

*On Small Literatures and  
their Location in World Literature:  
A Case Study on Luxembourgish Literature*

In their definition of world literature, René Wellek and Austin Warren use the metaphor of the great mountain range<sup>1</sup> in order to describe the prominence of those writers that occupy 'the treasure-house of the classics', meaning those writers that belong to the so-called canon of world literature: "It [world literature] thus has become a synonym for 'masterpieces', for a selection from literature which has its critical and pedagogic justification but can hardly satisfy the scholar who cannot confine himself to the great peaks if he is to understand the whole mountain ranges [...]" (Wellek & Warren [1949] 1973: 49). The metaphor is taken up by the East German poet Durs Grünbein in his essay on the topic: "Zumindest in diesen Breiten ist man sich einig darüber: Es gibt einen Himalaya der Literatur, und seine Höhenzüge sind bestens bekannt. Dieses Weltgebirge wird unstrittig von einer Kammlinie aus Sieben- und Achttausendern dominiert, die dort schon seit Jahrhunderten aufragen" (Grünbein 2003: 23). Grünbein however does not only use the metaphor in order to comment on the peaks of world literature but, in expanding it further, it serves him to illustrate topographically the hierarchical structure underlying its canon. Thus, if Dante, Shakespeare, Rabelais and Cervantes adorn the peaks of the Himalayan Mountain range, Pushkin and Goethe crown those of the European Alps whereas the founding fathers of Western literature Aeschylus,

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<sup>1</sup> Incidentally, the metaphor is already used by Goethe in his conversations with Johann Peter Eckermann in order to explain Shakespeare's magnitude and his influence on European literature in general and on German literature in particular: "Sie haben vollkommen Recht, erwiderte Goethe. Es ist mit Shakespeare wie mit den Gebirgen der Schweiz. Verpflanzen Sie den Montblanc unmittelbar in die große Ebene der Lüneburger Heide, und Sie werden vor Erstaunen über seine Größe keine Worte finden. Besuchen Sie ihn aber in seiner riesigen Heimat, kommen Sie zu ihm über seine großen Nachbarn: die Jungfrau, das Finsteraarhorn, den Eiger, das Wetterhorn, den Gotthart und Monte Rosa [i.e. Ben Jonson, Massinger, Marlow, Beaumont and Fletcher], so wird zwar der Montblanc immer ein Riese bleiben, allein er wird uns nicht mehr in ein solches Staunen versetzen" (Eckermann 1999: 527).

Sophocles and Euripides, Homer and Vergil, to name but a few, form the Greco-Roman foothills of world literature<sup>2</sup>.

What is noticeable about this metaphor is that it reflects the fact that, for a long time, world literature was mainly the affair of Europe's dominant and imperial nations. This consequently explains the conspicuous absence of literatures from beyond its rim and that of small literatures. But to remain with the European context, what would its small literatures qualify as according to this metaphor? The shingles of world literature? The pebbles found at the foot of a glacier?

This paper addresses the complex location of small literatures in world literature, meaning the literature from small nations or communities that, as Milan Kundera puts it in his essay on world literature, are destined to wait in the antechamber of history<sup>3</sup>. Given the academic and intellectual interest in recent years in the workings of world literature, the revision of its canon, the emergence of new comparative approaches and methods for its study, it is worthwhile to inquire after the fate of small literatures in the innovative structures that aim to account for the expanded global scope of world literature today. One may indeed ask whether the chances of small literatures of being represented in world literature have improved. What, on the other hand, are the impediments a small literature has to contend with and that are likely to hinder its visibility? And how does the affiliation to different literary fields reinforce this problematic? These questions will be treated by taking as their field of analysis the case of Luxembourgish literature.

## Introducing Luxembourgish Literatures

The Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg is situated on the Germanic-Romance language border which in part accounts for the fact that Luxembourg is a trilingual country with German and French as its official languages and Luxembourgish, linguistically defined as a Moselle Franconian dialect, as its

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<sup>2</sup> „Es handelt sich um so gewaltige Felsmassive wie den allzeit schneebedeckten Peak Dante, den breit thronenden, in mehrere Gipfelzacken zerklüfteten Mount Shakespeare, um die beiden breitschultrigen, elefantenhaft abgerundeten Mons Rabelais und Monte Cervantes. Mittendrin, schon in mildernem Licht und mit grünen Matten zeichnen sich die Silhouetten des hohen Goethe und des scharf konstruierten Puschkin ab, und noch weiter zum Rand hin, fast schon in Alpenformat, all die anderen Berggruppen mit den Namen bekannter Archipoeten, die so lange Zeit fast nur europäischer Herkunft waren.“ (Grünbein 2003: 23).

