

'...by word or by figure'

Owen Dudley Edwards

Form may move from your mind to mine by word or by figure. (A myriad of alternatives swirl their chattering irrelevances around our heads: we will ignore them, knowing that they vanish in the dark.) We take word and figure to be allies in this business: show a child a picture of a pig and we take it to be well on the way to looking at the conjunction of p, i and g and recognising a similar result. (Those rebels to whom it means policemen, or those Muslims to whom it means President George W. Bush, complicate matters some but may with some difficulty be sidelined.) Yet how firm is the alliance? Can it be called a special relationship (and hence a debasement of one into servile status to the other)? Should it be termed more correctly an association (such as enabled Woodrow Wilson to go it alone on war aims, armistice, &c)? Are they in fact natural enemies?

Take word and figure as text and illustration. Age the child a little from pig letters and pictures. Seventy years ago a child's comic contained plenty of art-work, but as illustrations supporting say a lengthy narrative about good guys playing football for peanuts because they like it, and bad guys trying to debase the game into sordid financial profit. D. C. Thomson of Dundee pursued such themes in *Adventure*, *Rover*, *Wizard* and *Hotspur*; so did the Amalgamated Press in *Magnet*, *Gem* and *Modern Boy*. In theory the few pictures enabled the child to verify the images called into its mind by the text. In practice their support was uncertain.

Much depended on the artist seeing enough of the text or knowing enough of its content in advance, and caring enough about it to go beyond the perfunctory. Perhaps subtlety of portraiture was in no great demand in comics: the hero had to look heroic, the villain villainous, the heroine (not a very advisable point of emphasis except in girls' comics) either vulnerable or resolute, or maybe both ('I am deeply distressed by your implication, Mr Fitzfaggot', she said firmly, biting his —: no, 'shome mishtake here, as *Pig's Ear* likes to say). But most comics had their house 'tec — Dixon Hawke in *Adventure*, Colwyn Dane in *Champion*, Kenton Steele in *Knockout*, Nelson Lee and Sexton Blake in their own eponymous monthly or weekly 'libraries' — and a decent dissimulation to maintain suspense in choice of suspects meant that physiognomy wrecked the story if given its head. If we don't know who the baddy is, the baddy must not look like a baddy.

Sub-editors were supposed linkmakers for text and pictures, but the marriage of the arts under their priesthood was often doomed. The father of short story

series in monthly journals, Arthur Conan Doyle, contemplated with horror the wreck of many an artistic climax by its proclamation through picture and caption long before the text exploded its bombshell. The *Strand* for May 1903 carried the last story of the second series of Napoleonic adventures narrated by his devoted *chef de brigade* Étienne Gerard in which reader, writer and speaker are enmeshed in an episode of Byzantine complication to culminate in Napoleon's rescue from St Helena — where Gerard finally arrives to discover Napoleon dead before his eyes. The endless comedy of the stories makes the final tragedy the greater, all the more as it foretells a meaningless afterlife for Gerard himself. History forgotten, the reader is borne by Gerard's hopes to the very verge of rescue — and everything falls in that sight of the corpse on the bed. With consummate artistry Conan Doyle swept away all the machinery which had brought Gerard to the island, his

companions vanished, his ship disappeared, leaving him alone with his despair to stagger offstage in an irrelevant exit. But the *Strand* opened the episode by W. B. Wollen's far too striking full-page portrait of the dead Napoleon confronting his zealous rescuer. Never had Conan Doyle more rapidly turned a shattering *dénouement*, with faster change of emotions:

All was clear for me now, and I understood that not an instant was to be lost. Bending myself double I ran swiftly forward to the lighted window. Raising my head I peeped through, and there was the Emperor lying dead before me!

My friends, I fell down upon the gravel walk as senseless as if a bullet had passed through my brain. So great was the shock that I wonder that I survived it. And yet in half an hour I had staggered to my feet again, shivering in every limb, my teeth chattering, and there I stood staring with the eyes of a maniac into that room of death. He lay upon a bier in the centre of the chamber, calm, composed, majestic, his face full of that reserve power which lightened our hearts upon the day of battle. A half-smile was fixed upon his pale lips, and his eyes, half-opened, seemed to be turned on mine. ... Regardless of whether I was seen or not, I drew myself erect before my dead leader, brought my heels together, and raised my hand in a last salute.

