

Scott Elledge

January 9, 1914 — December 23, 1997

Scott Elledge, a distinguished scholar, a graceful stylist, and a kindly presence died at the Cayuga Medical Center in Ithaca Tuesday afternoon, December 23 at the age of 83. He was Goldwin Smith Professor of English Literature at Cornell, a university with which he had a long association. Following his undergraduate education at Oberlin College, he came to Cornell for graduate studies, receiving his M.A. degree in 1936 and his Ph.D. degree in 1941. After serving as Instructor in English at Harvard, he was appointed in 1947 as an Associate Professor of English at Carleton College, becoming a full Professor and Chair of the Department in 1951, positions he held until his return to Cornell in 1962. He retired from Cornell in 1984.

To the general public, he is best known for two books published in his later years. One of them is a biography of another Cornell alumnus—the essayist and *New Yorker* staff member, E. B. White—whose writing had long attracted him. *E.B. White: A Biography*, was published in 1984, the year Elledge became an Emeritus Professor. In the foreword to that book, Elledge remarks that in writing his biography he was following the advice—“to please and satisfy” himself—that White gives to all prospective writers in his *The Elements of Style*; Elledge achieved the clarity and unassuming grace that marks the style of his subject. The other book, *Wider than the Sky* (1990), is a collection of poetry for children that he edited, an anthology praised for the editor’s ability to choose poems that, while appealing to the young, were rewarding to readers of any age.

Elledge’s earlier writing was largely devoted to seventeenth and eighteenth century literature. In addition to many articles, he wrote two books on Milton, the first on *Lycidas* (1965) and the second on *Paradise Lost* (1975). He was co-editor of *The Continental Model: Selected French Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century* (1960) and editor of the two-volume *Eighteenth-Century Critical Essays* (1961). He also edited the highly regarded Norton Critical Edition of Thomas Hardy’s, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* (1965), as well as the revised editions that have kept its scholarship current.

Interested throughout his professional career in matters pertaining to education, he was associated in many capacities from 1941-68 with the College Entrance Examination Board, and served from 1964-67 as a member of the commission on the English curriculum for the National Council of Teachers of English. From 1964-66, he was a member of the supervising committee of the English Institute, becoming its chair in 1966. On a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, he was Visiting Professor in 1969-70 at Thannasat University in Bangkok, Thailand,

and returned to Carleton College in 1976 as Benedict Distinguished Visiting Professor. In the year following his retirement, he was appointed Visiting Professor at Williams College.

Elledge's relationship with the Salzburg Seminar in Austria began early in his career as educator and provides a remarkably fitting closure to it. Following the end of World War II, Elledge, then a young instructor at Harvard, and two Harvard students—augmented by the fortuitous circumstance that gave them the use of a war-ravaged Salzburg castle—gathered enough financial support to institute a “center in which young Europeans from all countries, and of all political convictions” could come together to foster the spiritual and intellectual healing that Elledge and his companions felt to be at least as important as the rebuilding of the physical structures damaged by the war. From the beginning, the Salzburg Seminar flourished, attracting as lecturers eminent cultural and intellectual figures from Europe and America; Elledge himself was brought back as lecturer in 1953. As part of the celebration of its fiftieth anniversary, the Salzburg Seminar invited Elledge to return once more. It was here that Elledge gave his final public address. As part of its anniversary celebration, the institution published a book, *The Salzburg Seminar: The First Fifty Years*, dedicating it to Elledge and the other two founders.

The generous impulses that led Elledge and his two companions to undertake that successful enterprise in open dialogue among individuals of diverse national groups can be found within all aspects of his life. *E.B. White: A Biography*, his last major work, is dedicated to his wife, Liane; they were married in 1950. The epigraph from Henry David Thoreau that Elledge chose for the biography can be applied to him as well as the subject of his book: “All that a man has to say or do that can possibly concern mankind, is in some shape or other to tell the story of his love--to sing; and, if he is fortunate and keeps alive, he will be forever in love.”

In addition to Liane, Scott Elledge is survived by two brothers: Daniel Elledge, of Naples, Florida, and Richard Reese Elledge, of Chicago; and two sisters: Mrs. Bonnie Baxter, of Gainesville, Florida, and Mrs. Eva Kathryn Shepard, of Saxton River, Vermont.

M.H. Abrams, Stephen Parrish, James McConkey