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A Tribute to/Hommage à



Alison Scott-Prelorentzos, Professor Emerita, University of Alberta, presented on October 19, 1998 by Professor Christa Fell of Queen's University at the banquet of the twenty-fourth meeting of The Canadian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies/Société canadienne d'étude du dix-huitième siècle.

Chers dix-huitiémistes, dear Colleagues and Friends,

At this year's conference we are honouring a member of our society. It is my pleasure to introduce Alison Scott-Prelorentzos, Professor Emerita de l'Université d'Alberta, une amie d'un grand nombre d'entre nous qui a assisté à beaucoup de congrès de notre société. It is also my privilege to tell you briefly about the vital role she has played in our society. When I was asked from among all her many friends to give this presentation, I myself felt honoured. In a moment you will see there is a special connection between us.

Alison was born in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England. She received an Honours BA in German from St. Hilda's College, Oxford. A scholarship took her to the University of Tübingen for a year. She later graduated with a MLitt from the University of Oxford, her thesis entitled 'The

Reception of Shakespeare in Germany from Johann Elias Schlegel to the Schlegel Brothers.' I give the title in full because it is a sign of Alison's future. Her titles 'sprechen Bände' as one says in German — they speak volumes. The one just given signals not only her devotion to the 'long' Eighteenth Century but her lifelong penchant for crossing physical and intellectual borders. Reception studies did not come into vogue until the sixties when inter-disciplinary concepts began to be explored. As one of Alison's friends puts it: she was 'by her ability and diplomacy a quiet trail-blazer.'

To no one's surprise, Alison crossed another border in 1953 when she came to Canada, more specifically, to the Department of German at Queen's University where she graduated in the record time of two years as the Department's first PhD with a thesis entitled: 'Friedrich Schlegel's Literary Notebooks (1797-1801): A Study in the Genesis of Romanticism.' She had been awarded Queen's prestigious Samuel McLaughlin Graduate Teaching Fellowship, at a time when scholarships were scarce.

In 1954 she received the Prize of the English Goethe Society — quite an accomplishment for a young scholar. After four years holding teaching positions in the Departments of German at Queen's and at the University of British Columbia, Alison settled here in Edmonton as an assistant professor in the Department of Modern Languages, where she served for the next 26 years as teacher, scholar, and administrator, rising through the ranks to full professor. She decided to take early retirement in 1985 to make room for younger colleagues. This was a landmark decision. Alison has maintained her tireless schedule of activities, her scholarly interests, and her community commitments.

There was another important border-crossing in her life, which is mirrored in her name: Scott-Prelorentzos. We all enjoyed Salvos, who became part of eighteenth-century Studies at CSECS, ASECS and ISECS conferences. We miss him, too.

Alison's devotion to the Eighteenth Century is manifested in her scholarship as well as in her administrative work. I would like to quote again from an e-mail I received: 'Alison has for four decades been a luminary of the German Enlightenment for her students and colleagues at home and abroad. There is something about Eighteenth-Century studies that engenders a quiet confidence in mankind to overcome its problems and to pursue a reasonable and humane path of progress. Alison exemplifies this by radiating a cheerful calmness as she continues her research and interacts helpfully with others. She has been a tower of strength in her learned societies both on the podium and in the committee room, and we have all been enriched by her insights and dedicated service.' These words, coming from a colleague outside the eighteenth-century circle, truly reflect the Alison we all know.

Elle s'est distinguée par une série de textes remarquables sur le concept d'égalité auquel elle attache une grande importance au XXIème comme au XVIIIème siècle dans tous les domaines de la vie et de la pensée. Servants, Jews, and religious issues figured prominently in her research, before they became common subjects of study.

Alison has served in different capacities in ASECS, was on the executive of ISECS, and, above all, has been a loyal member of CSECS. She always had a strong voice in our organization and has not distanced herself from CSECS in the years following retirement. This says a great deal about her.

In our society's history, she played a key role. She was one of the founding members and has filled a variety of executive positions over the years. But we owe her a special debt. Let me tell you of an event I witnessed in 1992 at our conference in St. John's during the general meeting:

You might recall that the present name of our journal, *Lumen*, does not date back far. Its former name, *Man and Nature*, was an appropriate title for a publication on the Eighteenth Century but in an era of political correctness it was criticised. For some years, the issue was debated, but none of the proposed suggestions had the same ring to it as *Man and Nature*. In 1992, it was decided to change the name. Pros and cons regarding proposed names flew back and forth. Nothing seemed satisfactory. I was sitting next to Alison in the meeting. All of a sudden she put up her hand and said: 'How about *Lumen*,' — followed by silence. The rest is history. We have all adapted to *Lumen*, thanks to Alison, who thus shaped our image.

Expressing our continuing gratitude and esteem, Alison, in this year's conference we dedicated two panels on German Literature to you; and as a sign of its appreciation of you as the first PhD graduate in German Language and Literature, with whom the eighteenth-century spirit started in the Department and has since flourished, Queen's Graduate School contributed financial support to three students from the German Department to present papers in the colloquia in your honour.

For your commitment to our society, your genial collegiality and warm friendship which many of us have enjoyed over the years, we thank you, alles Gute und weiterhin viel Glück. We hope to see you for many years to come at annual meetings.