In Memoriam: Mary Murphy Schmelzer, PhD

Mary Schmelzer at the opening reception for the 17th triennial ISST conference, held at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, California, June 23–29, 2019

We mourn the loss of our dear friend and colleague Mary Schmelzer, who passed away on August 13, 2023. For over 20 years, Mary was a vital contributor to the International Society for the Study of Time, and her tireless work on the society’s behalf has helped ensure its continuing success.

Mary was born in 1940 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She earned a bachelor’s degree from Immaculata College, a Master’s degree from John Carroll University, and a PhD from Temple University. Among her publications is the compelling monograph ‘Tis All One: “The Anatomy of Melancholy” as Belated Copious Discourse, which, with its focus on Robert Burton’s use of copious discourse in the Anatomy, “seeks to understand the epistemological shift to the empirical validation of truth that characterized the intellectual climate in Western Europe at the beginning of the seventeenth century.”

I first met Mary at Saint Joseph’s University in Philadelphia, where she taught for many years as a professor of English. From the start, I was impressed by her intellectual depth and breadth. Mary was a gifted teacher, able to meet
students at their level, whether explaining how to read *Pride and Prejudice* to a struggling first-year student or how to make sense of obscure poststructuralist theoretical concepts to her colleagues. Beloved by her students and respected by her colleagues, she won a well deserved Faculty Merit Award for Teaching. Mary also served as Gender Studies Director at Saint Joseph's and the Saint Joseph's representative to the Greater Philadelphia Women's Studies Consortium. Mary truly embodied the Saint Joseph's value of *cura personalis* (care of the person), and she made Saint Joe's a better place.

Mary's involvement with the International Society for the Study of Time began in 2001 when she presented the talk “The Tyranny of Temporality: Edmund Spenser, Desire and the Already Written Text” at the 11th Triennial Conference at the Castello di Gargonza in Italy. (Her husband Dr. John Schmelzer also became an ISST convert at this time. Although he had planned on sight-seeing while Mary was conferencing, after hearing one talk, he was hooked and ended up attending every conference session.) From that time, Mary became an active member of the ISST, presenting at each triennial conference that followed. Her brilliant essay “Furnishing the Memory Palace: Renaissance Mnemonic Practice and the Time of Memory,” an extended version of a talk that she had given at the 12th triennial conference at Cambridge University, appeared in *Time and Memory: The Study of Time* XI. Mary was the primary organizer of the 14th triennial conference, held in Monteverde, Costa Rica, the first (and, so far, only) meeting of the ISST in Central America. Her duties at that time increased dramatically when, on the day before the conference concluded, a storm washed out a main road, and Mary spent hours arranging alternative transportation for nearly 100 conference-goers, maintaining her usual aplomb all the while. In 2005, Mary and John generously volunteered to host the annual ISST council meetings at their home in Strathmere, New Jersey, a custom that continued for over a decade. During meeting weekends, council members spent the days working industriously on ISST business at the long table overlooking the Back Bay before gathering in the evenings under the gazebo for bountiful repasts. As a council member, Mary joined her colleagues at the work table but, she also, in the words of former ISST executive secretary Tom Weissert, took on the job of “the hostess with the mostest,” ensuring that Council members were excellently fed and comfortably lodged. (More than one member has spoken longingly of her fabulous crab cakes.) For many years, Mary served as the copy editor for *KronoScope*. From 2007 to 2013, she also served as the editor of *Time's News*, the ISST newsletter. Her informative, often witty editor's columns were a highlight of each issue. In her final editor's column, she eloquently evoked the philosophy of the society, a philosophy that she embraced:
My mind has been turning on the notion of a society, especially as Julius Fraser encouraged us to understand it. More than, and different from an association, it evokes in its etymology a working together in collegial good faith and conviviality. Our commitment to reach across unfamiliar disciplines and languages to speak to our colleagues in ways that demand intellectual attention delineates the international academic society that is the crucial center of the ISST.

Mary is survived by her beloved and loving family – husband John, son Michael and his wife Elizabeth, daughter Meghan (Maggy) Caruso and her husband David, and her grandchildren Mallory Schmelzer and Sophia, Anna, and Benito Caruso. She will be deeply missed.

To read Mary’s obituary, please visit the following link: https://www.radzieta.com/obituaries/Mary-M-Schmelzer?obId=28699498

Jo Alyson Parker