Luxembourgish French-Speaking Literature through the lens of Francophone Studies

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Luxembourgish literature occupies a position at the crossroads between French and German literature, somewhere between the two, close to the double periphery. A young literary tradition that emerged in parallel with the independence of its country (1839), the literature of the Grand Duchy draws on the various aspects and characteristics of the country's general situation as a source of artistic creation[1] . In this sense, whether it be the multilingualism of the Grand Duchy, its geographical location, or its cultural and historical heritage, the concept of Luxembourgish literature and what it encompasses is updated and evolves in parallel with the societal context, demonstrating a particularly notable momentum from the 1960s onwards[2] . As the concept has varied over time, we will examine here what can be understood by the term 'Luxembourg literature', what characterises it and the major issues it raises. With this in mind, approaching the subject *of Luxembourgish literature* through the discourse surrounding it allows us to better understand how its representation has been constructed and developed, and to comprehend the deep roots that unite the particularities of cultural hybridity at the heart of an identity specific to the writers of the Grand Duchy.

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[1] Jeanne E. Glesener, "Multilingualism as a characteristic and challenge of literature in Luxembourg," *in* Heinz Sieburg (*ed.*), *Vielfalt der Sprachen – Varianz der Perspektiven. Zur Geschichte und Gegenwart der Luxemburger Mehrsprachigkeit,* Bielefeld, Transcript, 2013. See also: Germaine Goetzinger, "Die Referenz auf das Fremde" [The Reference to the Foreign], *in* Irmgard Honnef-Becker & Peter Kühn, *Über Grenzen. Literaturen in Luxemburg [Across Borders: Literatures in Luxembourg],* Esch-sur-Alzette, Phi, 2004, pp. 15–26.

[2] Fabienne Gilbertz, "Vom 'Ende der Bescheidenheit'," *in* Anne-Marie Millim & Ian de Toffoli (*eds.*), *Modernisms in Luxembourg. Traditions – Variations – Ruptures,* Mersch, National Centre for Literature, 2019, pp. 220–247.

1.) What is Luxembourgish literature?

Before delving into the work of Anise Koltz, it is necessary to consider the context in which it was produced, but above all to examine the literature from which it emerged. At the crossroads between French and German literature, Luxembourgish literature often raises questions about what it encompasses as such. As the concept has varied over time, we will examine what can be understood by the term 'Luxembourg literature', what characterises it and the major issues it raises. With this in mind, approaching the subject *of Luxembourgish literature* through the discourse surrounding it allows us to better understand how its representation has been constructed and developed. As the concept of *literature* is very often considered and used as a collective singular (*Kolletkivsingular)* with a very broad range of meanings, our aim is not to provide an exhaustive treatment of all the numerous particularities and characteristics present in the Grand Duchy's literary output, as this would require us to approach each literary work by individual authors. What interests us here, and what will enable us to paint a picture of what is known as Luxembourgish literature, is what represents, names and defines it as an overarching concept, i.e. metaliterary discourse. In the following pages, we will use the concept of metaliterary discourse as discourse on literary production, which shapes and conveys the representation of what is commonly accepted under the concept of *Luxembourgish* literature[3] . Thus, in order to discuss the concept of Luxembourgish literature, we must begin with the discourse on it, through its biases and orientations.

This chapter is not intended to be a detailed and exhaustive overview of Luxembourgish literature, but rather a quick overview that allows the reader to refocus and refresh their understanding of the cultural milieu in which Anise Koltz's poetic thought evolved. In this sense, we claim complete transparency with regard to our approach to Luxembourgish literature. As it is profoundly multilingual and polygraphic, we are obliged to define our own angle. We approach the analysis of Luxembourgish literary production through a Francophone lens, which inevitably leads us to emphasise the French language element of her work. This choice in no way excludes consideration of the German and Luxembourgish language dimensions of this literature – quite the contrary.

In considering how to introduce the subject of Luxembourgish literature, Thomas Ernst seems to have provided a particularly apt introduction to our topic:

"Luxembourg literature has only been recognised as such since the 1980s, and its fundamental multilingualism and cultural hybridity have been identified as its central characteristics since the 2000s. [...] Luxembourg prose is mostly written in German, poetry in French and plays in Luxembourgish[4] ."

[Luxembourg literature has only been referred to as such since the 1980s, and its fundamental multilingualism and cultural hybridity have only been defined as its central characteristics since the 2000s. […] In addition, Luxembourg prose is mostly written in German, poetry in French and plays in Luxembourgish." (personal translation)]

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[3] We thus rely on the same premise as François Provenzano: "[...] all literature owes part of its social existence to the metadiscourse that supports it. In other words, a corpus of works, a population of authors, only become visible, and therefore socially readable, when a discourse is produced that classifies them, orients them and grants them relevance, even a status of obviousness, in a whole that is supposed to represent more than the sum of its parts and that common sense refers to as '(literary) tradition'." See François Provenzano, *Vies et mort de la francophonie. Une politique française de la langue et de la littérature, op. cit.*, 2011, pp. 55-56.

[4] Thomas Ernst, "Von Mischkultur und Mehrsprachigkeit: Deutsch in der Literatur Luxemburgs," *in Oxford German Studies,* 48, I, March 2019, p. 91.

Like a composite sketch, Thomas Ernst's description introduces the key biographical information about this literature. Date of legitimate recognition: 1980. Major characteristics: its multilingualism and cultural hybridity, which, according to Ernst, have only been recognised as such since the 2000s. In addition to highlighting the early years of this literature, Ernst's introduction also breaks down the major literary genres (poetry, prose and theatre) into specific languages, which constitute the official triglossia of the Grand Duchy. One leading to the other, we thus have a succinct and comprehensive description of the most widely held idea of what Luxembourgish literature is. Nevertheless, while praising Ernst's attempt to introduce Luxembourgish literature in a clear and concise manner, it is obviously impossible to present all its specific features in just a few lines[5] . Referring to the recognition of this literature in the 1980s inevitably raises the question of who recognised it. What came before? Why were the characteristics of cultural hybridity and multilingualism only defined as central at the dawn of the 21st century? Why, moreover, are they designated as major characteristics? Ernst's description is based, as we have just indicated, on assumptions that have been conveyed for several decades by a meta-literary discourse that defines the literary object through *a* strongly entrenched doxa[6] , which, at first glance, captures a valid generalised image of the object of Luxembourgish literature. Images, metaphors, literary practices, but also the discourse and attitudes of writers and actors in the literary world generate, repeat and greatly consolidate this kind of discourse, elevating it to a status close to that of *commonplace.* If we take, for example, the first lines of the introduction to the collective work *Über Grenzen. Literaturen in Luxembourg,* it says: "*Wichtiges Merkmal der Literatur in Luxemburg ist ihre Inter und Multikulturalität. In mehreren Sprachen zu schreiben, ist für Luxemburger Autorinnen und Autoren eine* Selbstverständlichkeit[7] ". Here again we see cultural hybridity through its dimension of inter- and multiculturality, as well as the multilingual ability of Luxembourgish writers. One last example: [8]"Before even beginning to write, every author in the Grand Duchy must make a linguistic and cultural choice because, due to the fortunately complex linguistic situation in the Grand Duchy, there is no one language that imposes itself. [...] Writing in Luxembourg means writing in relation to these local factors and, beyond that, in relation to the foreign world." 's question of cultural hybridity through the connection between "local circumstances" and "abroad" is addressed here, while preserving the evocation of multilingualism by referring to the choice that each author is supposed to make. With the same colour combination producing a relatively similar painting with each stroke, Thomas Ernst's attempt at synthesis crystallises and consequently reiterates a meta-literary discourse.

Defining what "Luxembourg literature" means requires evoking the constructed aspect of the discourse that shapes its representation, as well as its evolution in the eyes of the public. The clichés taken up by Ernst represent the main fault lines, insofar as they reflect the main

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[5] Far be it from us to imply that this was Ernst's objective. This description serves as a hook for a very fine analysis of the position of German in Luxembourgish literature, rather than an exercise in excessive synthesis or popularisation.

[6] "The notion of 'doxa' or common opinion can be linked, on the one hand, to the discursive ensembles – social discourse or interdiscourse – that convey it and, on the other hand, to the specific (logical) discursive forms – topoi (commonplaces) of all kinds, preconceived ideas, stereotypes, etc. – in which it emerges in concrete terms ." See Ruth Amossy, *L'Argumentation dans le discours,* Paris, Armand Colin, 2006, pp. 99-100.

[7] "An important characteristic of Luxembourg literature is its inter- and multicultural nature. Writing in several languages is a matter of course for Luxembourg authors." (pers. trans.) See Irmgard Honnef-Becker & Peter Kühn (*eds.*), *Über Grenzen. Literaturen in Luxemburg,* Esch/Alzette, PHI, 2004, p. 7.