<sup>3</sup> “Il y a, en Europe, d'un côté les grands pays et de l'autre les petits; il y a les nations installées dans les salles de négociations et celles qui attendent toute la nuit dans l'antichambre” (Kundera 2005: 47).

national language. After the country's independence in 1839, we witness a somewhat belated emergence of its national literature, a process which is slow and often laborious due to the smallness of the country which greatly determines the dynamics of its cultural activities such as the literary production<sup>4</sup>. Given the multilingual set-up of the country, Luxembourgish literature is written in several languages. The debate whether this means that Luxembourg has three national literatures or a national literature written in three languages is still not settled<sup>5</sup>. As it is, the literary production in these three languages is very dynamic even if the published yearly output may seem negligible on an international scale. Authors mostly write in one or two, some in three or four, languages and this linguistic multiplicity should allow them to be published abroad. Indeed, the lack of publishing houses which offer distribution abroad and thus access to a larger market, induces some of them to seek the patronage of foreign publishers, an endeavor which succeeds only to a select few. The quantitative limitedness of the literary production as well as the structural problems concerning publication, distribution and international dissemination partly account for the very sparse presence of Luxembourgish authors in World Literature<sup>6</sup>.

That does not mean however that Luxembourgish literature is not known beyond the borders of the country and its most important (international) representatives should be mentioned here. In fact the poetical works of the Francophone writers Anise Koltz and Jean Portante and of the Germanophone poets and novelists Guy Helminger, Roger Manderscheid and Jean Krier have been widely received and consecrated abroad<sup>7</sup>. However, Anise Koltz,<sup>8</sup> whose

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<sup>4</sup> For an in-depth analyses of the emergence and development of Luxembourgish literature, see Goetzinger 2004 a: 15–26 and Goetzinger 1985: 56–64.

<sup>5</sup> On Luxembourg and its three literatures, see Hoffmann 1985: 69–86; Hoffmann 1989: 467–518; Kieffer 1990 a: 287–296; Kieffer 1990 b: 115–130; Goetzinger 2004 b: 155–187; Wilhelm 2010: 99–112.

<sup>6</sup> The Luxembourgish sociolinguistic Fernand Fehlen, who conceives of world literature in the traditional sense of the world's masterpieces only, stipulates that the Germanophone writer Norbert Jacques (1880–1954), the creator of Dr. Mabuse and scenarist of the Austro-American filmmaker Fritz Lang, is the only Luxembourgish writer to have integrated the pantheon of world literature so far. (Fernand Fehlen, "Prolégomènes pour une étude du champ littéraire du Grand-duché", [forthcoming publication]). From that perspective, equal honor is due to Hugo Gernsback (1884–1967), known in American literary history as one of the founding fathers of science fiction and who was of Luxembourgish origin.

<sup>7</sup> For more information on the Luxembourgish writers quoted in this article, the *Luxemburger Autorenlexikon* or *Dictionnaire des auteurs luxembourgeois* may be consulted online ([www.autorenlexikon.lu](http://www.autorenlexikon.lu)).

<sup>8</sup> See Schenk 2000: 109.

work has been awarded, among others, the Suisse Prix Blaise-Cendrars (1992), the French Prix Apollinaire (1998) and the bronze medal of the Prix Théophile Gautier (2011) awarded by the Académie Française, is the only poet from Luxembourg to date whose work has been reviewed in the Journal *World Literature Today* for instance<sup>9</sup>.

Qualitative criteria would, of course, also help to explain the relative absence of Luxembourgish literature in world literature but expanding on this topic would lead to a complex debate which cannot be covered satisfactorily here. Suffice to say that, like most small literatures, Luxembourgish literature too is haunted by the fear of parochialism<sup>10</sup> and if a part of its body may indeed be wanting the cosmopolitan dimension<sup>11</sup> that has for a long time been a main criteria for determining a work worthy of being considered as world literature, this is not true for the whole body of Luxembourgish literature.

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<sup>9</sup> Note that the Francophone poet, novelist and playwright, Jean Portante, winner of the Prix Mallarmé (2003) and jury member of the Prix Apollinaire since 2006, only figures in the same journal as the translator of the famous Italian poet and playwright Maria Luisa Spaziani. See Gathercole 1998: 812; Montante 1998 : 812.

