

Hena Maes-Jelinek, Pierre Michel & Paulette Michel-Michot, "Foreword", in *Multiple Worlds, Multiple Words: Essays in Honour of Irène Simon*, ed. Hena Maes-Jelinek, Pierre Michel & Paulette Michel-Michot (Liège: English Department, University of Liège, 1987), pp. ix-x.

Foreword

The publication of a volume of this kind usually marks a special occasion: a retirement or an anniversary. This *festschrift* is simply intended to honour Irène Simon. During a creative academic career that spanned over thirty years, she stimulated and influenced countless students, colleagues, associates and friends, some of whom raise their voices here in tribute and offer her this collection as a token of affection, admiration and respect for a person and a scholar who in her professional and everyday life so happily harmonizes "the clearest head and the sincerest heart."

The essays collected here are not arranged around a theme or a period, nor do they focus solely on literature; they also include essays on linguistics and the history of ideas. Their great variety reflects the diversity and dimension of Irène Simon's world, or worlds. The volume honours the many intellectual spheres in which she is equally, and formidably, exceptional.

Although her personal inclination drew her towards the eighteenth century, her international reputation rests on her achievement in all areas of modern English literature. But the vast range of her interests and her scholarly expertise are not confined to English literature only, which she taught throughout her academic career. For a long time she also taught the English language and American literature and always encouraged her students to investigate new fields of research. No wonder then that her students fanned out in all directions and now teach and do research in all the literatures written in English and in the most advanced areas of linguistics. The many vocations she awakened testify to her own intellectual curiosity and open-mindedness; it is owing to her foresight and under her guidance that the University of Liège has been able to develop the whole spectrum of modern English studies in its English Department.

Irène Simon taught at other universities too, mostly abroad. She held the Belgian Chair at the University of London (King's College) in 1961-62 and the Chaire Francqui at the University of Ghent in 1976-77. She was a Visiting Professor at the Universities of Gronigen, Oslo, Bergen, Nottingham, London (University College), Leeds, Sheffield, Poznan, Cracow, and Caen. She was a Fulbright Research Scholar at the Universities of Indiana (Bloomington) and

California (Berkeley) in 1954. In 1980 she received an honorary degree from the University of Stirling and was awarded the Order of the British Empire.

This skeletal outline of Irène Simon's career hardly does justice to her life and works. She exists in her publications as well: her books and articles prove that deeply perceptive, stimulating statements about literature can be made with vitality, simplicity and sensitivity. Her conception of literature is a humanistic one. She never sees it as dissociated from real life but combines in her approach attentiveness to moral significance—a major feature of the English tradition—and to form. The person and the scholar always go together in her writings, the former's infallible commonsense and finely tuned aesthetic judgment contemplating passing fads with what she likes to refer to as "English pragmatism," the scholar's rigour and erudition never spoiling the charm of the person. To her students and colleagues she was a model of unflagging energy and was always receptive to new experiences and ideas—working with her often became an enlightening process of self-discovery—but they also learned from her that new ideas were never to be accepted for the sole sake of being new and always had to stand the test of verification, intelligibility and good taste.

The editors want to thank all the contributors whose generosity, dedication and graciousness aided considerably in the growth of this *festschrift* from proposal in 1986 to publication. They are indebted, in the University of Liège, to the Direction des Relations extérieures for its contribution to the printing of this volume and to the Centre Informatique de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres for its technical assistance and generous cooperation. In a development that Irène Simon might not have thought of, but which was certainly in line with her constant urging to explore new directions, two of the editors became amateur Gutenbergs to produce the present volume.

Liège, January 1988.