[8] Frank Wilhelm, "An aspect of Luxembourgish polyglossia. Literary relations between French and Luxembourgish in French-language texts from Luxembourg," *in* Heinz Sieburg (*ed.*), *Vielfalt der Sprachen-Varianz der Perspektiven. Zur Geschichte und Gegenwart der Luxemburger Mehrsprachigkeit,* Bielefeld, Transcript, 2013, p. 169.

features of a young literature and the issues that are recognised as central to it. Let us therefore begin with a question that is simple at first glance, but particularly complex: What is Luxembourgish literature?

The first line of response: space. Research in the sociology of literature, as well as in Francophonie, has clearly shown that the political and economic borders of a state are often of no help in understanding and perceiving literary spaces and their arrangement. This is the case in all multilingual countries, and Pascale Casanova supports this fact in *La République mondiale des Lettres* (1999):

> The difficulty in understanding how this literary universe works lies in accepting that its borders, capitals, channels and forms of communication are not completely superimposable on those of the political and economic universe[9] .

Certain peripheral linguistic and cultural areas are formed as extensions of national literary spaces[10] , a direct consequence of the spread of dominant European languages beyond their national borders and their original linguistic areas. The organisation of literary spaces is very often based on a logic that is independent of national borders, reinforced by the cultural appeal of the languages from which the literatures originate. The blurring of state and linguistic borders is further complicated in the case of Luxembourg by the linguistic and cultural situation, which is akin to a palimpsest, resulting from multiple extensions of this type throughout the territory over the centuries[11] . Located on the border between the Romance and Germanic linguistic areas, the Luxembourg literary space developed and emerged as a peripheral, marginal and intercalated, a small space within which the German and French linguistic and cultural areas have overlapped and mixed with a local vernacular, which at the time of independence and the formation of the Grand Duchy was still only a simple Moselle Franconian dialect. This situation places the Luxembourgish linguistic space, and by extension its literary space, in a position of marginality in relation to two dominant spaces, on the periphery of these dominant centres. Thus, understanding the evolution of Grand Ducal literature and the discourse surrounding it requires taking into account these various grey areas, while also bearing in mind its particularity as *a minor literature*[12] , i.e. the profound relationship between its production and the construction and consolidation of a distinct national identity.[13] . Before we get there, let's start at the beginning.

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg is unique in that it is a country where linguistic distribution is no longer based on geography since its separation from its French-speaking quarters, which became the county of Luxembourg in Belgium (1839) and the region of Thionville in France (1659). This lack of spatial distribution in the use of different languages

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[9] Pascale Casanova, *The Global Republic of Letters, op. cit.*, p. 29.

[10] *Ibid.,* p. 175.

[11] See the works of Michel Pauly, Gilbert Trausch and Frank Wilhelm on the history of the Grand Duchy and the comings and goings of periods of linguistic domination over the centuries.

[12] As a more quantitative than qualitative concept, we approach Luxembourgish literary production through the prism of the narrowness of its field and the opportunities available to it. (See chapter I.2.)

[13] "Politicisation in the national or nationalist form – in other words, 'nationalisation' – is one of the defining features of 'minor' literatures." See Pascale Casanova, *La République mondiale des Lettres, op. cit., p.* 272. See also Anne-Marie Thiesse, *La création des identités nationales : Europe XVIIe-XXe siècle,* Paris, Seuil, 2001. See also Jeanne E. Glesener, 'D'Erfannen' vun der Nationalliteratur am 'Essai sur la poésie luxembourgeoise' (1854) vum Félix Thyes, *in* Anne-Marie Millim, Ian de Toffoli (*eds.*), *Modernisms in Luxembourg: Traditions – Variations – Ruptures,* Mersch, National Literature Centre, 2019.

distinguishes the small state from other multilingual states such as Switzerland[14] . However, as a result of this lack of geolinguistic distribution, the question of the formation of a national literature in the ideological impulses and conceptions of the 19th century[15] proved to be extremely difficult to resolve.

Referring once again to Ernst's description, the date he puts forward for the recognition of Luxembourgish literature as such is 1980. Nevertheless, its origins can be traced back to an earlier period. With his *Essai sur la poésie luxembourgeoise (Essay on Luxembourgish Poetry),* published in 1854, Félix Thyes laid the foundations for a school of thought based on what he considered to be the only true Luxembourgish literature, i.e. *literature written in the Luxembourgish* language[16] . This vision, ideologically imbued with romanticism and the political ideology of the nation state stemming directly from the changes brought about by the Congress of Vienna in 1815, consequently established the concept of Luxembourgish literature as three distinct entities: one national literature and two literatures by Luxembourgish authors in foreign languages (i.e. French and German). This vision became deeply rooted in the country's cultural imagination during the first half of the 20th century and found defenders in figures such as Michel Raus[17] and Frank Wilhelm[18] . The latter argues for this tripartite division by emphasising what he considers to be the excessive differences in cultural references between German-language, Luxembourgish-language and French-language authors[19] . The evocation of cultural references forges a direct link between French- and German-language production and a culture outside the nation, which, *de facto,* invariably distinguishes them from vernacular-language production through a deterritorialised aspect[20] . Frank Wilhelm is part of the Luxembourgish meta-literary discourse by addressing, as a consequence or result of institutional multilingualism, Luxembourgish literary production through the differential prism of languages, analysing mainly the identity construction of Luxembourgish authors in the light of the identity awareness that is emerging and testifies to an "[...] the emergence of a national consciousness forged over the last 150 years, in which linguistic identity and cultural choices have generated a distinct identity: *Grand* Ducality[21] ". His contemporary, Fernand Hoffmann, published *Die drei Literaturen Luxemburgs. Ihre Geschichte und ihre Problematik [The Three*

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[14] Frank Wilhelm, "L'écrivain francophone grand-ducal et ses choix linguistiques et culturels" [The French-speaking writer of the Grand Duchy and his linguistic and cultural choices], *in Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire,* 3, vol. 79, 2001, p. 884.

[15] "The nation being ideally envisaged as a linguistic community, writers contribute to the enrichment of the national language, its democratisation and sometimes even its creation, as in the case of the 'national awakenings'." See Anne-Marie Thiesse, *La fabrique de l'écrivain national. Entre littérature et politique,* Paris, Gallimard, NRF, 2019, pp. 16-17.

[16] Jeanne E. Glesener, "D'Erfannen" vun der Nationalliteratur am *Essai sur la poésie luxembourgeoise* (1854) vum Félix Thyes, *op. cit.*

[17] As Nicole Sahl points out: "Raus' provocative thesis that there is no Luxembourgish literature in foreign languages tacitly assumes that 'Luxembourgish literature' must be 'Luxembourgish', whatever that means. " [Raus' provocative thesis that there is no Luxembourgish literature in foreign languages implicitly presupposes that 'Luxembourgish literature must be "Luxembourgish", whatever that means. (personal translation)]" *in* Nicole Sahl, "Gibt es eine Luxemburger Literatur in fremden Sprachen, eine 'wirkliche' Literatur in Luxemburg?" *in Trouvailles: Archives-Recherche-Lettres,* Mersch, Centre national de littérature, 2014, p. 234.

[18] "Given this complex linguistic situation, the smallest country in the European Union has not one but three literatures, which use the three languages in common use," *in* Frank Wilhelm, "L'écrivain francophone grand-ducal" [The French-speaking writer of the Grand Duchy], *op. cit.,* p. 886.

[19] Frank Wilhelm, "Luxembourg's Francophone Literature and its Problematic Positioning", *in Amuse-Bouche. The French Language Journal of Yale University 1*, no. 1, Spring, 2010, p. 110.

[20] "The deterritorialised feeling of language expressed in the Francophone cultures of Europe, America, Africa and Asia is coupled with an identity claim that seeks to blur or even eliminate the effects of domination to which these cultures are subject." See Jean-Pierre Bertrand, "Territorialisation," *in* Michel Beniamino & Lise Gauvin (*eds.*), *Vocabulaire des études francophones, op. cit.*, p. 176.

[21] Frank Wilhelm, "L'écrivain francophone grand-ducal et ses choix linguistiques et culturels," *art. cit.*, p. 884.