<sup>10</sup> See Hoffmann 1989 and Manderscheid 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Concerning the topic of cosmopolitanism, it may be worthwhile to know that for some local scholars, cosmopolitanism in a work is determined by the language in which the work is written. Thus, Frank Wilhelm claims that only Luxembourgish literature written in French can be considered as cosmopolitan. He perceives the literatures in the different languages in Luxembourg according to the linguistic hierarchy existing in the 19th and for most of the 20th century, with French, as the language of the bourgeoisie, at the apex, German, the language of trade and commerce, in the middle and Luxembourgish, the 'unrefined' mother tongue at the bottom. This leads him to argue that: "Globalement on peut dire que les littératures en langues allemande et luxembourgeoise induisent des œuvres proches du vécu de leur public, correspondant à la sensibilité générale, alors que la littérature de langue française, produite par et pour la bourgeoisie, donne des œuvres plus abstraites où le quotidien luxembourgeois est moins à l'honneur, mais où l'écrivain peut davantage s'inscrire dans l'universel ou, au contraire, cultiver ses propres lubies" (Wilhelm 2001 : 886). If Wilhelm's observation may be true for great parts of the literary production until the sixties, it can no longer hold for literature from the eighties onwards. Indeed, Luxembourgish literature of the last two decades of the twentieth century is marked by an incisive caesura brought about by the emergence of an energetic and iconoclastic generation of authors who, if nothing else, subvert and question this taxonomy of literature based on language prestige. For obvious reasons, Wilhelm's postulate does not endear him to authors writing in German and Luxembourgish who feel their work discredited by this categorization which seems to suggest that linguistic preferences and cultural affiliation rather than aesthetic principals and poetic imperatives are posed as criteria for cosmopolitanism. (See Jérôme Netgen's 'Hirtenbrief and die Hinterwäldler' on Georges Hausemer's homepage under [Blog Capybara Gazette] 22.11.2011. ([www.georgeshausemer.com](http://www.georgeshausemer.com); accessed 26.01.2012).

## Cosmopolitanism revisited

The topic of cosmopolitanism brings us back to the contemporary revision of both the concept and the canon of world literature.

It was precisely the focus on Europe and European masterpieces that, in recent decades, has brought about a revision not only of the canon but also of the method underlying its construction. One side of the argument was that since the end of the Second World War, Europe could no longer claim the cultural supremacy it had previously, given that Eurocentric cosmopolitanism that established Europe and its literary production as the measuring stick of world literature was no longer tenable. Moreover, due to the increasing process of internationalization<sup>12</sup> of literatures, world literature can no longer be measured in strictly European terms. Furthermore, the cultural subalternity and dependence that non-European literatures, but also a great number of European literatures themselves, were subjected to as long as French and English literatures figured as the cosmopolitan model was equally no longer acceptable<sup>13</sup>. Given that the study of world literature has always been one of the main areas of research in comparative literature, this realization had a profound effect both on the understanding of world literature and on the idea, definition and identity of comparative literature itself. As Fernando Cabo Aseguinolaza and many others have argued, since “Comparative literature’s reason for being was founded on the notion of European literature, whether initially as a literary republic or later as a geocultural space within which to define the relationships among diverse national literatures” (Aseguinolaza 420) the perception changed radically after Europe lost its role model position, both politically and

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<sup>12</sup> See Auerbach 1952: 87; Damrosch 2003: 18.

<sup>13</sup> Fernando Cabo Aseguinolaza summary on the paradigmatic shifts that gave rise to the revision of the concept of cosmopolitanism and the supremacy of European literature is particularly enlightening and is therefore quoted in full here: “We are here talking about the elegiac, if not gloomy, logic anticipated by Auerbach and currently endorsed by Moretti, who in *Letteratura europea* mourns that ‘even the self-sufficiency of Europe has become dubious, confused, and perhaps disrupted by the world network which has superseded it’. This is certainly the result of the changing conditions of a spatial and geopolitical framework in transition, a transition which has done away with a cosmopolitanism that was in essence European in favor of a cosmopolitanism that was global. Thus, ‘The search for a unitary cultural identity of diverse European nations through the creation of a common tradition refers to the conscience of an original, but historic, mourning; that is, the loss of an original imperial identity’ (Sinopoli). Indeed, a reconsideration of the traditional comparatist view of European literature reveals the extent to which Europe was the driving force behind a set of ideas about universality and cosmopolitanism, the translatability between cultures, and the forms of literary and cultural internationality, a set of ideas which has ended up leaving it to flounder in a state of uncertainty” (Aseguinolaza 2006: 422–423).

culturally, after World War II. Indeed, the loss of Europe's prominent position constitutes one of the main caesura of the history of comparative literature in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: a widespread opinion in American comparatism is that the kind of comparative literature that arose after World War II converted "everything that had come before into mere prehistory" of the discipline. By thus insisting on the "posthumous character of European literature" they could "clear the way for global comparatism as the discipline's quintessential horizon" (ib. 423).

These developments led to the redefinition of world literature<sup>14</sup> and to the reorientation of comparative methodology in order to provide the necessary analytical tools<sup>15</sup>.