And that sublime effect was deadeningly anticipated for the story's first audience!

It invited the hope that illustrations be outlawed from



texts forever. It was bad enough that Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes had been inescapably begirt with Inverness cape and deerstalker hat by the work of an artist, neither having any place in the stories.

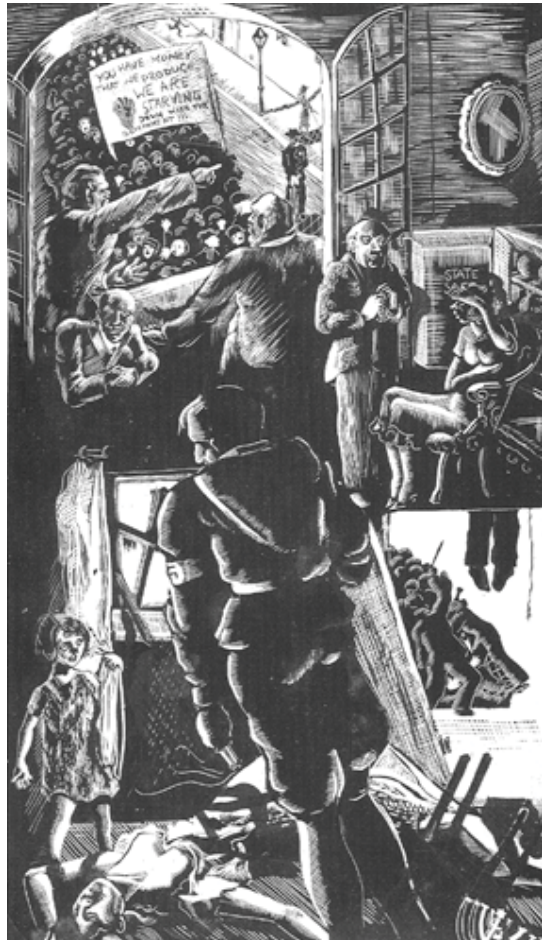
Conan Doyle

wrought my simple plan
If I bring an hour of joy
To the boy who is half a man
And the man who is half a boy

'man' = 'woman' = 'boy' = 'girl', as his daughter Jean would show, calling herself 'Billy' as a child and helping to turn the W.A.A.F. into the W.R.A.F. during World War II. To such a writer, harmony with one's artist is essential, if one cannot be one's artist. And in the latter case, does identity as artist dwarf that of author, or vice versa? We venerate the art of Dudley D. Watkins, our age's answer to Michelangelo (his life's ambition, unfulfilled, was to illustrate a Bible), but how deeply do we value Lord Snooty's or Desperate Dan's or even Oor Wullie's dialogue (apart for the occasional 'Crivvens!', a word in any case more artistic than linguistic in impact)? Wullie on his bucket may as fittingly represent the courage and resourcefulness of modern Scotland --- and its distaste for oppressive authority --- as Michelangelo's David exemplifies and inspires heartwarming heroism of Judaeo-Christian glorious youth. Michelangelo allowed the occasional sonnet to express some of the sentiments animating his sculpture, just as Watkins needed his fragments of dialogue for the plotline: but essentially they said the big things they had to say visually. To take the converse case, is there anything more tawdry and demeaning than literature reduced to the comic strip, from *Hamlet* to *Billy Bunter*? Richard Burbage may have thought of *Hamlet* as essentially visual: Shakespeare certainly did not, never knowing whether he wanted him teenaged or middle-aged, fat or fit.