Literatures of Luxembourg. Their History and Their Problems] in 1989. Also advocating the tripartite division of Luxembourgish literature based on the languages used for writing, Hoffmann nevertheless refers to the existence of what he describes as a common denominator, allowing him to group all works in three languages under the category of Luxembourgish literature. According to him, this common denominator is the national sentiment recognisable in Luxembourgish works, regardless of the language in which they are written[22] . His approach is to treat Luxembourgish literary history and its evolution mainly from the perspective of national identity. However, this common denominator embodied by national sentiment is not in itself a valid marker and is based more on a preconceived idea or an essentialising concept that automatically takes into account not the work but the writer. Indeed, what is national sentiment in a text? Hoffmann does not provide a clear definition or precise criteria on this point. Due to its intangible and undefined nature, Hoffmann's criterion remains an essentialisation, an idealisation of the unity of the literary corpus. The perceptible features of this common denominator are to be found elsewhere. The variable that best supports the development of a differential metaliterary discourse with regard to neighbouring literatures from a formal point of view can be found in the two characteristics already mentioned in Ernst's description at the beginning of the chapter: multilingualism and cultural hybridity.

As Germaine Goetzinger explains, the nationalising variable of literature remains more the preserve of its historiography, i.e. the metaliterary discourses surrounding it, than of a real internalisation of this component by literature itself, at least at the time of the country's independence. According to her, it is much more the multilingual reality that catches up with the early literary productions:

> What came easily to historiography does not seem to have been achieved by literature. Its fictions do not confer any higher sanctity on national independence; they are not incantations of national autonomy. Rather, they are overtaken by the contradictory and complex reality of the multilingual cultural space.[23]

> [What historiography has obviously managed to do easily, literature does not want to do. Its fictions do not confer a higher consecration on national independence ; they are not incantations of national autonomy. Rather, they are overtaken by the contradictory and complex reality of the multilingual cultural space. (pers. trans.)]

In fact, Goetzinger highlights the retroactive orientation often perceptible in meta-literary discourse, shifting the focus from literature's hoped-for anchoring to the nation and its independence towards recognition of the intrinsic presence of a multilingual component, through examples of language games and interlinguistic possibilities present in theatrical works such as Dicks' d'*Mumm Se'ss* and Michel Rodange's *Renert*. This situation, in which the identity dimension is challenged in favour of the multilingual variable by metaliterary discourse, does not, however, detach the literary object from its nationalising appeal. A paragon of a society that wants to be open to multiculturalism, Luxembourgish literature is the logical crystallisation of the Grand Duchy's geographical situation. On the border between the Romance and

[22] Fernand Hoffmann, "Die drei Literaturen Luxemburg. Ihre Geschichte und ihre Problematik," *in* Martin Gerges, *Mémorial 1989. La société luxembourgeoise de 1839 à 1989,* Luxembourg, Les Publications mosellanes, 1989, p. 467.

[23] Germaine Goetzinger, "Die Referenz auf das Fremde" (The Reference to the Foreign), *in* Irmgard Honnef-Becker & Peter Kühn, *Über Grenzen. Literaturen in Luxemburg (Across Borders: Literatures in Luxembourg), op. cit.* , p. 18.

Germanic linguistic areas, the Grand Duchy, due to the political impotence resulting from its foundation as a buffer state in the 19th century, has equipped itself with a major political tool in the form of institutionalised multilingualism, enabling it politically to be "German among the French and [...] French among the Germans[24] ". Since the 1843 school law, the Grand Duchy has sought to be a multilingual country and has established an unofficial triglossia[25] , which became official in 1984[26] . This political choice, to which we will return later, has shaped the linguistically composite nature of Grand Ducal literature, which has consequently become one of its major constituent dimensions. Its social importance is reflected in the recurring theme of questioning the 'mother tongue' (or 'main language') and 'foreign languages' (or even 'second languages') of its citizens[27] . Luxembourg's doubly peripheral linguistic situation generates and encourages the development of a metalanguage discourse, based mainly on acute linguistic hyper-awareness[28] , which encourages Luxembourgish writers, but also a large part of the Grand Ducal intellectual field, to question their position and their relationship with their own languages. Metaliterary discourse is very often combined with metalanguage discourse in the Luxembourg literary sphere, insofar as language issues are central to the latter. This is evidenced by the constant recurrence of questions about language in works and critiques surrounding Luxembourg literature. [29]Jeanne Glesener has addressed the importance and constitution of this metalanguage discourse and highlighted its primacy in the very perception of Luxembourgish literature: "If [multilingualism] is indeed one, if not the defining characteristic of the literature in question, it may well also be its essential dynamic and guarantee of survival as a language." The central role of multilingualism in dynamism and, above all, as a basis for a strong desire for identity-based distancing from the other two major neighbouring literatures, stems precisely from this link, which intrinsically combines Luxembourgish literary production and its relationship to the nation's situation. As Pascale Casanova points out, all minor literatures develop in a constitutive relationship with the nation-[30] from which they emerge, focusing mainly on often similar theoretical issues:

> [31]"The central question around which most literary debates in these emerging
> literary spaces are organised [...] remains that of the nation, language and
> people, the language of the people, and the linguistic, literary and historical
> definition of the nation."

The importance attached to these debates is evident in Luxembourgish literature throughout the 20th century, particularly those surrounding the question of the language of writing, in a context where one idiom is linked to a national aspect, while the other two, dominant as they are symbolically, remain nonetheless *exophonies*. Thus, from its origins,

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[24] "Report of the Permanent Commission on Education," 14 August 1844. *Correspondence from the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.*
[25] Jul Christophory, A *Short History of Literatures in Luxembourgish,* Luxembourg, National Library, 1994.
[26] The law on language use of 24 February 1984 establishes Luxembourgish as the national language, while retaining French and German as the administrative languages of the Grand Duchy.
[27] This is evidenced by the population census organised by *STATEC* in 2021 under the title "Une diversité linguistique en forte hausse" (A sharp increase in linguistic diversity), *RP,* 2021, no. 8.
[28] "[...] desire to question the very nature of language and go beyond simple ethnographic discourse. [...] to propose, at the heart of identity issues, a reflection on language and on the way in which the relationship between languages and literature is articulated in different contexts". See Lise Gauvin, *L'écrivain francophone à la croisée des langues,* Paris, Karthala, 1997, pp. 6-7.
[29] Jeanne E. Glesener, "Multilingualism as a characteristic and challenge of literature in Luxembourg," *op. cit.*, p. 138.
[30] "Politicisation in its national or nationalist form – in other words, 'nationalisation' – is one of the defining features of 'minor literatures'", *op. cit.,* p. 24.
[31] *Ibid.,* p. 274.

Luxembourgish literary production showed traces of transitions between languages and language games, echoing a situation combining linguistic insecurity[32] and linguistic hyper-awareness. During its emergence, from the mid-19th century to the 1970s and 1980s, Luxembourgish literary production gave rise to interesting literary discussions and debates, very often centred mainly on this linguistic dimension. Luxembourg's political independence and its interstitial situation created a multilingual breeding ground that was highly fertile for the imagination and, above all, for metaliterary reflections. Luxembourg's language policy established a triglossic social structure, which consequently also led to complications when, in the wake of the 19th century and the primacy of the monolingual prism, questions arose about the existence of a so-called *national* literature and, above all, debates about the capacity of Luxembourgish to be a literary language.

Glesener addresses the issue and the contrast between the notion of Luxembourgish literature as implied by Félix Thyes in the 19th century and its predominant use today, which tends to include all of the Grand Duchy's literary production under a single generic term, regardless of the language chosen[33] . This paradigm shift took place in two main stages. Firstly, at the beginning of the 20th century, with the advent in meta-literary and meta-linguistic discourse of a key concept in understanding the development of Luxembourgish cultural identity: *Mischkultur.* Literally translated as 'mixed culture' or 'culture of mixing', this notion, introduced by Batty Weber around 1907, symbolises the first shift in metalanguage discourse towards a conceptualisation of the literary object as a reflection of the concept of national identity, open to cultural hybridity, which it defines as stemming from a beneficial geographical in-between. Anne-Marie Millim analyses the emergence of this concept in relation to literary production and journalism insofar as "the influence of writers and journalists was great in the discursive construction of the nation [pers. trans.]"[34] . [35]This notion, however, never fully matured in Luxembourg and yet represents the appeal of presenting identity not as permanent but as evolving, with the borderline aspect of Grand Ducal culture, as *Kreuzungskultur[36]* , being perceived and presented as positive. The entry into the cultural debate of this idea promoting mixing and hybridity paved the way for a slow but profound questioning of the monolingual paradigm imposed by Herder's vision of the nation and the people, on which emerging Luxembourgish literature was heavily dependent. As Glesener explains: "The emergence of metalanguage discourse is closely linked to reflections on the Grand Duchy's mixed culture[37] ."