### New Methods: Moretti, Casanova, Damrosch

The major problem the new methods have to contend with is the management and organization of the sheer size of the material henceforth to be studied and Franco Moretti underlines this point when he says that: "[...] la littérature mondiale n'est pas un objet mais un problème, un problème qui exige une nouvelle méthode critique; et personne n'a jamais trouvé une nouvelle

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<sup>14</sup> As an example of the multitude of new definitions of world literature that are being put forth, Moretti's attempt highlights the focus on the internationalization of world literature that a lot of current research sets much store by: "Weltliteratur... But the singular is misleading. There are two distinct world literatures – one that precedes the 18th century, and one that follows it. The 'first' Weltliteratur is a mosaic of separate 'local' cultures; it is characterized by strong internal diversity; it produces new forms mostly by divergence; and is best explained by (some version of) evolutionary theory. The 'second' Weltliteratur (which I would prefer to call the world literary system) is the product of a unified market; it shows a growing, and at times shocking degree of sameness; it produces new forms mostly by convergence; and is best explained by (some version of) world systems analysis." (Moretti 2005: 227).

<sup>15</sup> In her contribution to the 1993 Bernheimer Report focusing on the 'othering' Eurocentric world literature has been prone to in the past, Rey Chow is also adamant on the necessity for developing new methodological tools for the analysis of world literature if the pitfalls of the former approaches are to be avoided: "The critique of Eurocentrism, if it is to be thorough and fundamental, cannot take place at the level of replacing one set of texts with another set of texts – not even if the former are European and the latter are Asian, African or Latin American. Rather, it must question the very assumption that nation-states with national languages are the only possible cultural formations that produce 'literature' that is worth examining. Otherwise we will simply see, as we have already been seeing, the old Eurocentric model of languages and literature study being reproduced ad infinitum in non-European language and literature pedagogy. The active disabling of such reproduction of Eurocentrism-in-the-name-of-the-other should, I think, be one of comparative literature's foremost tasks in the future." (Chow 1995: 109).

méthode critique en lisant simplement un plus grand nombre de textes” (Moretti 2001: 11).

It transpires that the idea of networks and systems provides new angles and approaches as the works by Franco Moretti, Pascale Casanova and David Damrosch, among others, show. Incidentally, Damrosch reminds us that the erstwhile founder of the concept of world literature saw it “less as a set of works than a network [...] that had a fundamentally economic character, serving to promote ‘a traffic in ideas between peoples, a literary market to which the nations bring their intellectual treasures for exchange” (Damrosch 2003: 3). It is maybe not surprising therefore that the new methods of study favour systemic models that draw heavily on economic models in order to find a framework to work with. An interesting reversal occurs here: in his *Manifest der kommunistischen Partei* (1848), Karl Marx refers to Goethe’s idea of ‘Weltliteratur’ in order to draw an analogy between the context of newly global trade relations that came about with the rise of the bourgeoisie and the exchange of spiritual goods, i.e. literature: “Und wie in der materiellen, so auch in der geistigen Produktion. Die geistigen Erzeugnisse der einzelnen Nationen werden Gemeingut. Die nationale Einseitigkeit und Beschränktheit wird mehr und mehr unmöglich, und aus den vielen nationalen und lokalen Literaturen bildet sich eine Weltliteratur” (Marx 1978: 73). Henceforth it is literature that looks to economy to find new methodological impulses to analyse a literature that ‘has gone global’.

In numerous articles and in his major works *Modern Epic: The World-System from Goethe to Garcia Marquez* (2003) and *Graphs, Maps and Trees. Abstract Models for Literary History* (2005), Moretti elaborates a method that draws on systemic models both from the economic and the literary sphere, which are supplemented by adopting some of Charles Darwin’s theoretical findings as developed in his evolutionary theory *The Origin of Species* (1859). Economic historian Immanuel Wallerstein’s theory of *The Modern World-System* (1974) forms the basis of Moretti’s method to describe the disparity in the relations between literary centers and their peripheries. It is then linked with Itamar Even-Zohar’s *Polysystem Theory* and his concept of the law of interference in order to explain the effect literary models from the centre exercise on the periphery without the centre being necessarily aware of this influence<sup>16</sup>. In his

