

About...

Literature in Luxembourg

Luxembourg's presence on the literary map of Europe is barely detectable. It is a white area, a vacuum, which only a handful of well-informed individuals outside the Grand Duchy can populate with authors' names and literary titles. Beyond Luxembourg's borders, people are frequently ignorant of which languages are actually spoken and written in the second smallest of the EU member states, let alone aware of the traditions that Luxembourg's modern literature draws on, the themes favoured by authors, and the trends and tendencies that can be identified. A closer look, however, soon reveals that this smallest of territories is dominated by a vast thematic and formal diversity of literary voices.



There are good reasons for this limited awareness among the reading public of Western Europe and beyond. These are related to the language situation resulting from the geographic location and history of a country, which for centuries has been at the crossroads of Romance and Germanic cultures and which has been influenced by both in its folklore as well as its cultural and linguistic customs, while at the same time always endeavouring to maintain a certain level of autonomy.

These particular circumstances have enabled a linguistic landscape to evolve over the centuries which – at least in Europe – is unique and characterised by the interaction and coexistence of the three languages *Lëtzebuergesch* (Luxembourg language), German and French, all used in everyday life, across all social classes and throughout the entire country.

Grand Duchy
of Luxembourg

Capital:
Luxembourg

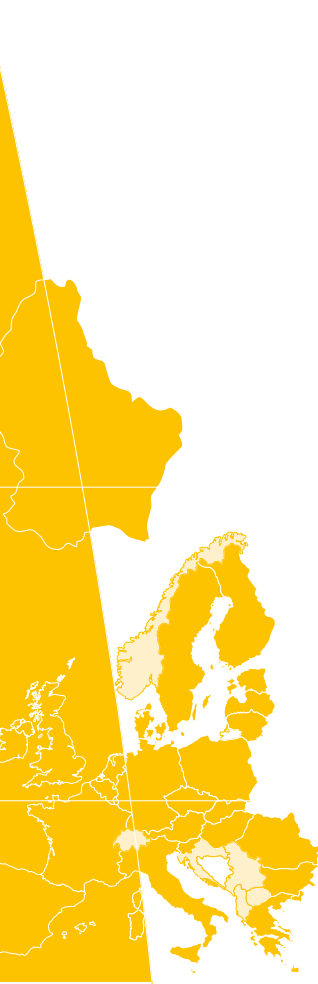
Form of
government:
constitutional
monarchy

Neighbouring
countries:
Germany,
Belgium,
France

Area:
2,586 km²

Population:
483,800
inhabitants,
of which
205,900
are foreigners

Population density:
184 inhab./km²
(2007)



This complex multilingual element is also reflected in Luxembourg literature and has a bearing on the history of its authors – whereby the concept of “Luxembourg literature” is not a straightforward one. In pure linguistic terms, there is in fact no such thing as a Luxembourg literature. Instead there is a literature that expresses itself in three languages – even four if including those authors who write in English. Taken as a whole, this polyphonic production is summed up by the collective term *Luxemburgensia*, an expression which stands for everything written or printed by Luxembourg nationals, in or about Luxembourg, regardless of the language used.

A young literature

Compared with the rich traditions of its neighbours France and Germany, Luxembourg literature looks back on a relatively brief history. While there is one work of literature that dates back to the Middle Ages, a biographical epic verse about the abbess Yolanda of Vianden, which was written by the Benedictine monk Hermann von Veldenz (d. 1308) around 1290, the first half of the 19th century is generally acknowledged as the advent of Luxembourg’s national literature.

The key date is the year 1839, which marks an obvious turning point in Luxembourg’s history. On 19 April, the Treaty of London was signed by the major European powers in London, establishing the borders of the now autonomous Grand Duchy and making it a monolingual territory, in which the local population spoke only *Lëtzebuergesch*. Luxembourg’s national pride was finally awakened.

It was only ten years previously, in 1829, that the very first work of literature in *Lëtzebuergesch* was actually published: a volume of verse entitled *E’ Schrek ob de’ Lezeburger Parnassus*, penned by the mathematics

professor Anton Meyer (1801-1857). The second half of the 19th century saw a Luxembourg vernacular literature develop in the wake of this first work.