The difference between the meta-literary discourse of the 19th century and that of the early 20th century created a ferment that slowly but surely questioned and reshaped perspectives and, above all, awareness of what constitutes the nation and the Grand Ducal identity. In the 19th century, the validity of Luxembourgish as a literary language was addressed

[32] Germaine Goetzinger, "Die Referenz auf das Fremde," *op. cit.*

[33] "[...] am Géigesatz zu haut, wou mer de Begrëff 'Lëtzebuerger Literatur' als Kollektivsingular gebrauchen, deen op d'Literaturproduktioun an de verschiddene Sproochen verweist." ['[…] unlike today, where we use the term "Luxembourg literature" as a collective singular, which includes literary production in different languages.' (personal translation)] *in* Jeanne E. Glesener, '"D'Erfanne" vun der Nationalliteratur', *op. cit.*, p. 37.

[34] "In the discursive construction of the nation, the influence of writers and journalists was of great importance." See Anne-Marie Millim, "Muttersprachliche Mehrsprachigkeit" [Native Multilingualism], *in* Jeanne E. Glesener, Nathalie Roelens, Heinz Sieburg (*eds.*), *Das Paradigma der Interkulturalität: Themen und Positionen in europäischen Literaturwissenschaften [The Paradigm of Interculturality: Topics and Positions in European Literary Studies],* Bielefeld, Transcript, 2017, p. 85.

[35] See Sonja Kmec, "Batty Weber und das Konzept der 'Mischkultur'. Ein Vorgriff auf die heutige Interkulturalitätsdebatte," *in* Danielle Roster, Melanie Unseld (*eds.*), *Komponistinnen in Luxemburg. Helen Buchholtz (1877-1953) und Lou Koster (1889-1973),* Cologne, Böhlau, 2014.

[36] 'Culture of cross-fertilisation' [personal translation].

[37] Jeanne E. Glesener, "Multilingualism as a characteristic and challenge of literature in Luxembourg," *in* Heinz Sieburg (*ed.*), *Vielfalt der Sprachen – Varianz der Perspektiven, op. cit.*, p. 125.

as a predominant aspect in debates and discussions surrounding the country's literary production in an idealised manner according to the formula 'one language = one people = one nation'. Félix Thyes thus devoted his entire essay to the question of poetry in Luxembourgish, seeking to postulate the literary capacity of this idiom, even though the corpus of his essay remained very limited. This effort to grant Luxembourgish the status of a literary language, or at least to strengthen its legitimacy even though it was still, in fact, a simple regional dialect, was based on a romantic vision and, above all, imbued with Herder's philosophy of the relationship between a people and their language, a vision that could take on an air of necessity due to the Grand Duchy's recent independence. This approach did not prevent him from publishing, a year after his essay, in 1855, the first novel in French in Luxembourgish literature, *Marc Bruno. Artist* profile[38] . The reality of the linguistic situation thus remained one of triglossia, with French and German remaining dominant, despite a more natural attraction to Luxembourgish on the part of speakers. This attraction was largely based on an imagination steeped in what contemporary research calls *national* romanticism[39] . Added to this was the imperative of a differential discourse generated by the peripheral situation, and it was as an extension of a desire to construct an identity that the question of Luxembourgish, and consequently its relationship to the other dominant languages in the territory, became established as one of, if not the central theme present in a diffuse manner in metaliterary discourse throughout the Grand Duchy's existence[40] . Even today, the relationship between the question of Luxembourgish identity and its crystallisation through literature remains an important prism through which to approach the subject.

Nevertheless, if we refer to Ernst's definition at the beginning of our discussion, it was around 1980 that the real turning point occurred in Luxembourgish literature. Herder's vision of the nation, based on the monolingual premise that a national language serves as a bond between the nation and its people, was not yet fully contested, but it was challenged by a new approach to the situation in the Grand Duchy. With the emergence of a discourse promoting multiculturalism through the multilingual aspect of national identity, Luxembourg literature, like much of the intellectual field at the time, became involved in debates that saw the emergence, from 1907 onwards, of a theorisation of Luxembourg culture by Batty Weber as *Mischkultur (*literally translated as 'mixed culture' or 'culture of mixing'). According to Goetzinger, the emergence of this notion also represents a shift in the relationship with the other within Luxembourgish culture: "Es geht nicht mehr um die Abgrenzung gegenüber dem Fremden, sondern um dessen Integration und die Aufwertung der eigenen Zwischenstellung[41] . ['It is no longer a question of separating oneself from the foreigner, but rather of integrating them and recognising one's own intermediate position (personal translation).'] Recognising, among other things, that literary and linguistic creativity lies between languages, Batty Weber's metalinguistic discourse paved the way for the emergence in the 1980s of an imaginary world of the multilingual Luxembourgish writer and his relationship to languages through a multitude of diverse metaphors. The emergence of discussions and theories around multilingualism became, from then on, an integral and central feature of Grand Ducal culture. As often mentioned in research on multilingualism, it is in the questions surrounding language, its use and the writer's position in relation to one or more of them that an awareness of writing is

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[38] Félix Thyes, *Marc Bruno: profil d'artiste (1830–1855)* [1855], Luxembourg, Linden & Hansen, 1930.
[39] See Anne-Marie Thiesse, *La fabrique de l'écrivain national. Entre littérature et politique, op. cit.*, p. 32.
[40] "The emancipation of the Luxembourgish language from its status as a German dialect was one of the major issues in the literary life of the Grand Duchy, but one that can only be touched upon in the present context." See Fernand Fehlen, "Prolégomènes pour une étude du champ littéraire du Grand-Duché" (Prologue to a study of the literary field of the Grand Duchy), Luxembourg, 2012, p. 2. See online: https://orbilu.uni.lu/handle/10993/6161 [accessed on 4 November 2024].
[41] Germaine Goetzinger, "Das Referenz auf das Fremde," *op. cit.,* p. 21.

developed, in interstitial linguistic spaces such as Luxembourg, as an act of taking a stand and making a claim for languages that do not have this maternal character for the indigenous writer[42] .

It is the question of the linguistic hyper-awareness[43] of writers in a linguistic periphery that becomes a central variable in the economy of Luxembourgish literature from this period onwards. No longer simply as a lack of purism and mastery, as might have been implied in the early Luxembourgish period, but rather as an act of appropriation of the linguistic tool by a speaker. This shift in the self-perception of Luxembourgish writers corresponds to a paradigm shift in the very perception of literature as an object. This change is embodied in a question of nomenclature that emerges, distinguishing two visions of the literary act within the framework of this literature and which, according to Glesener, "[...] reflects two particular ways of understanding the literature(s) in question, which concern both the (common) cultural referent and the degree of affiliation with foreign literatures[44] ".

As we have seen, Ernst's argument posits that the characteristics most widely recognised since the 2000s are primarily its multilingualism, but also the cultural hybridity that Luxembourg literature seeks to embody. The former, for political reasons, leads to the latter, insofar as languages, as cultural objects, often establish a principle of domination through their use, as Casanova implies: "[...] in the global Republic of Letters, other principles of domination, particularly political ones, can be identified, which continue to be exercised notably through language[45] ". However, in the case of Luxembourg, this common cultural reference, evoked by Glesener, which initially seems to crystallise around the discourse of Luxembourgish identity and relations with foreign literatures, mainly German and French, would reveal these two other characteristics of Luxembourgish literature. Firstly, its cultural and linguistic hybridity[46] , which subsequently leads to the imperative for writers in the Grand Duchy to choose between a national and a universal perspective. This hybridity of Luxembourgish literature results from its obvious geographical location, as we have already mentioned, which places it simultaneously within the sphere of influence of two major cultural spheres. In his book *A Short History of Literature in Luxembourgish,* Jul Christophory explains: "The basis of Luxembourg literature is the growing awareness of a particular cultural identity based on the mother tongue but also made up of different linguistic and social ingredients contributed by our French and German neighbours[47] ." Taking up the themes of *mother tongue* and Luxembourgish particularism, Christophory argues that these are the result of a hybridisation where, to quote Frank Wilhelm, "linguistic selfhood and cultural choices have generated a distinct identity: *Grand Ducality*[48] ". Or how cultural discourse supports identity discourse. The revival of the discourse of identity construction through the prism of linguistic identity and a relationship with a mother tongue with less symbolic capital than its counterparts thus echoes the *Mischkultur* already mentioned above and reinforces, in metalanguage discourse, the appropriation by identity discourse of the multicultural and multilingual variable.

Christophory's evocation of the term *'mother tongue'* paves the way here for an analysis of another *topos* that is widespread in Luxembourgish metaliterary discourse and which is

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[42] "[...] the two highly developed languages are not native to Luxembourgers, whereas their native language, Luxembourgish, lacks sophistication." See Johannes Kramer, "Tri-Literalität" in der Literatur in Luxemburg, *in* Irmgard Honnef-Becker, Peter Kühn (*eds.*), *Über Grenzen. Literaturen in Luxemburg, op. cit.*, p. 46.