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<sup>16</sup> In his quotation of Itamar Even-Zohar’s article “Laws of Literary Interference” (1990), Moretti’s added comments, set in [square brackets], show how he reads Even-Zohar’s findings through the lens of economic theory: “L’interférence [désigne] cette relation entre les littératures par laquelle une [...] littérature donneuse peut devenir une source d’emprunts directs ou indirects [*Importer le roman,*

theoretical approach, Moretti advocates for a method of distant reading (as opposed to close reading) and for abandoning detailed microreading (which takes up to much time) in favour of a macroreading, that is the focus on processes, themes, tropes, genres and systems, meaning unities that are either smaller or bigger than the texts<sup>17</sup>. The study of their circulation from the centre to the periphery and the manner in which the periphery adopts and adapts these themes, tropes and processes so that they fit the local material would, in Moretti's opinion, yield a more thorough understanding of the interconnectedness of the literatures of the world. If the problems inherent in the implementation of Moretti's systemic method of macroreading could be overcome and put into practice<sup>18</sup>, the inclusion of small literatures in the analysis would surely lead to interesting insights into the transfer and transformation processes regulating the centre-periphery dynamics.

The method developed by Pascale Casanova in her work *La République mondiale des Lettres* (1995) and in her article "Literature as a World" (2005) also draws on models from the economic sphere, such as Wallerstein's and Fernand Braudel's concept of world-economy developed in *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme – XVe-XVIIIe siècles* (1979). Like Moretti she stresses the need to move beyond the mere study of the body of literature and proposes the conceptual tool of 'world literary space' where the focus does not solely lie with world literature but rather with (its) space as "a set of interconnected positions, which must be thought and described in relational terms. At stake are not the modalities of analyzing literature on a world scale, but the conceptual means for thinking literature as a world" (Casanova 2005: 73). Revolving around the centre-periphery relationship, her thesis concentrates on the inequality and conflict between the periphery and the dominant centre and on the hardship of the periphery to gain recognition. Thus, *la République mondiale des lettres* features an insightful analysis on the revolts and literary revolutions as experienced by and in small literatures or of literatures emerging from what she terms 'dominated spaces' (such as Switzer-

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*emprunts directs et indirects, dette étrangère : on remarque à quel point les métaphores économiques ont travaillé de manière souterraine dans l'histoire littéraire] – une source d'emprunts pour [...] une littérature preneuse [...]. Il n'y pas de symétrie dans l'interférence littéraire. Une littérature preneuse est plus souvent qu'à son tour traversée par une littérature donneuse, qui par ailleurs l'ignore complètement.*" [Italics in the text] (Moretti 2001: 12).

<sup>17</sup> Moretti demonstrates his method of macroreading by studying the reception of the essentially European literary form of the novel in countries like Japan and Brazil which he analyses by focusing on the category of narrative voice (ib. 14–21).

<sup>18</sup> See Damrosch 2003: 26.

land, Ireland, Lithuania, Romania, the Czech Republic, etc.) and that have propelled them to a greater prominence on the international stage.

One last method that I want to mention here briefly is David Damrosch's proposal to conceive of world literature as an elliptical system (Damrosch 2003: 281–303) which hinges on the idea that world literature, rather than being a set canon of texts, is actually a mode of reading. As this mode is determined by the factors of time and space, it can best be understood by premises from reception theory. Because Damrosch's elliptical system highlights how contemporary tastes determine what a given society reads and consequently considers to be world literature – and Damrosch shows that parts of the canon tend to be renegotiated every epoch (Damrosch 2006: 43–54) – it can best be described as a kind of rotation system of literary works that fall in and out of prominence depending on the prevalent tastes of the reading public. Damrosch's approach seems particularly appealing in regard to small literatures. Considering that we not only live in an age of globalization but also in an age where counter-canons blossom and the marginal and the peripheral are in the limelight, organising contemporary world literature according to this elliptical system might indeed help small literatures to achieve greater prominence, a point which will be discussed later.

### On the Literary Field of Small Multilingual Literatures

In theory, the methods summarized so far proceed in a way that makes the inclusion of works or authors from small literatures in the study of the system of world literature a possibility. It is worthwhile however, to take a closer look at the literary field of a small literature and how it may determine the visibility or invisibility of a given small literature in the context of world literature.

The following analysis was triggered by the definition that Damrosch gives of world literature in his seminal work *What is World Literature?*, where he states: "I take world literature to encompass all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language [...]. In its most expansive sense, world literature could include any work beyond its home base [...]" (Damrosch 2003: 4).

This view seems to imply that in the host culture, the work will be received and recognized as a foreign work from a distinct national literature. This however is not necessarily the case for a small literature that is not disseminated internationally and, as is the case with Luxembourgish literature, is generally

little known beyond its borders. A closer look at its literary field allows us to explain this problem more clearly.

