Multiple Worlds, Multiple Words

Essays in Honour of

Irène Simon
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Irène Simon

Edited by
Heba Maes-Jelinek
Pierre Michel
Paulette Michel-Michot

Université de Liège
U.D. GERMANIQUE

English Department
University of Liège
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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 formidable, 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 Groningen, 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 Gutenbergers to produce the present volume.


Irène Simon
A Checklist of Publications

Books

Dorothy M. Richardson. Bruxelles, Didier (Série Langues Vivantes, No. 21), 1949, 24 pp.

Formes du roman anglais de Dickens à Joyce. Liège, Université de Liège (Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres, Fasc. CXVIII), 1949, 463 pp.


Articles and Essays


"Chronique des Lettres Anglaises," Revue des Langues Vivantes, 1939, No. 3; 1940, No. 2 & No. 6; 1941, No. 2 & No. 3; 1946, No. 6; 1947, No. 1, No. 2 & No. 3; 1948, No. 1, No. 2, No. 3, No. 5 & No. 6.


A Checklist of Publications


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Contribution to Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature, 1957–1968.


“Frustration as Theme and as Narrative Device in Tristram Shandy, Jacques le Fataliste, and La Disparition,” Revue Belge de Philologie et d’Histoire, LXIII, 1985, 504–12.


“De foe mémorialiste,” Abstract of a paper read at the 27th Conference of S.A.E.S. (Bordeaux, 1987), to be published in Actes du Congrès.

Tabula Gratulatoria

Raymond Alexis, Université de Liège (Hon.)
Edgar André, Ecole d’Interprètes Internationaux, Mons
Viviane Bessem, Grâce-Hollogne
Gina Bet, Ougrée
Emile Betz, Université de Liège (Emer.)
Nadine Bignos-Belleflamme, ECOSA (Liège)
René Blaise, Ecole Normale de l’Etat (Virton)
Arthur Bodson, Recteur, Université de Liège
Armand Boileau, Université de Liège (Emer.)
Jean Bovy, Polleur
Malcolm Bradbury, University of East Anglia
Huguette Breny, Metzert
J. Clarembeaux-Crespin, Liège
Denis J. Conlon, UFSIA (Antwerp)
Tony Coopman, Leuven
Rudy Coppiters, Provinciaal Hogeschool voor Vertalers en Tolken, Gent
Agnès Corbisier, Lillois
B. Corhay-Ledent, Cambridge
Fernand Corin, Université Catholique de Louvain
Jean-Louis Cupers, Facultés Universitaires St. Louis, Bruxelles; HEC, Liège
Pierre Danchin, Université de Nancy (Emer.)
Simone David-Constant, Université de Liège (Emer.)
Solange Dayras, Université Paris-Nord
Gilbert Debusscher, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Vrije Universiteit Brussel
Dorothy Deflandre, Former Executive Director of the Commission for Educational Exchange between the United States, Belgium and Luxembourg
Marie-Claire Defossé-Henry, Esneux
Fernand G. Dekegeleer, Institut Supérieur de l'Etat de Traducteurs et d'Interprètes, Bruxelles
Jeanne Deblaere, Université Libre de Bruxelles
Paul Delbouille, Université de Liège
Robert Demoulin, Université de Liège (Emer.)
René Deroze, Rijksuniversiteit te Gent (Emer.)
M. Derwa, Liège
Claude Desama, Université de Liège
Jean-Marie D'Heur, Université de Liège
Jean-Dierickx, Université Libre de Bruxelles (Emer.)
Juliette Dor, Université de Liège
Ronald Drafier, University of Aberdeen
Sandra Dumonceau, Gosselies
Joris Duyschaever, Universitaire Instelling Antwerpen
Micheline Edwards, Sittingbourne
Robert Ellrodt, Sorbonne Nouvelle
Yvette Eliot, Rocourt
Maurice Engelborghs, Facultés Universitaires St. Louis, Bruxelles
Willi Erzgrabner, Universität Freiburg
Etienne Eyrard, Université de Liège (Emer.)
Jean Finck, Université de Liège
Marie-Claire Flamée, Université de Liège
Thierry Fontenelle, Université de Liège
F. A. Fraipont, Tiff
A. M. Garcel-Paris, Bruxelles
Jacqueline Genet, Université de Caen
Albert Gérald, Université de Liège (Emer.)
Louis Gillet, Doyen, Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres, Université de Liège
Paul Gochet, Université de Liège
Herbert Grabes, Justus-Liebig-Universität, Giessen
Suzanne Hagemann-Augarde, Spa
Louise Hagiage, Paris