The tedious all-rounder, who can scramble a sonnet or an egg with equal artistry, is beyond our enquiry as he etches his masterpieces with one eye on the mistress-

pieces: he is but the missing link en route to the robot. Max Beerbohm, incomparable by definition, makes his own perfections. We may acclaim him the greatest caricaturist of his own (or of any) age; we may agree with Dorothy Parker that his 'A. V. Laider' in *Seven Men* is one of the greatest short stories ever written; but the one caricature-subject that Beerbohm admitted to baffle him was A. V. Laider. Laider, the liar whose only lie may have been that he was a liar, naturally clouds and fragments the visual. (How cuddlesome and old-fashioned postmodernism is!) The story-teller illustrating his own work, or the artist narrating a text for his pictures, must in theory have a unity denied to all collaborations (how would an artistic and a literary Siamese twin work with one another?). But in a single nature one seems always likely to be the stronger. Hergé's Tintin stories score on both fronts, but the only true union there is in the original French: probably only a Walloon would be a capable judge. And there were all those assistants when the strip acquired high



quality. The latter consideration would apply to Schulz's *Peanuts* (not the title he wanted). The less technical sophistication may mean the more truly schizophrenic the creative genius: Edward Ardizzone seems to have brought off the entirety of his art-work as well as text in *Little Tim* and the *Brave Sea-Captain* in 1937, and John Ryan his *Captain Pugwash* series after the Second World War. (In passing, the Captain saves the little boy in the story before the war, the little boy is always having to save the Captain in the series conceived after it: World War II left the child a symbol of much less obvious dependence.)

My meanderings or maunderings on all of this have been sparked off by having to open an exhibition of the work of Edith Simon, on behalf of Edinburgh University Settlement, to whom that author-artist had been a

very good neighbour and benefactor down the years. Her daughter (Antonia Reeve), her sister (Inge Goodwin) and Giles Sutherland accompanied it with a catalogue of beauty and value few exhibition-subjects can boast. Simon, born to a Jewish family in Berlin in 1917, emigrated with them to England in 1932 ('Our father' notes Inge, 'a cheerful pessimist, and helped by his talent for languages, was simply the first to size up



the situation'). Edith Simon was producing line drawing of startling narrative quality in her early 'teens: her portraits told their stories in part and asserted further potentialities. She also went in for writing character studies of teachers, which (perhaps fortunately for the subjects) don't seem to have survived. The interplay of word and line were vital to her from the first. Inge was uneasy when Edith, her senior by six years, wanted to paint her:

I said, 'I don't think I've got a very interesting face.' 'Every face is interesting', said Edith firmly.

That generation was less aware of the interest present in body-language than ours (apart from the obvious sexual clichés) but from her earliest work, Simon could make body tell its story as well as face, sometimes semi-contradictory stories.

Inge Goodwin tells of these years when Edith was moving from German to English:

An extraordinary fragment survives ... The language is still imperfect, the sentence structure strange ... a bold ambitious experiment --- sixty pages plus, typed on what looks like long strands of lining paper. On the back of each sheet is a rather good drawing-head, a figure, a limb --- just practising. Nothing to do with the subject, a character study of a glamorous villain, a left-wing American student and political adventurer, one Bernard Jacey, and his interactions with penniless artists in drab 1930s' London. Eventually, she did full justice to that period in *The Great Forgery*.

Nothing? It's easy for me to ask, not having seen them, how can Inge be so sure, but some relationship, however dysfunctional, may not be wholly deniable. Simon quickly graduated to book-illustration, jacket artwork, while steeping herself in other minglings of form and word in films and pantomimes. The earliest anti-Nazis in England were inevitably around --- only in much fewer cases actually in --- the Communist Party, and it was for the Party's publishers, Lawrence and Wishart, that 'Edith' as she signed it, wrote her first book; but the Party must have been sadly puzzled as to its possible heresies or orthodoxies. *Somersaults and Strange Company* is a triumph of inconsequence, the protagonists on a journey ranging from adventure to adventure in the inexorable yet inescapable character of dreams. It also invites indeterminate speculation as to whether the pictures caused the text, or *vice versa*. Certainly its opening did its work in tasters disguised as annotation agenda --- declaring a beginning by means of a middle under the pretext of problem-prophylactic:

Of course I want to get to the story as quickly as possible. But it is better to give a few quick descriptions first, because otherwise there would be much time taken up in explaining, right in the middle of the

real story, why Aunt Rilly blushes or why Joan doesn't want to take the twins with her, or something like that.