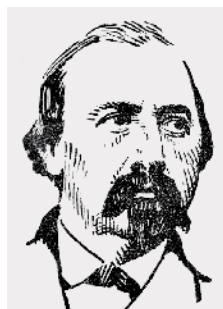
In 1872, Michel Rodange created Luxembourg’s national epic par excellence with his epic verse *Renert oder de Fuuß am Frack an a Ma'nsgrëßt*, modelled on Goethe’s *Reineke Fuchs*
© SIP/Charles Caratini



Anton Meyer
© Centre national de littérature/SIP



Michel Lentz
© Centre national de littérature/SIP



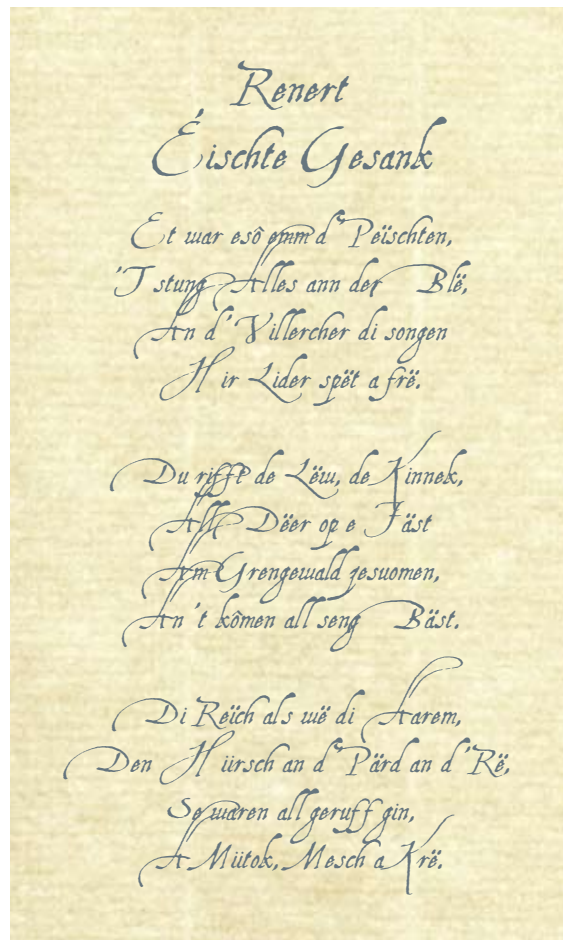
Dicks
© Centre national de littérature/SIP

Classic triumvirate

This first generation after 1839 to write mostly in the vernacular also included three authors who are these days regarded as the classics of Luxembourg literature: Michel Lentz (1820-1893), who composed the lyrics to the Luxembourg national anthem *Ons Hémécht* in 1859 as well as several poems (*De Feierwon*, *Wé méng Mamm nach huôt gesponnen*) that were frequently reworked into chansons, in which the patriotic feelings of his compatriots found expression; Edmond de la Fontaine (1823-1891), better known under his pseudonym Dicks, who is regarded as the founder of theatre in Lëtzebuergesch; and, last but not least, Michel Rodange (1827-1876), who with the grand epic verse *Renert oder de Fuuß am Frack an a Ma'nsgrëbt*, based on Goethe's *Reineke Fuchs*, created Luxembourg's national epic par excellence in 1872. The first two authors were immortalised in a monument inaugurated in their honour on the Place d'Armes in Luxembourg City in 1903 – incidentally the first of its kind in Luxembourg.

With this popular triumvirate, literature written in the national language scaled a new peak towards the end of the 19th century. Literature written in French and German also flourished, but it played a far lesser role in the consciousness of the reading public. Mention must nevertheless be made of Félix Thyes (1830-1855) at least, who is considered the first Luxembourg author to have written in French and whose novel *Marc Bruno: profil d'artiste* was published posthumously the year of his death.

By contrast, it was only at the turn of the century that Luxembourg saw any literature of artistic claim being written in standard German. Its most significant proponent was Nikolaus Welter (1871-1951), who wrote about Luxembourg issues in German – as a playwright with *Die Söhne des Öslings* (1904) and as a poet with *Hochofen* (1913), for instance. At the same time,



Nikolaus Welter is regarded as Luxembourg's first literary historian. Some of his books were published in Germany, and so the author enjoyed a certain amount of literary fame beyond national borders. He was joined by Batty Weber (1860-1940), who made a name for himself as a novelist (*Fenn Kass*, 1913) and who was an exceptionally prolific feature writer, with the pages of his *Abreißkalender* (tear-off calendar) appearing almost daily in the *Luxemburger Zeitung* between 1913 and 1940.



Michel Rodange
© Centre national de littérature/SIP



Félix Thyes
© Centre national de littérature/SIP



Nikolaus Welter
© Jochen Herling

German exile

In this context, mention should be made of two further Luxembourg authors who sought their literary luck abroad and chose to live in Germany. Norbert Jacques (1880-1954) pursued his tertiary education in Bonn and worked as a journalist in Hamburg and Berlin before travelling the world from 1906 onwards and turning his experiences into adventure and travel novels, which were very well received by the German public and published in numerous editions. Norbert Jacques rose to fame in 1921 with his novel



Norbert Jacques' novel *Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler* dated 1921 was filmed twice by Fritz Lang: once in 1922 under the same title and again in 1933 under the title *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse*

Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler, which was made into a film by Fritz Lang the following year. In his home country, however, Norbert Jacques was ostracised as a persona non grata for decades. His compatriots accused him of pro-Nazi sympathies after Hitler rose to power and of vehemently calling his fatherland to account in several of his works. Critics pointed the finger at his "satirical tactlessness", going as far as calling it a display of contempt for his own country, largely on account of his novels *Der Hafen* (1910, in which he wrote that his hatred for the small, accursed country felt great enough for him to strangle it with his own hands – "Es ist mir oft, als hätte ich einen Hass, mächtig genug, das ganze kleine verfluchte Land zwischen den Händen zu erwürgen") and *Die Limburger Flöte: Bericht über Pierre Nocké den berühmten Musikus aus Limburg, der auf einer Flöte blasen konnte, die er sich nicht erst zu kaufen brauchte* (1929, new edition 1985).

Substantially shorter, but less plagued by scandal, was the literary career of Alexander Weicker (1893-1983), who became part of the so-called Munich Bohemians after World War I and who, in 1921, had a single, highly regarded novel published by a local publishing house with the title *Fetzen: Aus der abenteuerlichen Chronika eines Überflüssigen*.

Contemporaries of Welter, Weber and others who wrote in French included the journalist, poet and committed francophone Marcel Noppeney (1877-1966), the lyric poet Paul Palgen (1883-1966) and the essayist Nicolas Ries (1876-1941).

*"My bowels yearn for Luxembourg. ...
Maybe it is particularly in Luxembourg
that I feel the genius loci."*

Norbert Jacques



Auguste Liesch (1875-1949), author of *Maus Ketti*, is among the most popular writers in the Luxembourg vernacular. His folk fable about the country mouse and the city mouse forms an integral part of the country's national literature and is taught at most Luxembourg schools.

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Lyric poetry boom during the inter-war period

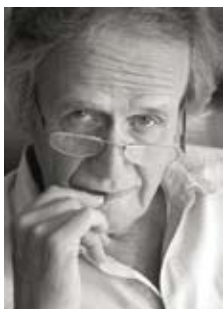
Despite the fact that the 1920s and 1930s witnessed a true upsurge in poetry written in German as a result of the literary trends of symbolism, surrealism and expressionism present in Germany, producing lyric poets such as Albert Hoefler (1899-1950) and Paul Henkes (1898-1984), the first half of the 20th century is seen as an only marginally fertile period in Luxembourg literature. The country's rapid rise of industrialism, its economic, technical and intellectual dependence on foreign nations and, last but not least, the two world wars all made it difficult for authors to find a distinctive voice of their own. In many instances, the repertoire of the authors of that era tended to express a strong connection to their homeland, combined with an often excessive love thereof, and an idealistic portrayal of the agricultural society – an approach that produced a rather backward-looking literature.

Moreover, there was hardly any stimulus to form a post-war literary movement in Luxembourg, unlike, for instance, Germany's "Gruppe 47". Similarly, a certain reserve must be exercised when it comes to talking of Luxembourg literature and style-influencing movements and trends. Until very recently, Luxembourg authors have been mainly isolated characters, individualists who, despite adopting foreign writing models and adapting them to Luxembourg's circumstances – admittedly with some delay – have not actually established any schools of thought or literary movements. One of the reasons for this may of course be the ultimately modest number of those working at a challenging level of literary activity in Luxembourg.

Several phases of change

Following World War II, change was witnessed in several phases. At first, and tentatively throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, authors such as Anise Koltz (b. 1928), Lex Jacoby (b. 1930), Roger Manderscheid (b. 1933) and Jean-Paul Jacobs (b. 1941) came into the public eye, countering the conservatism of their predecessors with their own creative potential, which was to fully thrive during the decades that followed.

Luxembourg literature underwent a further phase of development during the late 1960s, when the ungainly patriotism and the linguistically often antiquated closeness to their native soil in the works of a younger generation of writers switched into a critical discussion of the fatherland. Influenced by the social changes during that period (the 1968 student movement and its consequences), the homeland and western civilisation were among the most important literary subjects for authors such as Pol Greisch (b. 1930), Josy Braun (b. 1938), Rolph Ketter (1938-2008), Cornel Meder (b. 1938), Guy Wagner (b. 1938), Guy Rewenig (b. 1947) and René Welter (b. 1952). Elements of satirical parody, ecology



Pol Greisch
© Philippe Matsas/SIP



Josy Braun
© Wolfgang Osterheld/SIP



Josiane Kartheiser
© Wolfgang Osterheld/SIP

and pacifism were also present in the works of Léopold Hoffmann (1915-2008), who already emerged as a literary critic and academic during the 1950s, while feminism found a voice among upcoming female authors (such as Josiane Kartheiser, b. 1950). Since then a trilingual or even quadrilingual literary continuum has been guaranteed.



