

Call for Papers

From a Local Writer to a World Author: The Circulation of Georges Simenon's Work in Translations



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In May 2024, the City of Liège and Liège University inaugurated a mural depicting Georges Simenon surrounded by the titles of his novels in translation. Located only a few steps away from the Department of Translation and Interpreting, and the Simenon Archives, in the historic neighborhood where the writer was born, this mural not only commemorates the remarkable journey of the Liège-born author to global literary renown but also highlights the essential role played by translation in the circulation and international recognition of his work. This complex process of internationalization will be the focus of the upcoming conference, which will take place in Liège on June 24 - 25 2026, under the auspices of the *Centre Interdisciplinaire de Recherche en Traduction et en Interprétation* (CIRTI) and the Georges Simenon Research Center.

According to the *Index Translationum*, Georges Simenon is the third most translated French-language author in the world. Although this source has certain limitations in terms of completeness and reliability, it nonetheless allows us to situate the Liège-born author within the broader dynamics of global literary circulation (Casanova 1999; David 2011; Moura 2023) and to consider him as a world author (Sapiro 2024). Today, an extensive body of scholarship analyzes his French-language output – as evidenced, among other things, by the existence of at least two journals devoted exclusively to the study of his

work, *Traces* and *Cahiers Simenon*. By contrast, the translation and international dissemination of his texts remain relatively underexplored, particularly in view of the corpus's magnitude – 2,315 translations into 50 languages, according to the Index Translationum, for just over 400 originals. Existing studies that take into account the worldwide diffusion of Simenon's work reveal a diversity of approaches. Without claiming to be exhaustive, they include textual comparisons between originals and translations (Taylor 2009); analyses focused on specific linguistic or cultural areas (Kouchkine 1999; Sebe-Madácsy 1999; Titica & Marcou 2020; Kálai 2020; Öztürk Kasar 2020; Ngadi Maïssa 2023), investigations into particular translation issues (Viezzi 2022; Dakhouche 2024; Coppin 2024), as well as research on translators and mediators (Cabré & Udina 2003; Biosca 2007; Pla 2009; Gaillard 2024). While these contributions constitute a valuable starting point, the scale of the corpus calls for a more comprehensive approach and the formulation of broader conclusions.

In recent years, the convergence of a growing number of studies on the translation of popular fiction (Carter 2018; Bianchi & Zanettin 2018; Buzelin 2022) and on translation archives (Cordingley & Hersant 2021), together with an increasing interest in multimodal and digital approaches to translation history (Boria et al. 2020; Valdeón 2024; Roig-Sanz & Fóllica 2021; McDonough Dolmaya 2024), has encouraged scholars to revisit this well-known figure of Belgian Francophone literature from new perspectives. The project *Simenon en traductions* [Simenon in translations] (SITRAD), conducted in collaboration with the Simenon Archives, the ULiège Library, and the *Centre Informatique* of the Faculty of Philosophie and Arts at Liège University aims to map the international circulation of Simenon's work through the creation of a relational database based on bibliometric data. As of October 2025, this database includes 5,001 items in seven languages.

This conference will provide an opportunity to bring together researchers interested in the circulation of Georges Simenon's work and to contribute to the development of an international network devoted to studying the dissemination of the Liège-born writer across different languages, regions, formats, and media. The conference seeks to assess the current state of research and to outline potential directions for future study.

The event is open to researchers examining the circulation of Simenon's work from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, including Translation Studies, Sociology of Translation, Literary Studies, Global Studies, Audiovisual Communication, Book History, and Sociology of Culture, among others. Building on this interdisciplinary framework, the conference proposes to examine, among others, the following fields of inquiry:

1) Translation in/and the process of the writer's consecration

What literary, cultural, economic, political, and social conditions have shaped the

international circulation of Simenon's work? What discursive, media-related, editorial, and institutional means have been mobilized to construct an international authorial figure (Meizoz 2007), to forge his celebrity (Heinich 2011), his brand (Thérenty and Wrona 2020), or his image as a world author (Sapiro 2024)? Within this framework, translation and retranslation will be considered not only as potential vectors of consecration, but also as practices capable of repositioning the author and his work within different national and linguistic contexts.

2) The global/world author's mediators

This theme invites contributions that explore the mediators involved in constructing the figure of the world or global author: translators, publishers (Quaquarelli and Cailleux 2023), journalists, literary agents, scholars, and amateurs, among others. The aim is to examine their roles, agency, and visibility in the processes through which Simenon's work has circulated internationally, as well as how their work intersects with the author's own intentions – an author who frequently intervened in the dissemination of his texts, to the point that he could be considered a catalyst for the international circulation of his own oeuvre.

3) Simenon, a writer of popular fiction?

World literature has often been approached through the works of Pierre Bourdieu (1992), Pascale Casanova (1999), and Gisèle Sapiro (2024), whose research has helped shape sociological approaches to literature and translation around the categories of the field of large-scale production and the field of restricted production. Yet, as Bernard Lahire (2006) has emphasized, these two subfields are by no means impermeable. This section therefore invites reflection on the following questions: What criteria make it possible to situate a translated work within the literary hierarchies specific to different national fields? What role is played by the work's serial dimension (Letourneux 2017), by covers, collections, publishing formats (Thérenty 2010), and by other material aspects in the construction of these hierarchies? Finally, what does the case of Simenon reveal about the ways in which literary hierarchies circulate and are reconfigured through translation?

4) Transmedial circulation

While Georges Simenon's work has circulated extensively in book form, it has also been (and continues to be) the subject of numerous adaptations: audiovisual (films, television movies, and series), comic books, audiobooks, as well as commercial paratexts (Meehan 1991). This transmedial corpus raises several questions: What are its main characteristics? In which languages and contexts have these adaptations circulated? What connections exist between retranslations and multimedia adaptations (Albachten and Gürçağlar 2020)? What role do these adaptations play in the international consecration of the author?

5) Simenon, between *belgitude* and universalism

Georges Simenon's Belgian origins place him within a literary tradition often described as peripheral (Denis and Klinkenberg 2005), and thus relatively marginal on the international stage. The geographical anchoring of his translated work therefore warrants examination: In which national and linguistic contexts has his reception taken shape? To what extent has this circulation contributed to the visibility of Francophone Belgian literature? This theme invites an exploration of the tensions between local belonging and global recognition, and an assessment of how Simenon's oeuvre contributes to redefining the symbolic boundaries of World Literature.

6) **Readers and readings of Simenon around the world**

This theme focuses on the reception of Simenon's work across different geographical regions. Does the reception vary depending on language, country, or institutional context? Or should we instead speak of cross-reception? What methodological approaches can help us to better understand Simenon's work through the lens of his readership?

The conference will be held primarily in **French**, but contributions in English are also welcome. Original paper proposals (350–500 words), accompanied by a short biographical and bibliographical note, should be submitted by **15 December 2025** to ecarbo@uliege.be.

Provisional Timeline

- **15 December 2025:** Deadline for submission of proposals
- **30 January 2026:** Notification to authors

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