(It is quite good English, but with the ghost of German thought, not necessarily of German formulation, still clinging to it: 'much time taken up', for instance. Equally, the beginning ignores the severity of German scientific expression, and instead declares itself in Jewish individualism.)

Whereas the way I'll do it you'll know every one of these explanations beforehand, and you'll know exactly what it's all about when a point is mentioned while the adventures go on. Let's get on with the story, then. I must, of course, start with Aunt Rilly, for she is the oldest and might think it a grave breach of respect if she wasn't mentioned first. You know what people are like. ...

(This is Pirandello in the nursery, and a good place for him. 'Aunt Rilly' as a character in the story does not yet exist, but as she awaits rather than seeks her author, her status precedes her identity in our discovery of her, and while as character she would obviously detest the ensuing description, as character-in-waiting the deference she demands is of greater importance than the sensibilities she is about to acquire.)

Well, here we go ---
This then is Aunt Rilly.
You may not think her beautiful, for she has projecting teeth and her hair is thin and shaggy, but she has a good heart, a very good one, and she is nice in a practical sort of way. Of course she has a few weaknesses. One of them is that she *will* sling those ribbons through her locks. The next is her name. Please take care never to ask her about it. She is quite ashamed of it and actually blushes every time she has to put it under some document or other in full.



Her name turns out to be Amaryllis. She is not very important in the story, but a vulnerable grown-up, lovable and with obvious foibles, is a conventional pedestal on which to begin a child story which then quickly steps off it and moves rapidly elsewhere. The German origin also asserts itself in the choice of undesirable name. A classical, hopelessly archaic name in German proclaims its scholarly redundancy; an English use of the name is more apt to recall



Milton's 'To sport with Amaryllis in the shade' *Lycidas*, which sets the lady up for vigorous if Amazonian company — the German antecedent, Virgil's Eclogues, equip her with sullen rage and scornful disdain, and that would seem to be what Edith Simon had in mind. The effect would confront the sublime but odious word with the ridiculous but lovable drawing.

The Communist credentials of Lawrence & Wishart were more in evidence on negative grounds, which indeed were probably their attraction for Edith Simon. The episodic narrative takes a new twist a quarter into the book:

So on and on
and on they
went again.
Suddenly out
of an
ambush,
formed by an
asthmatic
policeman,
stormed two
funny little
men in black
shirts armed
with saws
and razor
blades,
sticks, whips,
and so on.
On their arms
were badges
with the drawing of a flash of lightning, which
was a sign that they were Fascists and
hated Jews. They crowded round the poor,
bewildered [tortoise] Qual, greeting him
amicably:

'Have you paid your party-dues
lately? Hail, Mosley!
So they shouted and pressed Qual's yellow
hand while they raised their black arms in
Roman fashion
'Have you brought your friends to
us? Unless they are Jewish we will welcome
them. And even if they are it doesn't matter
as long as they have money. When that's
used up we can still kill them or throw them
out. We see you're on the way to the Black
Country. Earl Moneybags is the ruler there,
he's a great friend of ours. He gives us
money and we help him to keep his subjects
down so that he can keep and use the
wealth they make for him. They're getting
obstinate and want to live better than they
do, which is a damned cheek as they're only
workers. We can give you a letter of
introduction to Moneybags, seeing that
you're members of our useful band.'

It is very doubtful if such grim emphases on anti-Jewish sentiments and their political meaning would have been allowed in literature for children under the imprint of most other publishers. Even the Jewish and



Popular Front Victor Gollancz allowed his best-selling detective novelist Dorothy Sayers insert her mean and mindless needles of anti-Jewish propaganda irrelevantly to her text. Simon hit ugly nails on their potentially crucifying heads. Mussolini's Fascists had little anti-Jewish stress initially, but the twenty-year-old girl not only saw its development among them, but also the opportunism with which it would be taken up and discarded according to supposed utility. She saw the dangers of Jews trying to buy their way out of anti-Jewish persecution, while noting its initial apparent success. She recognised Fascist potential in certain capitalist-linked British aristocrats, something soft-pedalled until fairly recently (such as the new analyses of the then Marquess of Londonderry, and such fictional reappraisals as Ishiguro's *Remains of the Day*). And she was careful to indict Fascism for anti-labour snobbery at its heart, despite its flaunting of its working-class appeal.