[43] Lise Gauvin, "Surconscience linguistique" [Linguistic superconsciousness], *in* Michel Beniamino & Lise Gauvin, *Vocabulaire des études francophones [Vocabulary of Francophone studies], op. cit.,* p. 172.

[44] Jeanne E. Glesener, "Le multilinguisme comme caractéristique et défi de la littérature au Luxembourg," *art. cit.,* p. 109.

[45] Pascale Casanova, *La République mondiale des Lettres, op. cit.*, p. 172.

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 111.

[47] Jul Christophory, A *Short History of Literature in Luxembourgish,* Luxembourg, National Library, 1994, p. 15.

[48] *Ci-supra,* p. 24.

based on a differential and complex relationship with languages. Johannes Kramer explains this, drawing inspiration from the case of the polyglot writer Jurij Koch:

> The language that Jurij Koch so aptly describes as part of his fundamental existence and his entry into the world, the language he grew up with and to which his fate is bound, the language he cannot escape, even if he wanted to, which he had as little choice in as his parents, this language is Luxembourgish for Luxembourgers, but there is not just *one* constant linguistic companion, not just *one* big neighbour, not just *one* carefully tailored going-out dress as opposed to the simple housecoat, there are *two,* and they are quite different, they need to be handled very differently and are equally distant from one another: German and French[49] .

> [The language that Jurij Koch so aptly describes as part of his basic existence and his entry into the world, with which he grew up and to which his destiny is linked, which he cannot escape even if he wanted to, which he had no more choice in than his parents, this language is Luxembourgish for the people of Luxembourg, but there is not *just one* permanent linguistic companion, not *just one* big neighbour, not *just one* carefully prepared outfit for going out as opposed to simple indoor clothing, but there are *two,* and even two that are very different, that need to be handled in very different ways and that are distant from you in different ways, namely German and French. (personal translation)

The metaphorical register of the companion, the neighbour or even clothing allows us to introduce both a relationship of proximity, or even juxtaposition, in time (neighbour and companion), as well as a dimension of internalisation, representation or even externalisation through clothing. However, it is this last metaphor that introduces an interesting comparison. Whereas the two previous terms remain open to a simple comparison between the bilingual Koch and the trilingual Luxembourger, introducing the complexity of an intermediate situation between two languages that are so profoundly different and which the Luxembourgish writer would nevertheless use, the last term (clothing) allows for the introduction of a qualitative judgement through the difference between the "*schlichten Hausanzug*" ("simple indoor attire") and the "*sorgfältig zurechtgemachtes Ausgehkleid*" ("carefully prepared outdoor attire"). This contrast introduces the reader to an important difference in the representation and, above all, the symbolic capital enjoyed by the various languages in question. The Luxembourgish language seems to pale in comparison to the two major languages, German and French, despite the fact that it is the language to which '[...] Schicksal gebunden ist, von der er nicht loskommen kann, selbst wenn er es wollte, die er sich so wenig aussuchen konnte wie seine Eltern [...][50] ". Kramer thus underlines the hereditary aspect of a language that one would not have chosen and into which one is born, echoing Yasemin Yildiz's analyses of the monolingual paradigm[51] . Through the *pathos* conveyed by Kramer's description of an inevitable marginality, it is above all the difference in symbolic capital that accentuates the marginal situation of the

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[49] Johannes Kramer, 'Tri-Literalität' in der Literatur in Luxemburg, *op. cit.,* p. 35.

[50] "[...] his destiny is bound, which he cannot escape even if he wanted to, which he could not choose any more than his parents [...]" (personal translation). See *Ibidem,* p. 11.

[51] "This language [the mother tongue] is special because one is born into it, one acquires it with the 'mother's milk' or at least at the 'mother's knee'. See Yasemin Yildiz, Beyond the Mother Tongue. The Postmonolingual Condition, New York, Fordham University Press, 2012, p. 203. See Yasemin Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue. The Postmonolingual Condition,* New York, Fordham University Press, 2012, p. 203.

Luxembourgish language and, consequently, the marginality experienced by Luxembourgish speakers in relation to their French and German neighbours. This marginality is widespread throughout all small linguistic areas and is expressed above all by the writers who come from them. However, the appeal of Luxembourgish seems no less inevitable, as Kramer implies at the beginning of the extract and reinforces a few pages later by explaining that '[...] *die zwei elaborierten großen Sprachen haben für Luxemburger keinen muttersprachlichen Charakter [...]* " [[...] the two great, elaborate languages do not have a mother tongue character for Luxembourgers [...] (personal translation)]. Thus, it is the intrinsic relationship of the multilingual speaker to his languages that introduces into the metalanguage discourse one of the most persistent topoi in the Luxembourgish literary imagination, which has its source precisely in his situation of linguistic hyper-awareness, namely the *topos* of *the mother* tongue[52] . Persisting despite the claim to multilingualism in literary practice, the *topos* of the mother tongue stems from the profound questioning generated by the act of writing in several languages in a peripheral situation, decentralised in relation to the normalising poles that are the centres of the large linguistic and literary areas of the two other languages nearby.

The intrinsic link between a speaker and a hypothetical mother tongue is based mainly on a monolingual prism and a vision that emphasises a unique link between a speaker and their inherited language, as Yildiz points out:

> According to [the monolingual] paradigm, individuals and social formations
> are imagined to possess only one "true" language, their "mother tongue", and
> this possession is organically linked to an exclusive, demarcated ethnicity,
> culture and nation[53] .

> [According to the [monolingual] paradigm, individuals and social formations
> are supposed to possess only one "true" language, their "mother tongue", and
> this possession is organically linked to an exclusive, demarcated ethnicity,
> culture, and nation. (pers. trans.)]

This monolingual paradigm remains very present in small linguistic areas, insofar as the equation "one language = one nation" remains deeply rooted in the sense of belonging to small nations. However, this approach remains rooted in an empathetic and subjective relationship to national issues and, echoing Casanova's remarks, is reflected in the difficulties posed by a concept such as *mother tongue* in contemporary intellectual debates. The questioning of the monolingual paradigm in recent decades and research on this subject have brought to light the intrinsic links it presupposes between language and nation, links that carry a strong ideological charge and continue to be expressed in the metalanguage discourse surrounding Luxembourgish literature. Indeed, the perception and representation of languages remain a central dimension, reinterpreting the "mother tongue" in order to form and theorise the triglossic structure at play through a hierarchy of proximity, as in Wilhelm:

> As the mother tongue strikes a more emotional chord, Luxembourgish
> responds to a primary and spontaneous need for identity, as does German to a
> lesser extent; French, long practised by certain intellectuals as an antidote to
> the perceived threat of Pan-Germanism, generates a second-degree, more
> cerebral but no less decisive identity reflex[54] .

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[52] "[...] the mother tongue is the first language one learns and continues to master. [...]" See Michel Beniamino & Lise Gauvin (*eds.*), *Vocabulaire des études francophones. Les concepts de base, op. cit.,* p. 113.
[53] Yasemin Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue. The Postmonolingual Condition, op. cit.*
[54] Frank Wilhelm, "L'écrivain francophone grand-ducal et ses choix linguistiques et culturels," *art. cit.*, p. 886.

Or again, in Helminger, when he recalls becoming aware of his linguistic situation as a child in the 1950s:

> Another thing struck me: the hated German was much closer to our language than the highly praised French, with which most of us had difficulties.

> [Another thing that struck me: the hated German was much closer to our language than the much-loved French, with which most of us had difficulties.
> (pers. trans.)]

The use of Luxembourgish as a mother tongue in Wilhelm's work, which echoes Helminger's possessive "our language " (*unserer Sprache)*, becomes the basis for comparison, thus introducing a distance in the registration of a Luxembourgish speaker with regard to their use of other languages, a distance that varies from one language to another, with French being, according to Wilhelm and Helminger, the most distant language. This is not unfounded linguistically, as Luxembourgish is, as we have indicated, a language of Franconian-Moselle origin, in other words, from the Germanic language family, so it seems quite normal to express this feeling of closeness and instinctive attachment. But it is precisely this impression of naturalness that becomes the focus of discourse and a source of debate, depending on whether one finds oneself, as in Helminger's case, just after the Second World War, or, as in Wilhelm's case, in the 2000s. The weight of the argument is not the same, because the ideology within metalanguage discourse evolves in parallel with the societal context. The relationship with the other languages that make up the Luxembourg literary space is thus part of a collection of metaphors and images that attempt to portray the desired situation as specific to Luxembourg writers in terms of language, an image that also varies according to the period. Questioning Luxembourgish authors about their writing language and their output in relation to their linguistic choices thus becomes one of the keys to understanding cultural hybridity, insofar as the use of two neighbouring languages implies, according to Kramer, a necessary adaptation to the obligations of usage that these languages require[55] . This complicated relationship raises questions about the place that language occupies in the consciousness of writers and contributes to the development, within metalinguistic discourse, of a long-standing differential approach between works written in one of the neighbouring languages and those written in the national language, a choice that leads to a different relationship with neighbouring and local cultures.

