationship problems, they

get bored, they get depressed. Their lives are complicated in a certain way that Harry’s is not.

DTH: What adventures are in store for the characters in this book?

LG: One of the challenges they have is that they get this education, they are released back into the world and they don’t have anyone to fight. They don’t have any monsters, and the world isn’t ending... One of the things that happens in “Magician’s Land” is that the hero has to figure out what magic is for him and what his path is in life. So there’s that, and there is also a lot of growing up that the characters have to do. They have to realize that a lot of problems in life can be solved with magic and for them to fight and be brave, I think it has to do with facing things that they can’t face.

DTH: You’ve announced this will be the last book in the series — how do you think you tied things up?

LG: When I started to write the “Magician” series, I was in a dark

place — struggling with depression and other issues — but that was 10 years ago and in some ways my life is so much better than it was. I think one of the challenges for me was that in some ways it is easy to write characters that are tortured and filled with angst, but what you don’t see in fiction is happy magicians, magicians who got to a place where they feel good about their lives and feel like they are doing something satisfying.

DTH: The Science Fiction Channel announced they’ll be running a pilot episode adaptation of the “Magicians” series. Are you nervous to see what they’ll do with your work?

LG: Yeah, I’m nervous. Novelists are used to doing everything themselves. When you write your book, you don’t have anyone else come back and do all the costumes. You design all the costumes yourself — you do all the line readings, and you do the sets, the camera angles. It is not a collaborative occupation,

ATTEND THE TALK

Time: 7:00 p.m. tonight
Location: Flyleaf Books
Info: www.flyleafbooks.com

so giving up control of five years to someone else, yeah it makes me nervous. The people who are doing it, though, are people who I actively wanted to work with.

DTH: How is your routine as journalist different from that of a novelist?

LG: Journalism is reliable and satisfying — it’s like making a chair. You know how to make a chair, you get the stuff, you measure everything, and you nail it together. It’s hard, but you know how it’s going to go and it’s satisfying. Fiction is much more like, when it’s good it’s great and when it’s bad, it’s terrible. There is also a certain amount of confusion along the way.

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COURTESY OF MATHIEU BOURGOIS
Lev Grossman will hold a discussion for his novel “The Magician’s Land” tonight at Flyleaf Books in Chapel Hill.

A NEW CHAPTER



DTH/MITALI SAMANT
Martha Pentecost is a volunteer, co-manager and events coordinator at Internationalist Books. The business is moving to a new location in Carrboro.

Internationalist Bookstore turns page in Carrboro

By Patrick Millett
Staff Writer

A longtime hub for political and philosophical thought in Chapel Hill, non-profit Internationalist Bookstore and Community Center is moving to Carrboro after almost two decades at the store’s Franklin Street location. Friday will kick off 30 days of fundraising events to finance the move on Sept. 28. The event schedule includes a bike-in movie night at the store’s new location at 101 Lloyd St. Friday, brunch at Vimala’s Curryblossom Cafe and a fancier \$50 dinner. Internationalist Books co-manager Martha Pentecost is excited for the move. She said there will be more space for bookshelves and seating.

The store hosts several organized events each week. “We want to be the best resource center for people who are looking for alternatives,” Pentecost said. “The layout feels very welcoming.” The staff of Internationalist Books hopes to raise \$15,500 to finance the move. The money will go toward covering the rent of both spaces until the store’s Franklin Street lease ends. Funds will also be used to purchase furniture and cover light construction costs for the new space. “We also want to bring in a lot of new inventory,” Pentecost said. “Spruce up the shop in that way.” The UNControllables, a student anarchist group, holds meetings at Internationalist

Books. Pentecost said the group is welcome to continue to meet in the new location. “They don’t have regular meetings here, but we are certainly connected to them,” she said. “We support them and they support us.” The Internationalist Bookstore was founded in 1981 by community activist Bob Sheldon and moved to its current location in 1995. Durham resident Loftin Wilson, who first came to Internationalist Books in the mid-1990s, is also looking forward to the move. “I haven’t been to the new space yet, but I know where it is,” she said. “I think it’ll be a good space for them.”

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Coal ash bill passes at end of NC session

It would set a timeline for Duke Energy to clean up their sites.