Both the anonymity and the size of the country entail a particular organization of its literary field, an organization best described by Pierre Bourdieu in his short case study on Belgian literature, provocatively entitled “Existe-t-il une littérature belge?”. Although the situation of Belgian and Luxembourgish literatures cannot be considered identical, they are certainly similar were it only because they feature distinct literatures in different languages (Flemish, French and German in Belgium; Luxembourgish, French and German in Luxembourg) and literary and cultural affiliation to or orientation towards established literatures of the culturally dominant neighbours France, Germany and the Netherlands. In both cases, the literatures (and authors) are likely to waver between their national literary field and the culturally dominant foreign ones (French, German or Dutch) in relation to which they constitute a peripheral field. For Bourdieu, this wavering amounts to different strategies of literary identification: “Tout se passe comme si tout écrivain de nationalité belge [...] balançait entre deux stratégies, donc deux identités littéraires, une stratégie d’identification à la littérature dominante et une stratégie de repli sur le marché national et la revendication de l’identité belge” (Bourdieu 1985 : 3). The tension between these strategies of literary identification can be apprehended as one of the main characteristics of the literary field of a small literature in general, as will be shown later on.

It is Bourdieu’s contention that the size and, in this case, the smallness of a literature determines its degree of dependence from the institutions of the culturally dominant centre. This dependence is determined by a number of indicators of heteronomy. The decisive one for our argument concerns the institutions of consecration: every literary field possesses its specific set of institutions, publishing houses, journals, and theatres, etc. that constitute its structure. But that does not mean that they are also invested with the recognized authority to consecrate the literature in question. Indeed, the latter rests with the instances of consecration of the dominant centre. The transfer of authority to the central institutions is not only determined by the weight and power of the centre itself but arises, in an equal measure, from the lack of confidence of the authors and the reading public of the small literature, as Bourdieu remarks: “[...] comme si les écrivains et le public cultivé ne croyaient pas dans leurs instances nationales, c’est-à-dire dans la valeur de leur jugements” (ib. 4). But it is not the fact that Belgian and Luxembourgish writers have to earn their ‘lettres de noblesse’ abroad that is important here; it is rather

the fact that in order to gain their honors, they have to face, in Bourdieu's view, an uncomfortable dilemma: "Les écrivains de nationalité belge et de langue française sont ainsi placés devant l'alternative de l'identification au modèle dominant – qui, lorsqu'elle réussit, les dépouille de leur identité nationale [...]" (ib). The same situation holds true for Luxembourgish writers writing in German or in French<sup>19</sup>: by analogy they too risk losing their national identities if they are consecrated by the centre.

But what do the Bourdesian postulates look like in practice? In an article on the Germanophone writer Guy Helming, who mainly lives, writes and publishes in Germany, Rolf Parr deconstructs this tension between the drive towards internationality (*i.e.* anchorage in the culturally dominant system) and the withdrawal to the national market (Parr 2007: 46). Parr's analyses is based on the new edition of Helming's first novel *Die Ruhe der Schlammkröte* ([1994] 2007), introduced and commented by the German author and TV-presenter Manuel Andrack. This edition holds a substantial amount of paratextual material, such as the correspondence between Andrack and Helming. When the novel was first published, it made no references whatsoever to Luxembourg and the targeted reading public was an in-crowd revolving around a bar in Cologne. As Parr rightly shows, the paratextual material of the new edition is revealing of Helming's endeavor to avoid being perceived as a German author, a point which seems to have been of less importance when the novel was first published 17 years earlier. Helming's affiliation to both literary fields is demonstrated in the following excerpt, where Parr's added comments in square brackets in actual fact describe the wavering between the different strategies of identification as emphasized by Bourdieu:

An Luxemburg oder an meine dortige Heimatstadt Esch habe ich wenig gedacht, muss ich zugeben. Ich habe mich schon immer als Nomade gefühlt und damit überall zu Hause [*das zielt in Richtung Internationalität*]. Aber die Erfahrungen meiner Geburtsstadt lass ich nicht veräppeln, hörst du [*das holt ihn wieder nach Luxemburg zurück*]. Ich meine, hätte jemand mit damals erzählt, dass Esch-sur-Alzette mir eines Tages den ‚Prix du mérite culturel‘ verleihen würde, hätte ich ihn nach Merheim in die Klapse geschickt [*hier verortet Helming sich durch Lokalwissen wieder regional*]. Eigentlich hatte ich nie vor, in meine Heimat zurückzukehren. Da ich nur noch Deutsch schrieb, war mir klar,

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<sup>19</sup> I would suggest that the situation is even more dramatic for Luxembourgish than it is for Belgian writers. Belgian literature may be a small literature, but there is no denying the fact that it is far more thoroughly located on the map of European literature, not least for the prominent part it played during the symbolist movement and its influence on European and Russian literatures.

dass ich auch in Deutschland leben muss. [...] Heute fahre ich regelmäßig zu Besuch nach Esch, sage meinen Eltern hallo, treffe Freunde [*alles das geht wieder in Richtung Luxemburger Identität*], aber nach ein paar Tagen ist mir alles wieder zu klein und ich freu mich auf Köln[*da setzt schon wieder die Absatzbewegung ein*] (46).