Ch. Hyart, Université de Liège (Emer.)
Patricia Jacobs, Meyerode
Arlette Jacquemotte, Aulier-Xhendremael
A. Norman Jefferis, University of Stirling (Emer.)
Jean-François Kaisin, Alleur
Michel Kefer, Université de Liège
René Kerf, Institut Supérieur de l'Etat de Traducteurs et d'Interprètes, Bruxelles
I. J. Kirby, Université de Lausanne
Jules Labarbe, Université de Liège (Emer.)
Léon Lacroix, Université de Liège (Emer.)
Guy Laprevotte, Université de Strasbourg
Marlyse La Roché-Koiler, Ecole Normale de l'Etat, Arlon-Virton
Roger Lefosne, Université d'Amiens
Marie-Claude Léonard, Mons
Robert Léron, Université de Liège
Hélène Létargez, Institut Supérieur de l'Etat de Traducteurs et d'Interprètes, Bruxelles
Suzanne Linsmaux-Orban, Nivelles
Hena Maes-Jelinek, Université de Liège
Lilian Magy, Beauvais
Alan McLeod, Rider College, U.S.A.
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Jean Mertens, Institut Supérieur Industriel Huy, Gembloux, Verviers
Pierre Michel, Université de Liège
Paulette Michel-Michot, Université de Liège
Sylvère Monod, Sorbonne Nouvelle (Emer.)
Joseph Moors, Université de Liège (Emer.)
David R. Morris, Ecole d'Interprètes Internationaux, Mons
André Motte, Université de Liège
Jean Nieulandt, Institut Supérieur de l'Etat de Traducteurs et d'Interprètes, Bruxelles
Jacques C.J. Nioull, Université de Liège
Armand NIVELLE, Université de Liège (Emer.); Université des Saarlandes
Jacques NOËL, Université de Liège
Mary A. O’CONNOR, University of California, Davis (Hon.)
J. ORBAK-ENGLEBERT, Liège
Christine PAGNOUILLE, Université de Liège
Annette PAGNOUILLE-GÉRARD, Heusy-Verviers
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Albert PVOET, Université de Toulouse
Jean QUENON, Université de Liège
Sir Randoph QUIRK, The British Academy
A. ROUSSELLE, Angleur
Anna RUTHERFORD, University of Aarhus
Mathieu RUTTEN, Université de Liège (†)
Camille SCHMIT, Angleur
Jean SCHOOLBROODT, Liège
Willem SCHICKX, Rijksuniversiteit te Gent (Emer.)
Herman SERVOTTE, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
Kristian SMIDT, University of Oslo (Emer.)
Bertil SUNDBY, University of Bergen, Norway
James SUTHERLAND, University of London (University College) (Emer.)
Yvette THEATE-PIERRE, St.-Séverin
Claude THIRY, Université de Liège
Jean TROMMER, Embrun
F.C. TRUFFAUT, Liège
Madeleine TYSSENS, Université de Liège
M.-J. UBBIALI, IPEPS Seraing
Antonin VAN ELSLANDER, Gent
J. P. VAN NOPPEN, Université Libre de Bruxelles
Jacques VAN ROEY, Université Catholique de Louvain
J. P. VANDERMOTTEN, Rijksuniversiteit te Gent
Michel VANDERSMISSEN, Rocourt

Kristina VERSLUYS, Rijksuniversiteit te Gent
Joseph VROMANS, Université de Liège
Paul WATHELET, Université de Liège
Horst WEINSTECK, Technische Hochschule, Aachen
Dina & Jean WEISGERBER, Université Libre de Bruxelles
C. H. WHISTLER, Eastry, Kent
R. W. ZANDVOORT, Universiteit Groningen (Emer.)