What follows shows an artist in propaganda, in this case the propaganda of winning audience identification with the Jews. Although Edith Simon claimed that her protagonist, Joan, was based on her sister Inge, the reader was not invited to think of Joan as a Jew. Instead, her text spotlighted the likeable neighbour boy Robin, who had attached himself to Joan's uncertainly-motivated Odyssey in a sort of cheerful knight-errantry:

Qual didn't say a word and his wrinkled face looked blank. 'Are you a Fascist then?' cried Joan horrified. 'Know then that Robin, my best friend, is a Jew, and I won't tolerate people who hate him. Who would have thought it! You, Qual! You, my wise and beloved friend? Go 'way! Scram!'

The other animals stared with horror and sorrow at the tortoise. 'Sure he's a member', howled the pimpled blackshirt, and the moustached one added briskly: 'Don't you see our sign on this here back of his?'

Poor Qual fell weeping on Joan's neck seeing that his innocence was thus proved. Joan embraced him, full of feeling, and all the other pets, as well as Robin, asked his pardon, which he gave.

The drawing makes it clear that the stupid Fascists had assumed the markings on the tortoise's shell were their insignia (much as Nazis might seek to claim the swastika with which Kipling's works had been branded long before Nazism). But it also uttered its covert warning against wise-



sounding friends whose wisdom on close inspection proves to have an anti-Jewish basis.

Cinema was the most obvious form of word-image collision in the 1930s, and Simon enjoyed herself both in emulation and in execration of its possibilities:

The story had been strenuously manufactured by an imaginative staff of half-a-dozen writers. It was created in such a manner that there was an excuse for bringing everyone of the new stars in. Soon posters were seen all over the town advertising the new film 'TUT-TUT', and saying that this new epic would be shown shortly. The film had this uncompromising title because the man who was employed to make titles, after reading the story, had only been able to say, 'Tut-Tut'.

This was the story:
Little Miss Daffodil

Squeak is seen playing harmlessly with her dancing animals. Suddenly she picks up a story book and starts reading. The book is about a youthful cowboy-hero called Freddie Squinteye and his brave horse, Swallow. Daffodil finishes the story in no time, and then picks up a novel belonging to her mother. Soon she falls asleep and in her dream the characters of both books mingle into one adventurous story in which the antique Greek musical pair have a daughter and die. The daughter then falls into the claws of pirates who intend to make foul money out of her by selling the little beauty as a slave. A rival sea-robber, young and noble, discovers this fiendish plot and rescues the maiden, making her his lawful wife. But their ship is stranded on the Mexican coast. When the young couple awake from their semi-drowned state, they discover wet little Daffodil who has floated on to safe ground out of another shipwreck.

They take her with them and now meet Freddy plus horse. Wild adventures, love-scenes, and quarrels, etc., befall them in the country of robbers and Red Indians; and in the end, just after everything is straightened out and happy once more, Daffodil awakes in the midst of her acrobatic pets.

It looks back, obviously enough, to *Nutcracker*: it looks forward to Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* and in fact Simon, young as she was, almost immediately took a place in the milieu of experimental fictionists. Her next formal alighting-place was obvious enough, perhaps: that of translating a middle European Jewish Communist's historical novel on the fashionable theme

of the gladiators' revolt under Spartacus some sixty years before Christ. Lewis Grassic Gibbon had handled it with Scottish Marxist vigour before his death in 1935. But the novel Simon translated as *The Gladiators* bore some signs of the independence of its mind which would take its author Arthur Koestler from Communist conformity to anti-Communist confrontation, his next novel being *Darkness at Noon*, and while Simon's independence would include independence from Koestler, the translator's free spirit harmonised with that of her chosen writer.