What Parr underlines in his article is the double-bind authors from small nations are subjected to as soon as they start publishing abroad. In doing so, they are always inevitably faced with the question of literary identity, to which, according to Bourdieu, there can be no middle ground. However, while Bourdieu understands the dilemma of these writers in terms of national identity mainly, thus reducing the question of affiliation to an either/or situation, Parr's emphasis on literary subject matter and targeted reading public, while also following in Bourdieu's line of argument, leads to a different solution to the question of affiliation:

Sie [Luxembourgish writers] müssen (und wollen) sich einerseits luxemburgisch verankern, möchten sich andererseits aber auch über Luxemburg hinausreichende Leserkreise erschließen und müssen dies in ökonomischer Hinsicht sogar. In dieser Situation können die Luxemburger Schriftsteller *erstens* entweder ganz auf Luxemburg (und damit auf dauerhafte Subvention) setzen und sich vom europäischen Markt abkoppeln oder *zweitens* ausschließlich auf das Leserpotential einer der beiden großen Bezugssprachen setzen, wofür aber die Luxemburger Spezifika weitgehend ausgeblendet werden müssen, oder *drittens* solche Kompromisse eingehen, die darauf hinauslaufen, das eine zu tun ohne das andere zu unterlassen (46). [Italics by R.P.]

According to Parr, the new edition of Helminger's novel performs such a compromise by including the paratextual material which permits to locate him in relation to both the German and Luxembourgish literary field. Parr even goes so far as to suggest that this new edition transforms Helminger's novel into world literature, as the article's title boldly states<sup>20</sup>, but a definition of what Parr means by world literature here would be needed in order to assess this claim. I would suggest that, precisely because it is only via the paratextual material that it becomes possible to locate the novel (and its author) in both systems, that this is really rather an exceptional case and that for most authors

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<sup>20</sup> The full title reads: 'Wie aus einem Kölner Szenenroman ein Stück Luxemburger Weltliteratur wurde. Manuel Andrack entdeckt Guy Helmingers ersten Roman *Die Ruhe der Schlammkröte* neu' (45).

and their works this kind of compromise is rarely this effective, successful and available.

### The Risk of Appropriation by the Dominant Literary Field

To return to the topic of consecration abroad and loss of national identity, this whole process is of course not contrary to Damrosch's contention that "a work has an *effective* life as world literature whenever, and wherever, it is actively present within a literary system beyond that of its original culture" (Damrosch 2003: 4). However, having been adopted by the central system and there being no need for a translation either, given that the works are written in the language of the center, they risk not being recognized as works that issued from beyond the center<sup>21</sup>. This surely is not an insignificant point for as Damrosch rightly argues: "A lively awareness of a work's original context is an important safeguard against its outright assimilation to the reader's own immediate moment" (Damrosch 2003: 140). It is precisely the unawareness of the original context for instance that in the past has led some reviewers to consider Luxembourgish literature written in German as a kind of German Exile literature and Germanophone Luxembourgish writers as "Auslandsdeutsche" (*i.e.* Germans living outside of Germany)<sup>22</sup>.

Since the argument here concerns the representation of national literatures in the canon of world literature, the question of how a work can still be recognized as one stemming from another, albeit small and unknown national literature is an important one. As I have tried to show by referring to Bourdieu's

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<sup>21</sup> I need to stress here that this risk applies, in my opinion, mainly to works from small literatures with a very limited international dissemination and the situation of writing from the Maghreb for example and its consecration by the Parisian institutions is a different debate not least because of the postcolonial problematic underlying the antagonism of the France-Francophonie-paradigm.

<sup>22</sup> In his article "Stiefvaterland und Stiefmuttersprache. Anmerkungen zur deutschsprachigen Literatur in Luxemburg", the Germanophone writer Georges Hausemer presents and discusses the positions and problems of Luxembourgish literature in general and of Germanophone literature in particular. His choice of words in describing the 'step-relationship' between Germany and Luxembourg is revealing of the intricacy of the relationship: "Obwohl wir uns bei unseren literarischen Aktivitäten für die deutsche Sprache entschieden haben, zählen wir uns nicht zu den von Lisa Kahn angesprochenen 'deutschen, im Ausland lebenden Schriftstellern' und bemühen uns auch nicht um eine 'im Ausland entstandene und laufend entstehende deutsche Kultur'. Unser Verhältnis zu Deutschland und der deutschen Sprache ähnelt eher der Relation zu einem Stiefvaterland und einer Stiefmuttersprache, ja, wir suchen förmlich nach Abgrenzung, versuchen unentwegt das zu verwirklichen, was Dieter Hasselblatt einmal über ein Hörspiel des deutschschreibenden Luxemburger Autors Roger Manderscheid bemerkte; nämlich, 'dass hier jemand in deutscher Sprache etwas gesagt hat, was ein deutscher auf deutsch gar nicht hätte sagen können'" (Hausemer 1985: 38–39).

contention, this is indeed a complex issue since consecration by the centre entails the very real risk of losing national distinctness and consequently, the marginal writer's appropriation by the centre.