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UNIVERSITÄT FREIBURG
UNIVERSITÄT MÜNCHEN
UNIVERSITAT MÜNSTER, Englisches Seminar
UNIVERSITÉ DE LIÈGE, Philologie Germanique
THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE
THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, Berkeley
Contributors

A. Norman Jeffares was Jury Professor of English literature at the University of Adelaide, Professor at the University of Leeds and the University of Stirling from which he retired in 1987. He was the founding chairman of the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies. He founded Ariel (A Review of International English Literature), The Journal of Commonwealth Literature and the York Notes Series. He has published extensively on Anglo-Irish literature, particularly on W.B. Yeats: W.B. Yeats, Man and Poet (1949); In Excited Reverie (1965); A Commentary on the Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats (1968); W.B. Yeats, The Critical Heritage (ed., 1977). He has also edited Restoration Comedy (4 vols., The Folio Press, 1974). He now writes mainly poetry and has published two collections Brought up in Dublin and Brought up to Leave. An Irish Childhood came out recently and he is now working on a new biography of Yeats. He is president of P.E.N. Scotland and Chairman of Arts and Letters in the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

Malcolm Bradbury is Professor of American Studies at the University of East Anglia. He is also a novelist who has written Biting People is Wrong, Stepping Westward, Who Do You Think You are? (short stories), The History Man and Rates of Exchange. His critical works include The Social Context of English Literature, Possibilities, Essays on the State of the Novel, Modernism (ed.), The Novel Today (ed.), The Contemporary English Novel (ed.), The Modern American Novel and the recent No, Not Bloomsbury.

Fernand Corin is Professor of modern English literature at the Université Catholique de Louvain. He has published articles on English and American literature.


Jeanne Delbaere-Garant is Professor of English literature at the Free University of Brussels. She is a former student of Irène Simon under whose supervision

René L.M. Deboeck is Emeritus Professor of the University of Ghent. He has studied at Harvard and Ghent, where he started his academic career in 1948 and was Professor of English and Old Germanic Languages from 1959 to 1986. He was Visiting Professor at the University of Geneva in 1974 and the University of Bern in 1987, and he held the Franschi Chair at the University of Liège in 1975. He is a member of the Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België; Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy; member and former President of the Koninklijke Zuidnederlandse Maatschappij voor Duitse Letterkunde en Geschiedenis, of the Belgische Kring voor Linguistiek and of the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists. He was Convenor of the International Conference on Anglo-Saxon Glossography (1986) and of the Colloquium Ars Grammatica (1987). He is now Associate editor and editor of Studia Germanica Gandensi, and of English Studies (1969-79). He is the author of books and articles on runology, Old and Middle English, Germanic religion.

Jean Dierickx is Emeritus Professor, Université Libre de Bruxelles. Formerly with the department of English language, he retired in 1985 with a doctoral dissertation on "The Theatre of T.S. Eliot" (shortened French version published 1960). Later contributions on English grammar and general linguistics (editor of two volumes and author of several papers): translation studies (several papers) and varieties of English (two volumes on the English of journalism and several papers). Other papers on various subjects. Also interested in the problems of the diffusion of science to the general public, and former president of l"Extension de l'Université" (Board of extra-mural studies).


Ronald P. Draper is Regius Chalmers Professor of English and Head of the Department of English Language and Literature, University of Aberdeen. His publications include D.H. Lawrence (Twayne, 1964); D.H. Lawrence, The Critical Heritage (ed.) (Routledge, 1970); Hardy, The Tragic Novels (ed.) (Macmillan, 1975); George Eliot, "The Mill on the Floss" and "Silas Marner" (ed.) (Macmillan, 1975); Tragedy: Developments in Criticism (ed.) (Macmillan, 1980);


Robert Ellwood (b. 1922) taught at the universities of Poitiers, Algiers and Toulouse before becoming Professor at the Sorbonne in 1961. In 1968 he joined the newly University of Nice and was Dean of the Faculty of Letters. He returned to the Sorbonne Nouvelle (Paris III) in 1975 and was elected President of the University in 1986. He is honorary president of the Société des Anglisterres de l'enseignement supérieur. Besides Les poètes métaphysiques anglais (Corti, 1960, 1973) and Neo-platonism in the Poetry of Spencer (Droz, 1969), he has published many essays, notably in the Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies (1986), Genèse de la conscience moderne (PUF, 1983) and L'Age d'Or—Apocalypse (Pub. Sorbonne, 1986).