Thus, the relationship to language and, by extension, to literary writing, still seems to be largely, and paradoxically, part of a discourse imbued with the monolingual paradigm, so much so that the factor of identity and nationality permeates the writer's relationship to languages. Indeed, the use of the term *mother tongue* implies, by extension, a relationship with one or more foreign languages in discourse, or at least with *other languages.* Nico Helminger, for example, expresses it as follows: "*Ein Luxemburger schreibt immer und ohen Ausnahme in einer* Fremdsprache[56] ." ["A Luxembourger always writes in a foreign language, without exception."] This situation of deterritorialisation in relation to the dominant languages is revealed in metalanguage discourse as having both the appeal of the foreign and the appeal of the familiar, according to the subtitle of a paper by Fernand Fehlen, which takes the example

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[55] "[...] sondern es gibt *zwei,* und zwar zwei, die recht unterschiedlich sind, die ganz unterschiedlich gehandhabt werden wollen und einem unterschiedlich fern stehen, das Deutsche und das Französische eben." *Ci-supra,* p. 32.
[56] Nico Helminger, "Wahl & Wal," *in Zeitschrit für interkulturelle Germanistik,* 5|2014, Bielefeld, Transcript, p. 166.

of French: *Französich: (K)eine Fremdsprache[57]* . The ambivalence of the title heralds the ambiguity of the position of these two exophone languages in the Luxembourg linguistic space and, consequently, in its literary production. As the population of the Grand Duchy underwent profound social changes throughout the 20th century, the *topos* of the mother tongue, understood as the language in which one is born, became problematic in the sense that a large part of the population was not born there and whose most widely used language remains other than Luxembourgish. Despite this, the recurrence of this prism in the linguistic consciousness present in metaliterary discourse still demonstrates an orientation of discourse towards questioning and interrogating the national status of languages recognised as 'of the country'. This simple example supports the ambiguity of this *topos* in a literary space such as Luxembourgish. The mixing of the population since the second half of the 20th century has led to a constant re-evaluation of the cultural hybridity of the Grand Duchy, a re-evaluation of which literature has become the most striking representation.

Exposed to both French and German culture since its origins, Luxembourgish literature has long been marginalised in comparison to the literary output of its two large neighbours. However, the openness afforded by language proficiency not only gives Luxembourgish authors the possibility of choosing between languages, but also forces them to choose between "[...] openness to the world or [a] retreat into traditional values [...][58] ". The qualitative contrast evoked by Kramer through his metaphor contrasting formal attire with indoor wear subtly introduces a vision that contrasts the prism of perspective that each language allows. As in any diglossic structure, each language is associated with a function or even a role. In his attempt at description, Thomas Ernst hints at this fact through the attribution of literary genres to the various languages of Luxembourg's triglossic structure[59] . This distribution can also be seen as a consequence of the prism contrasting universalism and regionalism to which Luxembourgish literary production is often subjected through linguistic differences. This dichotomy is structured as a result of the difference in symbolic capital accorded to each of the country's two administrative languages, French and German.

In the case of the French language, Casanova summarises the imagery surrounding it by explaining that '[French] literary capital has the particularity of also being universal heritage[60] . Through its literary output, its political and philosophical influence, its symbolic capital and the breadth of its literary field, the French language is often represented in metaliterary discourse as a gateway to universalism and internationalism, and above all as part of a culture and literature whose prestige is accentuated by the elitist status attached to the French language in Grand Ducal society. This situation, this vision of French-language literature as part of a universal humanism, is now widely questioned, and the role and representation of the French language conveyed by metalanguage and metaliterary discourse has undergone significant change. The place of the French language and its weight in metaliterary discourse was largely re-evaluated towards the end of the second half of the 20th century, as Wilhelm explains:

> The end of ideologies means that French speakers in the Grand Duchy no
> longer use the language of Gide or Sartre in order to adhere to French culture,

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[57] Translating the play on words is complicated here, but one attempt would be ["French: (not) a foreign language"]. See Fernand Fehlen, "Die Stellung des Französischen in Luxemburg," *in* Heinz Sieburg (*ed.*), *Vielfalt der Sprachen – Varianz der Perspektiven, op. cit*., p. 50.
[58] Germaine Goetzinger, "Anise Koltz: une trajectoire littéraire sous le signe du refus", *in Arts et lettres: publication de la Section des arts et des lettres de l'Institut grand-ducal,* Luxembourg, Institut Grand-Ducal, no. 2, 2011, p. 51.
[59] *See below,* I.2.a.) Linguistic situation
[60] Pascale Casanova, *La République mondiale des Lettres, op. cit.,* p. 133.

or even French humanism. Nevertheless, French is still chosen for its plastic
qualities and the admirable horizon of literary reference that it conveys. [...]
[61]Ultimately, for a Grand Ducal citizen, writing in French means claiming the
cultural exception of French.

The discourse of Francophonie[62] , long central to Francophone literary criticism in the country, has thus reached a turning point. It is no longer the influence and *ethos* of the language that attracts people, but rather its material benefits, i.e. the materiality of the language and the literary capital it possesses. The French language is approached as a tool, no longer as a means of becoming part of "French culture, or even French humanism". Rosemarie Kieffer recounts a situation in which Marcel Noppeney, a leading figure in Luxembourg's Francophone community in the first half of the 20th century, expressed his view of the importance of French in Luxembourg:

In 1966, when eighty-eight-year-old Marcel Noppeney was dying, he told me
that the great passion of his life had been the French language, and he asked
me to carry on his work. Although I admire Marcel Noppeney very much, I
feel that the period of an exclusive love for the French language has come to
an end because of the world of international exchange we live in[63] .

[In 1966, when Marcel Noppeney, aged 88, was dying, he told me that the
great passion of his life had been the French language, and he asked me to
carry on his work. Although I greatly admire Marcel Noppeney, I feel that the
period of exclusive love for the French language has come to an end because
of the world of international exchange in which we live (personal translation).]

Both Wilhelm and Kieffer express a shift that has taken place in the perception and place of French in Luxembourg society, which obviously has an impact on its position in the Grand Duchy's literary production. The disappearance of emblematic figures of Luxembourg's Francophonie, of which Marcel Noppeney is the prime example, seems to mark the end of a tripartite, hermetic conception of Luxembourgish literature in relation to its French counterpart. Kieffer recounts this through her evocation of Noppeney's request, which she refuses to grant because she feels that this vision of the French language and culture is no longer compatible with her social and global context. At the dawn of globalisation, all the linguistic certainties developed and recognised since the country's independence are being called into question, which influences the meta-literary discourse. Nevertheless, the choice of universalism in Luxembourgish literature often remains concomitant with the choice of French as the language of writing, as well as the poetic genre, which can be explained more by the production possibilities offered by the Luxembourgish literary field and its lack of structure allowing for the professionalisation of the act of writing. The change lies in the representation of the French-speaking Luxembourgish writer, who cannot approach literature as a "pleasure for idle

[61] Frank Wilhelm, "The Grand Ducal Francophone Writer," *art. cit.,* p. 889.
[62] "[...] Francité constitutes another entity, albeit a non-geographical one [...], recognisable by its attachment to French civilisation and culture (the latter being defined as 'a rational way of posing problems and seeking solutions, but always with reference to humanity')." See Jean-Marie Klinkenberg, "Francité," *in* Michel Beniamino & Lise Gauvin, *Vocabulaire des études francophones, op. cit., p*. 82.
[63] Rosemarie Kieffer, "Luxembourg Literature Today," *art. cit,* p. 518.

aesthetes[64] " but rather as an activity that follows the laws of the book market, whose reach can be increased by the influence of the French language, provided that it breaks through.

The choice of regionalism has often been linked in meta-literary discourse to the Luxembourgish language, but also to German. The possibilities for literary influence offered by the Luxembourgish language as an outlet remain very limited today, despite its status as a national language. Writing in Luxembourgish means condemning one's work to remain within the borders of the Grand Duchy, with very little hope of reaching a wider audience without the help of various translations. German, due to its proximity to Luxembourgish, has inherited a regional appeal, despite its status as a major literary language. Its proximity to Luxembourgish facilitates its use by regional speakers and writers, which further anchors it, for most of the 20th century, as the written version of the Luxembourgish language, explaining the widely held idea of a division between Luxembourgish for theatre (a predominantly oral language until recently) and German for prose texts (due to its standardised grammar and lexicon).

