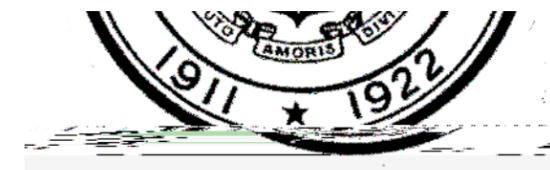


Retirement from the Skidmore College Faculty

Spring 2013



Faculty Meeting
April the Twenty-Sixth
Two Thousand and Thirteen

Be I t Resolved:

The faculty of Skidmore College expresses its profound appreciation and admiration for the following members of the Skidmore faculty who have this year expressed their determination to retire. The faculty further resolves that the following biographical highlights be included in the minutes of the faculty meeting of April 26, 2013 in recognition and celebration of their distinguished service and achievement.



Linda Simon came to Skidmore in 1997 as Associate Professor of English, after eleven years serving as Director of the Writing Center at Harvard. She brought with her a wealth of experience and a wide range of interests, all of which would help her to transform the culture of writing instruction at Skidmore. But it was in her own writing that she had her most significant impact. Over a range of books and topics seemingly too diverse for any one mind, she delivered, in immaculate prose, insight after insight about some of our biggest ideas and our most significant figures. To read Linda Simon is to experience the world in all of its wonder and complexity, its light-splashed surfaces and often-murky depths.

Linda's *The Biography of Alice B. Toklas* was published by Doubleday in 1977, and has been reprinted several times since. This first book was soon followed by *Thornton Wilder: His World* (Doubleday, 1979) and *Of Virtue Rare: Margaret Beaufort, Matriarch of the House of Tudor* (Houghton, Mifflin, 1982). This early trilogy of biographies led eventually to Linda's *Genuine Reality: A Life of William James* (University of Chicago, 1999), the work that would confirm her reputation as one of our most accomplished and perceptive scholars of this great American philosopher. In *Genuine Reality*, Linda was led by her sense that James had something fresh to offer us. As she wrote, "His sister, Alice, said that he was as hard to pin down as quicksilver: he was, and he is. Perhaps this is the reason he remains so endearing and so refreshingly contemporary. Unlike many other 19th-century intellectuals, buttoned into their stiff white collars, calcified in our collective memory, James strides easily, inquisitively, into our own time, urging us to notice him." Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, writing for the *New York Times*, called *Genuine Reality* "compelling," and "an ideal pathway for James' striding." It was also included among the *Times' Notable Books of 1998*.

Linda's work on James led to a number of other honors and associations. She was named President of the *William James Society* for 2001-2002, and has been the General Editor of *William James Studies* from 2005 to the present. In 2010, she was invited to serve as Curator of the William James Centennial Exhibition at Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Turning briefly away from biography, Linda next published *Dark Light: Electricity and Anxiety from the Telegraph to the X Ray* (Harcourt, 2004), before returning to James in 2007 with *Creating a Master: The Critical Reception of James*. It's at this point that Linda's career took its most exciting turn, at least for some of us, as she pivoted from James to fashion designer and cultural icon Coco Chanel, the subject of her 2011 critical biography for Reaktion Books. And when Linda announced the title of her current project, many of us assumed that she had finally decided to devote her many skills to documenting her exciting life as a member of the Skidmore faculty, but it turns out that *Circus* is less about us, and more about lion tamers and acrobats and jugglers and freaks.

While compiling this rich and promiscuous record of publication, Linda was also busy contributing to writing pedagogy and adult learning. She published *Good Writing: A Guide and Sourcebook Across the Curriculum* in 1988; *Contexts: A Thematic Reader* in 1991; *The HarperCollins Guide to Writing* in 1992; and *New Beginnings: A Guide for Adult Learners* in 1998, which is now in its fourth edition. She also maintained her presence in the worlds of Gertrude Stein and James, editing two Stein collections and one on James.

Linda has also been a prolific reviewer, writing for a number of scholarly and general-interest publications, including *American Scholar*, *Boston Review*, *Boston Globe*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Newsday*, *New York Times Book Review*, *Women's Review of Books*, and the *Washington Post Book World*. She's also been known to blog for the *Huffington Post* and *Bloomberg Echoes*.

Merely in terms of volume, this is an impressive record of achievement. But when you combine the quantity with the quality—the elegant prose, the wit and wisdom, the consistent string of insights and illumination—Linda's body of work is truly remarkable. That she shows no sign of slowing down offers us much hope for the future.

It's no surprise that Linda brought to our classrooms the same care and curiosity that she brings to the page. Across a wide range of courses, Linda proved herself an exceptional teacher. From "Introduction to Literary Studies" to "The Contemporary Imagination," from her Scribner Seminar on the unconscious to her upper-level course on "The James

Circle,” and across a wide range of workshops in creative nonfiction, Linda consistently offered her students the best parts of herself: a care for them as both people and as budding scholars, and a desire to push them further than they had thought possible.

It’s also no surprise that the word that comes up most often in Linda’s student evaluations is “lovely.” A lovely teacher, a lovely thinker, a lovely person,