Jacqueline Greuet Agrégée d'anglais, Docteur-ès-Lettres, Vice-President of the International Association for the Study of Anglo-Irish Literature, President of Caen University. She has published a series of articles in French, Yeats' main prose works, of P. MacDonogh's poems, Murdoch's plays, Mary Lavin's stories, The Penguin Book of Irish Short Stories and a collection of essays on Blake by K. Raine. She is the author of Contemporary English Novelists, Yeats: Les fondements et l'évolution de la création poétique. She edited Le Cahier de l'Herme on Yeats, Collected Studies on Seamus Heaney and the journal Gaeliana. She has written articles on Blake, Yeats, Eliot, Auden, Joyce, Beckett, Murdoch, Heaney, K. Raine, etc.

Herbert Gräbes is Professor of English at the University of Giessen. He studied philosophy, English and German philology at the University of Cologne, where he received his Dr. Phil. for a dissertation on Nicolai Hartmann's epistemology. In 1969 he completed his Habilitation on the imagery of the mirror in English literature of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Since 1970 he has held the Chair for English and American literature at Giessen. He has published books and articles on literary theory, the English Renaissance, and 20th-century English and American literature, among them Speculum, Mirror and Looking

Guy L. LAPREVOTTE is Professor of English Literature at the University of Strasbourg. He is the author of Science et Poésie de Dryden à Pope (Lille: Université de Lille III; Paris: Honoré Champion, 1981) and of articles on 17th and 18th-century thought and literature. His current interests are in satire and political literature in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Hena MAAS-JELINEK is Professor of English and Commonwealth literature at the University of Liège. She has been Visiting Professor at the University of Abidjan (1978) and the University of Bremen (1979). Her books include Criticism of Society in the English Novel between the Wars (1970), The Naked Design (1976), Wilson Harris (1982), Heart of Darkness: A Critical Commentary (1982). She has also edited Commonwealth Literature and the Modern World (1975) and Explorations: A Selection of Talks and Articles by Wilson Harris (1981). Most of her articles are on the English and Commonwealth novel, mainly Australian, Caribbean and South African.

Paule MEERTENS-FONCK has held the Chair of Medieval English Language and Literature at the University of Liège for 18 years. Her publications include A Glossary of the Vepstanian Psalter and Hymns (Liège-Paris, 1960) and articles on historical linguistics dealing particularly with linguistic change in 9th-century Mercian. She has also published studies on Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and on the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales. She is engaged in research on Chaucer’s indebtedness to the Clerk-Knight debates in Latin, French and Anglo-Norman. She is president of the Liège Centre for Medieval Philology and corresponding member of the Academy of Messina. She is regularly invited as visiting professor to the Universities of Catania and Messina.

Pierre Michel is Professor of English and American literature at the University of Liège. He has also taught at the University of Illinois (Fulbright, 1961-62), the University of Antwerp (1973), and Kent State University (1971, 72, 73, 75, 76). He held an ACLS Research Fellowship in 1969-70 (Amherst College) and did research at the University of Virginia on a Fulbright Grant (1980). His publications include Cozens: An Annotated Checklist (1971), James Gould Cozens (1974), Mourning Becomes Electra: A Critical Commentary (1981), Henderson the Rain King: A Critical Commentary (1981), Sister Carrie: A Critical Commentary (1982), and articles on American literature (20th century) and American Studies, Bellamy, Philip Roth, Locke, Whitman, Hawthorne, Dickinson, and Faulkner. Editor of Revue des Langues Vivantes (1972-79); co-editor of the US bicentennial issue of Revue des Langues Vivantes on American literature (1978).