WINNEBOG, THE EAGLE-EYED RED INDIAN,
AND NTCRO-TZHEE HIS BEAUTIFUL SISTER

Simon's first novel anticipated Koestler in returning to Jewish origins, but *The Chosen*, massively researched and fascinatingly audacious, appeared in 1940 only to be incinerated by Nazi bombing. It turned on the ironies of versions of the story of Moses pointed by a crucial role in discovery and distortion given to a storyteller called Jokh (a nice variant on Job, Joel, Joab, Josiah and Joshua). The story supposes Moses have married his adoptive mother, the princess who had rescued

him from the Nile, presumably handing Freud more for his Mosaic studies than he may have anticipated. The crucial theme is that of the variants of truth and their making: Simon was moving from word-image mix and word-remake (translation) to palimpsest. Simon's next two novels, *Biting the Blue Finger* and *Wings Deceive*, were wartime contemporary histories of individual myth-makers and their self-destruction. The second was based on the critic-novelist John Mair, killed in an RAF flying accident, whose own self-portrayal as anti-hero had been savagely immortalised in his *Never Come Back*. Those last two Simon books and Mair's, taken together, are fascinating reappraisals of a time of squalor and sacrifice, disenchantments and re-enchantments jostling one another. Inge remarks of Sandy, the anti-heroine of *Biting the Blue Finger* almost exactly what Julian Symons said of Mair in introducing a reissue of his novel, that one would hate to meet her/him, while in each case testifying to the inventive realism of their kaleidoscopic adventures. It was a time when chaos of the sky swooped down to mingle with that of the earth, and in the end *Wings Deceive* had to draw that from the worlds which *Biting the Blue Finger* and *Never Come Back* had echoed as well as established.

The catalogue, happily entitled *Moderation be Damned* (Edith Simon Studio, 11 Grosvenor Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 5EL), continues the saga of her books, her marriage and her new family's move to Edinburgh, her zeal for truth and her fascination with its fragmentation and obliteration. Scotland became a presence in her writing as well as her life, and in fact and fiction she pursued the past -- the building of a fourteenth-century English cathedral, the unearthing of

a prehistoric village, the interplay of the Nibelunglied and Attila the Hun, the triumph and tragedy of the medieval Knights Templar. But she swung in upon the past with her visual sense of the present through which she had matured — that raffish, misanthropic, mutually devouring, imploding genius of literary London mockingly relevant to the gigantic heroism and fathomless evil of the world war around it — and in her quiet, apparently simple, placidly ironic narratives across time sought make her contemporary portraits enhance without occluding the past. A calmer, more secluded Edinburgh — very much the sleeping capital of the once and future country — made its way into her work in the very different forms of *The Psst Masters* and *The Sable Coat*. Both will enrich the historian of postwar Scotland who is lucky enough to welcome new perspective achieved across space, time, art and word. Consciously or otherwise, Simon worked her way back into Scottish intellectual wars of history past centuries: she wrote both a history and a play on the youth of Frederick the Great, battleground of Macaulay and Carlyle — if Frederick was gay, his preference among lovers would seem to have been Scotsmen. The history was entitled *The Making of Frederick the Great* and the play *Love Me, Scum*, both of which might betoken rough trade in today's coding, but however much she might have acknowledged the value of an additional layer of meaning her concern was not with Frederick's sexual expression or the lack of it, but with the circumstance which amongst much else probably enhanced either, or both: Frederick's father. Inge points out in *Moderation Be Damned* that

Edith had two strong new threads to contribute, plus her experience as a novelist: first, there was her German schooling, which presented Frederick as the great national hero to cherish against the humiliation of World War I; and, second, the particular post-Freudian interest of Frederick's miserable childhood and his relationship with his monstrous father Frederick William.

'Love me, scum' was in fact uttered by father to son in the initial instance. The object of the brutality was the growth of Prussian power, covertly in father's case (his appetite for tyranny being mistakenly assumed by his contemporaries to have satiated itself on his family, court and immediate subjects), overtly in Frederick's. It was ultimately that power which provided a state capable of the mass extermination of Edith Simon's fellow-Jews and former compatriots