However, this dichotomy bears the marks of an idealised vision and, once again, of a tendency in metaliterary discourse towards conceptualisation, an essentialisation through idealisation, of what languages represent through the way they are portrayed. This discourse on the cultures associated with the French and German languages is fully in line with a vision of overlaps and attachments to a set of values and characteristics which, in the case of the French language, for example, falls within the register of "Francité[65] " (Frenchness as a universal value). This concept represents a non-geographical space and summarises everything that characterises French culture in its most humanistic and universal aspects. This discourse fully places French-language literary production in a relationship of assimilation with French culture, and more specifically with its Parisian centre. Thus, with regard to the French language aspect that is of particular interest to us, the inclusion of Luxembourgish production within the literary Francophonie has its roots in an initial movement of attraction and assimilation by the first generation of Luxembourgish intellectuals. This persisted, reinforced by the vagaries of history and two world wars which, for several decades, discredited the German language in the eyes of the Luxembourgish population. The French language and French-language production became established as the language of the elites, while retaining a very strong sense of purism and preservation of the norms originating in Paris. This relationship with the French language as the breeding ground for a differential metalinguistic discourse can be found in 1933 in Marcel Noppeney, for example:

> It is largely thanks to the use of the French language, even if incomplete or incorrect, that we have been able to preserve and maintain a particular, personal mentality, a Luxembourgish mentality. [...] The use and cultivation of French are for us a duty and an obligation, the most sacred of duties, the most sacred of obligations. [...] It is thanks to this anti-Germanic 'vaccine' ALONE that we will succeed in preserving our particular character, our fundamental originality, our national independence[66] .

The lexical field used here by Noppeney demonstrates a strong attachment to the discourse of *Frenchness* on the one hand, but also to the monolingual paradigm on the other. The incomplete, or even incorrect use of the language is more of an observation than a hypothesis of usage that varies from the Parisian norm idealised by literature. Furthermore, the

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[64] Frank Wilhelm, "Le champ littéraire francophone," *in* Claude Wey (*ed.*), *Le Luxembourg des années 50. Une société de petite dimension entre tradition et modernité, op. cit.*, p. 371.

[65] *See above,* p. 49.

[66] Marcel Noppeney, "Nécessité du français", 1933, quoted by Fernand Fehlen, "Die Stellung des Französischen in Luxemburg", *op. cit.,* p. 47.

evocation of the obligation to "worship French" and its metaphor of the "anti-German vaccine" introduces the main characteristic claimed by the Francophone metalanguage discourse of the first half of the 20th century, that of French as a means of counterbalancing German influence and thus constructing a distinct identity[67] . This position is also based on theoretical debates related to the concept of *Mischkultur*. Batty Weber theorises the hybrid dimension of Luxembourgish identity by advocating, among other things, literary creation inspired by the idiosyncrasies of Luxembourgish writers. Millim describes how Batty Weber's variable conceptualisation of this notion of *Mischkultur* fits into the monolingual paradigm that was still dominant at the time:

> The inaccuracy is highly context-dependent: in everyday language use, Weber often presents the mixing of language systems as a sign of incompetence and arrogance, but in the field of art, according to him, it is evidence of creativity, individuality and Luxembourgish uniqueness[68] .

> [The incorrectness is highly context-dependent: in the linguistic usage of the population, Weber often presents mixtures of linguistic systems as signs of incompetence and arrogance, but in the field of art, according to him, they testify to creativity, individuality and Luxembourgish uniqueness. (pers. trans.)]

This openness to idiosyncratic variation in language in metaliterary discourse introduces a desire for legitimacy with regard to an artistic approach that, as a specifically Luxembourgish production, can crystallise a distancing from the literary norms imported from the two large neighbouring areas. However, it is important to note that this openness to the idiosyncratic use of languages does not only concern artistic use. In terms of everyday practice, the monolingual paradigm, and its dichotomy between competence and incompetence, between norm and error, i.e. between the self and the other, remains firmly rooted in popular practice.

Nevertheless, this openness allows for an initial movement of distancing, albeit slight, but one that reconfigures the image that Luxembourgish identity wishes to project of itself. It was around the same time, in the first half of the 20th century, and due to a political context based on deep enmity between France and Germany, that metaliterary discourse became part of a reconfiguration of national identity towards a conceptualisation of the Grand Duchy as an intermediate space between German and French cultures. One of *the* recurring *themes* in Luxembourgish writers' perception of their own country in recent decades is that of an intermediate, transitional, mediating space located at the confluence of two countries with a tumultuous past:

> Nachdem die Zwichenstellung Luxemburg zum Topos der Selbstcharakteristik avanciert ist, schält sich als Wunschidentität des Luxemburger Schriftstellers die des Vermittlers zwischen den Kulturen heraus[69] .

> [After Luxembourg's intermediate position was promoted to the status of a topos of self-characterisation, the desired identity of the Luxembourgish writer became that of a mediator between cultures. (pers. trans.)]

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[67] See Germaine Goetzinger, "Die Referenz auf das Fremde," *op. cit.*

[68] Anne-Marie Millim, "Muttersprachliche Mehrsprachigkeit" (Native multilingualism), *op. cit.,* p. 86.

[69] Germaine Goetzinger, "Die Referenz auf das Fremde" (The Reference to the Foreign), *op. cit.,* p. 22.

According to Goetzinger, the imaginary of the intercalated space lies deeply rooted in the question of Luxembourgish writers' self-perception, which is evident in the numerous metaphors used throughout the 20th century to describe the Grand Duchy, to the point where, according to Glesener: "[...] throughout the 20th century, for instance, ideas of cultural in-betweenness and mixity dominated Luxembourg's self-perception[70] ". According to Glesener, it would seem impossible not to see in such a strong recurrence of the metaphor of the intermediate space a need for legitimisation and description of a situation experienced as particular and sensitive by the country's natives[71] . [72]According to Sieburg, this impression imprints on the Luxembourgish imagination the appeal of a bridging function between neighbouring spaces. This perception of themselves, this construction and elaboration of meaning in relation to such a strong interstitial situation, crystallised during the interwar period through the figure of the Mayrisch couple.

Aline Mayrisch de Saint-Hubert and her husband Émile Mayrisch were at the centre of a major cultural initiative in 20th-century European society. Thanks to Émile Mayrisch's high social position in the Grand Duchy at the time, but also to Aline Mayrisch's role as a patron of the arts who was particularly attentive to artists[73] , they succeeded in organising mainly Franco-German meetings between the wars at their castle in Colpach, thereby promoting rapprochement between these two countries that had recently been enemies on the battlefield. The idea of creating a meeting place for prominent figures from both countries within the borders of a neutral state situated between them reflects the vision of themselves as mediators that Luxembourgish intellectuals can espouse. Living in a border territory, linguistically part of the sphere of influence of both belligerent countries, this propensity for mediation became an almost inherent feature of the country's society and culture, crystallising strongly around the first half of the 20th century and its conflicts.

All this intertwining within the meta-literary discourse between nation and literature came to be challenged and overturned in the 1970s and 1980s. The generational shift that took place during these decades, as well as the beginning of a professionalisation of the literary field and the means of production, gave rise to a new approach to literature, a shift in metaliterary discourse where the "intertwining of languages that govern the intimate universe of the novice migrant poet [...] [74]" is claimed more as the individual appropriation of a personal identity than a national one. Thus, paradigms such as nomadism and migration, as well as the end of a complex inferiority complex, are introduced as *topos,* expressed in the words of Roger Manderscheid, the leader of this generation:

[Das] ende der bescheidenheit, einigkeit der einzelgänger, formulierung
unseres aktuellen selbstverständnisses als luxemburger autoren, luxemburger,
deutscher und französicher sprache[75] .

[70] Jeanne E. Glesener, "The Separateness of Luxembourgish Literatures revisited. Prolegomenon to a History of Literature in Luxembourg", *in Trouvailles. Archives – Recherches – Lettres,* Mersch, Centre national de littérature, 2014, p. 153.

[71] "Despite these metaphors' focus on interstitiality, rootlessness or plurality, and even if they implicitly counter a monolithic view of culture, identity and language, one cannot ignore their somewhat negative tenor. Also, their frequency in the cultural discourse of the[20th]century makes us guess at the urgency that was felt of making sense of what was perceived as a particular situation which had to be described and legitimised.*" Id.*

[72] Sieburg refers to this as *Brückenfunktion.* See Heinz Sieburg, "Die Stellung der deutschen Sprache in Luxemburg," *in* Heinz Sieburg (*ed.*), *Vielfalt der Sprachen – Varianz der Perspektiven, op. cit.*, p. 84.