Pauletté MICHEL-MICHEOT is Chargé de Cours at the University of Liège where she teaches English literature. She is the author of William Samson: A Critical Assessment (1971) and of articles on novelists and short-story writers in English published mainly in Revue des Langues Vivantes, English Studies, Ariel, Studies in Short Fiction, La Nouvelle de Langue anglaise, Visions Critiques. Continental editor of Studies in Short Fiction and contributor to Annual Bibliography of

English Language and Literature (1968-87). She is currently working on a study of the short story in English.

Jacques Noël taught English language and linguistics at the Universities of Antwerp and Brussels, and has been, since 1975, head of the University of Liège's English Language department. His main fields of research are English grammar and lexicography, computational linguistics, machine translation and artificial intelligence. In 1986, he was appointed head of the Liège University research team which represents francophone Belgium in EURATOM, the EEC's machine translation project. Jacques Jensen has a degree in electronic engineering. A specialist in computer software, he has been working on dictionary databases with Professor Noël's research team for over five years. Archibald Michibuts was a British Council scholar and as such studied under Professor Randolph Quirk at University College, London (1974-75). In 1979 he became Assistant Lecturer in the University of Liège's English Language Department. In 1982 he took his Doctor's degree at the same University with a dissertation entitled "Exploiting a Large Dictionary Database." In 1983 he was appointed Chargé de Cours at the Institut Supérieur de Traducteurs et d'Interprètes en Bruxelles. He is also head of the Eurotra Dictionary Task Force. His main areas of research are lexicography, computational linguistics and artificial intelligence. André Moulin taught English in secondary schools for 10 years, he was appointed Assistant Lecturer at the University of Liège's Language Centre where he taught English to the Business School undergraduates. In 1984 he was appointed Senior Lecturer in the University's English Department. His doctorate (1973) was on "Humour in the novels of Evelyn Waugh." His main areas of current research are English grammar and lexicography, varieties of English, computational linguistics and machine translation.

Christine Pagnoule teaches contemporary English literature and translation at the University of Liège. Her publications include critical studies on Malcolm Lowry's Under the Volcano (Lausanne, L'Age d'Homme, 1977) and David Jones's poetic fragments (University of Wales Press, 1987) as well as translations of poetry. She is interested in the literatures evolving in countries which have had to recover or re-create their cultural identities, also in myth-making in 20th-century literature.

Anna Rutherford is Associate Professor and director of Commonwealth Studies at the University of Aarhus. She is the editor of Kunapiapi and on the editorial board of The Journal of Commonwealth Literature, World Literature Written in English, Ariel and Westery. She is the chairperson of the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies. She has founded and directs Dangarho Press. She has been Visiting Professor at the University of Zaria (Nigeria) and the University of Adelaide. Her publications include Commonwealth Short Stories (1971 & 1979), Common Wealth (1971), Enigma of Values and Countries & Kobos: The West African Oral Tale and Short Story, both with Kirsten Holst Petersen (1975 & 1981), Silas Marner: A Critical Commentary (1982), Middlemarch: A Critical Commentary (1984). She has also written numerous articles on Australian, African and Indian literature and on the post-colonial literatures generally.

HERMAN SERVOTTE. Professor of English Literature at the Katholieke Universiteit Louven. His doctoral dissertation on The Narrator in English Fiction was published in Dutch under the title De Verteller in de Engelse Roman (1965). In 1974 he published a translation and commentary in Dutch of T.S. Eliot's Four Quartets. Later publications include an essay on the growth of the English novel, De simulatoren (1981) and a methodological introduction to poetry, Language into Meaning (1980). He reviews English books for the leading Flemish newspaper De Standaard.


JAMES SUTHERLAND (b. 1960) graduated from the University of Aberdeen in 1921. After two years of university teaching in Canada, he proceeded to Merton College, Oxford, where he obtained his B.Litt. He then became a lecturer in English at Glasgow University. From 1930 until 1967 he taught at the University of London, and was successively Professor of English at Birkbeck College, Queen Mary College and University College. From 1957-62 he was Public Orator for the University. Among his publications are two books on Delos, A Preface to Eighteenth Century Poetry, English Satire, English Literature of the Late Seventeenth Century, and an edition of The Dunciad (for the "Twickenham" Pope). His most recent publication is The Restoration Newspaper and its Development (1986).