but the cool, measured assessments were perpetually those of an artist seeking to portray and thus help to explain, rather than to declaim. Anti-Jewish horror was so recent in twentieth-century Germany, as opposed to its long history in Slavic lands, that Edith Simon herself knew she had experienced German rather than Jewish instruction, and that she could measure from her own training both her own ethnic traditions and those of her ethnicity's oppressors. She had in early youth passed for German rather than assert Jewishness: we may have an echo of that in Joan speaking up for her Jewish friend rather than counting her self as a Jew. But like all Jews in the world after 1945 she lived with the depth of the fate of her people, and with having herself been spared — not in itself a source of guilt, but a sense that her survival was not a thing to be taken for granted, as so many of us take our continued lives. She might have doubled the reaction in contemplating the losses in London where she had survived but her great book *The Chosen* — and many of her fellow-Londoners — had not. Awareness of so much death in one's own proximity, in space that had once been one's own, made for an additional artistic dimension. Yet so much of Simon's strength came from her ability also to stand outside a tradition, producing such books as *Luther Alive*, *The Anglo-Saxon Manner*, and *The Saints* (a particularly thoughtful and often empathetic reflection on the lives of early Christians). For Britain as well as for Scotland, Simon stands in the rare — and, on the whole, unhonoured — genre — of foreign-born dissectors. Her citation of the great Dutchman G. J. Renier's *The English: Are They Human?* in itself laid claim to an inheritance few had either the nerve or the strength to flourish.

Published in 1972 *The Anglo-Saxon Manner* was Edith Simon's last book. Painting, drawing, sculpture, were repossessing her, with outstanding results most impressively realised in *Moderation Be Damned*, a title gaining new force in the zeal of her work as shown here. Being great, Edith Simon's visual representations draw vastly differing responses, however admiring. Her study of a nun, for instance, 'Reflections in a Cloister (Sister Ingles) 1977', scalpel-painting four layers,



suddenly makes me understand why all staged versions of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* fail when trying to dramatise the final stage of the audience-link figure Sandy, as a nun. It is the strength with which the contemplative inhabits her solitude that they cannot conceive, as Edith Simon can. Time inevitably plays its tragic ironies on such multi-perspectived glimpses of humanity: the child Nora Elwell-Sutton, wistfully gazing from her mother's arms, seems now to stare in apprehensive resignation towards the death in a mountain snowstorm which twenty years later would overtake her. Time also shows the pictures as prophecy. The zoologist Aubrey Manning had not yet won full celebrity as a television expositor of science when in her eightieth year she painted him in eight colour layers, but he was already an international giant in his own zoological field. Simon's view of him gives a foreground in which his profile contemplates something out of the picture: whatever it is, he is learning from it, absorbing it, thinking it, and the figure is not immature but is only in early middle-age. Behind him, standing in an open door, is an older Aubrey Manning, gesturing, explaining, and essentially drawing the beholders in through an open doorway. On first examination neither figure seems to have Manning's most obvious characteristic, delighted infectious enthusiasm. But what Simon did was to show the spirit and vocation enabling that enthusiasm to exist and flourish.

The Manning scalpel-painting has a background it seems to be that of classroom/laboratory even with a hint of chapel, while the foreground, learning figure is somehow in a wider, unknown context facilitating observation. It could do as metaphor of Academe and Earth, perhaps, especially after Manning's success with his Earth series on TV. Facing it in *Moderation Be Damned* is what seems at first the very Earth Manning would take us all to explore with him. In fact, it proves to be the Scottish artist who most markedly compares to Simon herself. It is a globe whose contours prove to be those of a woman of infinite age, compassion, and understanding: 'Map of a World (Naomi Mitchison) 1983'. Its profundity as a portrait makes any verbal response seem thin and shallow chatter. This is the novelist who, sixty years before the portrait, had sought to disinter from time the spirit of the defeated and obliterated Gauls whose conquest had been hitherto known only through the self-advertisement of their conqueror, Caesar. This is the Africanist, the Socialist, the Scottish nationalist, the sister and mother of scientists, the autobiographer and fellow-witness of the London Blitz. If anyone has better shown the world caught in a single life, it is unknown to me.

And that is quite enough without my giving any further illustrations of the inadequacy of word when it trying to talk about the art of Edith Simon. What she needs is someone to do for her what she did for Naomi Mitchison. But at least we have her wonder-book.