By Sharon Nunn
Assistant State & National Editor

Right before adjourning their short session, state legislators passed a bill Aug. 20 addressing coal ash regulations for energy companies — but environmental groups worry it doesn’t do enough. The new legislation, the first of its kind in North Carolina, comes six months after Duke Energy’s coal ash spill, which caused thousands of tons of coal to leak into the Dan River. If Gov. Pat McCrory signs the bill into law, it would become illegal to dispose of coal ash in ponds. The disposal of coal ash isn’t heavily regulated by the state. Companies would have a timeline for getting rid of coal ash in the state’s wet impoundments and closing them. Some environmental organizations say the bill is not a solution. “It’s a shame that communities aren’t going to have the coal ash removed from their waterways or water supply immediately,” said Dustin Chicurel-Bayard, spokesman for the Sierra Club. Steve Wall, policy research associate at UNC’s Institute for the Environment, said the bill does not address the cost of cleaning up the coal ash. “Who’s going to pay for the closures?” Wall said. “Do people paying energy bills pay it, or does Duke Energy pay for it?”

The bill requires owners of coal ash residual impoundments to give the state a proposed plan for closing the impoundments during the next 15 years. High-risk impoundments must be closed by the end of 2019, intermediate sites by the end of 2024 and low-risk impoundments by 2029. Lawmakers grappled with competing bills this summer, coming to a compromise more than six months after a pipeline break that released several thousand tons of coal ash into the Dan River. “The entire river to Danville was gray, just like the color out of a crayon box,” Amy Adams, N.C. coordinator for Appalachian Voices, said. “Ash gray.” Sierra Club released a statement Aug. 20, saying the legislation undermines a March court ruling that required immediate cleanup of coal ash. The court ruling had required Duke Energy to take immediate action to stop the coal ash leaking and make a plan to clean up contaminated sites. “They undermined the judge for industry. In a lot of ways, this is a bill that helped Duke (Energy) out,” Adams said.

The bill also creates stricter standards for monitoring and containing coal ash. Chicurel-Bayard said the fact that coal ash will be regulated under solid waste management laws was a positive, even though the bill undermined the recent court case. “Your household garbage was managed more carefully than coal ash,” Chicurel-Bayard said. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is in the process of implementing its own national coal ash standards, Wall said, which should be passed in 2015 and would trump the state’s rules. “The big question becomes, is this bill going to address long-term coal ash problems in North Carolina?” Wall said. Adams said she’s concerned because the coal ash has already contaminated groundwater supplies. “There are communities at risk. Every one of these (coal ash sites) are contaminating ground water,” Adams said. “There are people’s lives at risk.”

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DTH ONLINE: To view an interactive timeline about the Duke Energy coal ash spill, visit dailytarheel.com

State GDP growth bodes well for hiring

UNC professors are optimistic about jobs for graduates.

By Paul Kushner
Staff Writer

North Carolina has continued to climb out of the recession in the past year, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce — a hopeful sign for students that the job market is becoming increasingly viable. The state announced a 4.1 percent gross domestic product growth in the final quarter of 2013, a rate higher than the national average, according to data released Aug. 20. The growth is a good sign for hiring.

“We have definitely seen a strong increase in the recruiting activities of employers here on campus,” said Jeff Sackaroff, associate director of UNC Career Services, in an email. He said employer registration for the Fall Job/Internship Expo is up 25 percent since 2010. The Sept. 11 event already has 124 employers set to attend. Boone Turchi, associate professor of economics, said he thinks the economy is strong enough to support seniors searching for jobs rather than immediately entering graduate programs. “From an educational and professional point of view, (forgoing graduate school) makes sense,” he said. “I recommend getting your admission and taking a year off to go do something different.”

Sackaroff said his office does not encourage students to consider graduate school to avoid a challenging job market. But for students looking for jobs right after graduation, he added that there is a strong market in N.C. and nationwide. UNC freshman Bill Wang, an economics major, said he is enthusiastic about the direction in which the state’s economy is heading. He said he sees a lot of relevant career opportunities, particularly in the Raleigh-Durham and Charlotte areas. “This increases my optimism and increases the chances that I’m going to stay in the state upon graduation,” he said. North Carolina’s unemployment rate, which has been on the decline since 2010, was 6.5

percent in July. Turchi said total employment has not yet rebounded to pre-recession levels, and the unemployment rate can be misleading because many North Carolinians have left the workforce after being unable to find a job. Still, Turchi said the state’s economic trends are encouraging. Sackaroff said UNC students looking to stay in the state are fortunate because North Carolina’s job market is so diverse. “We see students pursue careers in biotech, IT, medical, operations, finance/banking, non-profits, consulting, marketing,” he said. “All of these areas, and many others, continue to provide opportunities for new graduates.”

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