The problem is rendered even more complex by the fact that the Luxembourgish literary market is exceedingly small and the circulation of Luxembourgish literature beyond the borders of the country is very limited indeed<sup>23</sup>. Hence, in order for a literary work to be more widely disseminated, it needs to enter the international network of circulation and it can only do so by being published abroad. For we should remember that world literature is simply also "what is available to read, in classrooms and on bookstore shelves, on course syllabi and in anthologies for students and general readers, and questions of scale and of coherence come to the fore in such practical contexts" (Damrosch 2003: 111).

However, there is also an optimistic view on the problem for there has never been a better time to promote minor and small literatures than the present moment. This is mainly due to the decisive shift in literary and cultural studies provoked by the emergence of postcolonial literatures on the one hand and the oft-quoted fact of 'literature in the age of globalization' on the other. These driving forces have led to a more pronounced focus on the multicultural and the marginal, for "as central texts and problems come to be frequently explored and well understood, there is a natural intellectual drive toward the margins – new texts, new issues, new areas and periods of study" (ib. 84). It is therefore a good time to put the international study of small literatures on the agenda of comparative literature and on course syllabi, something the 1993 Bernheimer report on the state of comparative literature at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century implicitly advocates when it stresses the need, in the context of the study of European literatures, to abandon the sole focus on English, French, German, and Spanish literatures, in order to look to the "minority literatures [that] also exist within Europe" (Bernheimer 1995: 45).

Still, even if the academic or intellectual imperative to turn to the margins exists in theory, what does the practice look like? If it is true that Luxembourgish literature is just about to raise an academic interest internationally, its dissemination still hinges on the distribution aspect and major works are not physically accessible abroad. Authors and especially poets tend to be more widely included in international anthologies<sup>24</sup>, which is of course a first

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<sup>23</sup> See Glesener 2012: 152–167.

<sup>24</sup> For texts by Guy Helmingier, see; Višneū 2003; Delseit *et al* 2007: 121–123: 70–84. For texts by Jean Portante, see Deuy 1996: 259–266; Sofronieva 2005: 207–211; Weiberg *et al* 2010: 158–159. For

important step towards visibility in world literature. If these measures constitute a more or less natural process to further the dissemination of a small literature, it is worthwhile to look too to the artificial measures as a means to promote small literatures. The European Union Prize for Literature could be considered as one of these. Its purpose is “to promote the circulation of literature within Europe and to encourage greater interest in non-national literary works”<sup>25</sup> and, given that the selection for the Prize includes all European literatures, small literatures have indeed a chance to be given prominence in Europe<sup>26</sup>. Thus, in 2010, Jean Back was the first Luxembourgish writer to be awarded this prize.

This paper set out by asking some general questions about the location of small literatures in world literature. Given the emergence of new methodologies that are now applied for its study, it seemed worthwhile to superficially assess whether they allow for small literatures to be part of the corpus of study. This being the case, taking them into consideration promises to further the insight into the processes of exchange regulating and stimulating the centre-periphery paradigm.

Another focus lay on the setup characteristic of the literary field of Luxembourgish literature. Bourdieu’s theory of the ‘champ littéraire’ was useful to describe the internal organization of this field in particular and to highlight the tension between different strategies of literary identification the writer of a small literature may adopt and the dilemma he faces once he enters a culturally dominant literary system. However, despite the risk of appropriation by the centre this may entail, this remains his best chance of entering the system of world literature.

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texts by Anise Koltz see *Echo* 1 1991: 213–237; Lorraine 1991: 326–327; Alyn 2010: 202–203. For texts by Roger Manderscheid, see *Echo* 1 1991: 237–244; Gauch *et al* 1996: 102–109. For texts by Josée Ensch, see *Echo* 1 1991: 201–212; Lorraine 1991:323; Benoît-Dusauso 2007: 820–821.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.euprizeliterature.eu> (Accessed 2.9.2011).

<sup>26</sup> The prize, awarded every year, functions on a three year rotation system and every year a set of eleven or twelve countries are invited to set up national juries to proceed to a selection of possible candidates.

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