[73] Traces of this can be found in his correspondence with André Gide, in particular: André Gide, Aline Mayrisch, *Correspondance 1903-1946,* Paris, Gallimard, 2013.

[74] Jeanne E. Glesener, "Le multilinguisme comme caractéristique et défi de la littérature au Luxembourg" [Multilingualism as a characteristic and challenge of literature in Luxembourg], *op. cit.,* p. 122.

[75] Roger Manderscheid, *Leerläufe,* Esch-sur-Alzette, Kremer-Muller, 1978, p. 11.

> [[The] end of modesty, unity of loners, formulation of our current identity as Luxembourgish authors, in Luxembourgish, German and French. (personal translation)

A paradigm shift introduced in 1978, this discourse legitimises the identity of the Luxembourgish writer as a full and complete identity, and also enshrines this legitimacy in the common practice of the country's three languages. It is now as *a polygraph* that the identity of the Luxembourgish writer is constructed in metaliterary discourse, taking into account the simultaneous linguistic presence of the three languages under the monolingual appearance of any one of them. This permanent omnipresence of the multilingual variable in Luxembourgish productions would therefore imply a change in approach to its literary object as well. Thus, in this drive for legitimisation and distancing from neighbouring literatures, and insofar as French and German are not perceived by the inhabitants and writers of the Grand Duchy as fundamentally foreign languages, the output that results from their use is subject to an effort of singularisation. The emergence of the concept of *Francography*[76] in literary debates to describe Luxembourgish literature in French, rather than the more widely used academic term *Francophonie*, is evidence of a quest for distancing and a refusal to be co-opted by authorities and institutions considered foreign to the country. The practice of language, or languages, in their relationship to one another, as a means of expressing the individuality of Grand Ducal production, is thus built on a myriad of metaphors and images specific to describing the interaction between "writer + language(s)". Whether it be Jean Portante's metaphor of the *strange language*, Georges Hausemer's *Stiefmuttersprache [*stepmother's language (personal translation)] in Georges Hausemer's work, or the "war between languages" evoked by Guy Rewenig, the question of the linguistic situation remains central and fundamental, whether because of the promotion of multilingualism by Luxembourg society or because of its cultural hybridity, a fertile breeding ground for productions subject to linguistic hyper-awareness. Thus, the emergence of the term *francography* attempts to distinguish Grand Ducal production from the entire French-speaking sphere, as Glesener explains:

> The term "francography", for example, is dependent on the strategy of disassociation from the French literary system and resistance to arbitrary appropriation by that same system. It also seems to refer to the inside/outside of language, insofar as the transcribed language is not identical to the language within the language, i.e. the mother tongue[77] .

To evoke and forge strategies of non-belonging to the French literary system is to implicitly take into account one's intrinsic belonging to and submission to the power relations that constitute it. Insofar as literary belief often obscures the principle of domination at the heart of its functioning as a system[78] , undertaking strategies to impose its legitimacy as an autonomous system means first acknowledging its primary situation as a constituent part of that system. The use of French as the language of writing and its institutionalisation within Luxembourg's multilingualism immediately places Luxembourgish production in the position of Francophone literature. Nevertheless, this does not detract from the fact that, through its

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[76] Frank Wilhelm defines this concept as follows: "This neologism emphasises the fact that in Luxembourg, French – in its most intellectual functions – is mainly written." See Frank Wilhelm, "L'écrivain francophone grand-ducal" [The Grand Ducal French-speaking writer], *op. cit.*, p. 887.
[77] Jeanne E. Glesener, "Le multilinguisme comme caractéristique et défi de la littérature au Luxembourg" [Multilingualism as a characteristic and challenge of literature in Luxembourg], *op. cit.*, p. 132.
[78] Pascale Casanova, *La République mondiale des Lettres, op. cit.,* p. 28.

peripheral and marginal position, Luxembourgish metaliterary discourse can claim a strategy of distancing itself from the Parisian centre, a distance that varies depending on the period, and which is accentuated by the use of the term *Francography*. This distancing, which became evident from the Manderscheid generation onwards, symbolises a break with Francophilia and identification with an idealised Francité that had been prevalent in Francophone Luxembourg literature until then.

This schism, provoked and claimed by Manderscheid's generation, also resulted in a break with the themes usually associated with Luxembourg literature in meta-literary discourse. For a long time, literary production in the Grand Duchy was mainly limited to works that can be categorised as belonging to Heimatliteratur[79] , which Fabienne Gilbertz defines, quoting Josef Donnenberg, as works "marked, on the one hand, by the experience of the native world as a rural or provincial world, and on the other hand, which tend to present this rural and provincial homeland and its way of life as a supreme value[80] ". This trait, which is particularly present in his German-language works, this dimension of provincial, rural and pastoral literature, echoing the dichotomy between French universalism and German regionalism, was completely called into question in the 1960s and 1970s, when the Luxembourgish writer's conception of himself underwent a profound revolution. Representing a situation and a self-perception of being on the distant periphery, this provincialism, claimed by literary discourse in the development of the national imagination, was profoundly challenged in the Luxembourgish writer's self-representation through openness and contact with writers from neighbouring literary spaces. Through the Mondorf Days, an entire ideological matrix was called into question, particularly what Gilbertz describes as "the inferiority complex cultivated for a long time in Luxembourg[81] ". Thanks to this elevation and the confidence that the Grand Ducal artist gained from it, literature as a whole evolved in terms of its subjects and the way it approached them. What Thomas Ernst implied in his description, "Die Literatur Luxemburgs wird als solche erst seit den 1980er Jahren anerkannt [...]" (Luxembourg literature has only been recognised as such since the 1980s), is precisely in line with this momentum. It is a self-, legitimising meta-literary discourse that marks the birth of Luxembourg literature in the 1980s, in a modern and, above all, more professionalised vision of the act of being a writer. From then on, the hybrid nature of the Grand Duchy's literary output became more open to its multilingual component than in the past, fully embracing sociolinguistic variations not as a reflection of linguistic insecurity leading to a tendency towards hypercorrection, but as a fully recognised difference, i.e. an accepted otherness. From a literature strongly marked by its peripheral status, always out of step with a dominant literary centre and heavily influenced by neighbouring artistic trends, Luxembourg literature has been able to reorient itself towards a recognition of its personal challenges by asserting its borderline status, which is expressed both through variations on a linguistic norm, through a very strong presence of a reflexive and self-reflexive vision of the act of multilingual writing, and through literary productions with strongly heterolingual characteristics in the text.

To conclude, let us attempt to answer the initial question succinctly, in a few lines. What is Luxembourgish literature? It is a literary production that is a product of its geopolitical situation, whose metaliterary discourse has long linked its development and evolution to the

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[79] Kai Kaufmann, *Literaturraum Luxemburg. Vorüberlegung zu einer Regionalgeschichte der luxemburgischen Literatur,* Heidelberg, Winter, 2011, p. 81.

[80] Personal translation: "[...] on the one hand, are influenced by their experience of their native world as a rural or small-town provincial environment, and on the other hand, also tend to portray this rural provincial homeland and its way of life as something of outstanding value. ", *in* Fabienne Gilbertz, "Vom 'Ende der Bescheidenheit'", *in* Anne-Marie Millim & Ian de Toffoli (*eds.*), *Modernisms in Luxembourg. Traditions – Variations – Ruptures, op. cit.*, pp. 222–223.

[81] (personal translation): "[...] the inferiority complex cultivated over a long period of time in Luxembourg [...]", *ibid.*, p. 236.

state of the Grand Duchy and the constitution of its identity as such. The central importance of the multilingual issue, its geographical and linguistic smallness, as well as its borderline location between two major cultural areas, is claimed to be an ideal breeding ground for the superimposition of these different variables, forcing Luxembourgish writers to make choices: choice of writing language, audience, thematic orientation, etc. For several decades now, Luxembourgish literature has been deeply rooted in fairly recurring stylistic veins, among which the questioning and exploration of its multilingualism is paramount. This is expressed through the imagination and constant metaphorisation of the situation of Luxembourgish writers in their use of languages, an effort that is largely taken up and amplified by metaliterary discourse, which in turn shapes the widely held conception of what is to be understood as Luxembourgish literature. However, the strongly ethnocentric vision of metaliterary and metalanguage discourse forces anyone who wishes to approach Luxembourgish literature to take this into account and make an effort to relativise it. Its status as *a minor literature* and its small size generate complications and contradictions. The question is therefore no longer how to define Luxembourg literature, but rather how its production space functions, what its major variables and central institutions are, and what degree of autonomy it enjoys. In short, to complete the picture, we now need to approach literature as a social phenomenon and examine the Luxembourg literary field from a sociological perspective.