From left to right: the Luxembourg authors Albert Mambourg, Roger Manderscheid and Lambert Schlechter
© Wolfgang Osterheld/SIP

An end to self-effacement

During the 1970s, a critical look at the prevailing situation featured increasingly as the central driving force behind the works of Luxembourg authors. In parallel, a kind of literary self-assurance was developing, which Roger Manderscheid summed up in 1978 in his collection *Leerläufe* as the “end of self-effacement, unity of individuals, formulation of our current self-image as Luxembourg authors writing in *Lëtzebuergesch*, German or French”.

This indirectly also addresses the question of the boundaries and opportunities presented by multilingualism, which is an issue Luxembourg authors are commonly confronted with. In general, acknowledged problems include the lack of contact with the colloquial languages of France and Germany and the necessity to opt for one or more written languages that the author has essentially had to learn. Only gradually does it become apparent that the distance to these written languages can also generate positive results in the sense that, as was once commented upon by German radio editor Dieter Hasselblatt in connection with Roger Manderscheid's radio plays, “... that here someone has said something in the German language that a German could never actually have said in German”.

The early 1980s saw a further turning point at a time frequently considered to be the actual birth date of contemporary literature in Luxembourg. New and younger voices were making themselves heard, with authors such as Lambert Schlechter (b. 1941), Jean Portante (b. 1950), Michèle Thoma (b. 1951), Nico Helminger (b. 1953) and Georges Hausemer (b. 1957), whilst established authors were seeking alternative forms of expression. Man and his social environment took centre stage in the literary output of this period.

Reviving the novel in *Lëtzebuergesch*

1985 represents a milestone in Luxembourg's recent literary history. This was the year that Guy Rewenig's first novel *Hannert dem Atlantik* was published, in *Lëtzebuergesch*. This book, which was succeeded by a number of further substantial novels in *Lëtzebuergesch* by the same author, was described by Jul Christophory as “a fully mature novel with a deeper psychological and social content ... – representing an achievement for which Luxembourg literature has had to wait a long time”.

*“... that here someone has said
something in the German language
that a German could never actually
have said in German”*

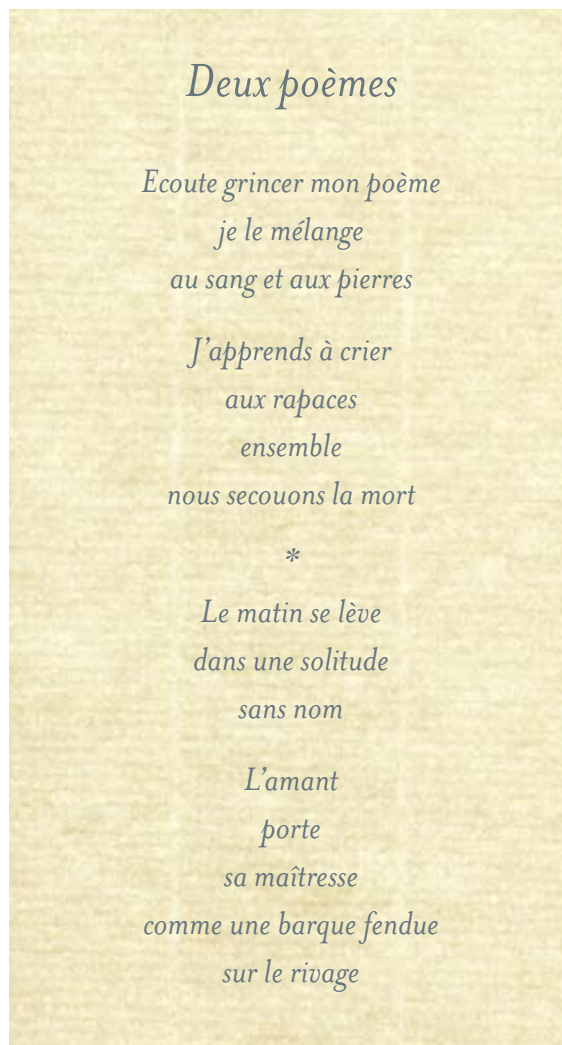
Dieter Hasselblatt

In the wake of Rewenig's accomplishment, Roger Manderscheid emerged onto the scene in 1988 with a voluminous trilogy featuring an autobiographical core and comprising the novels *schacko klak*, *de papagei um käschtebam* and *feier a flam*. Both authors received great public acclaim for their books, achieving unusually high sales for the limited size of the Luxembourg market and securing several re-editions for some.

The following decades have borne witness to the publication in *Lëtzebuergesch* of further epic works that would hardly have been conceivable without Rewenig's and Manderscheid's pioneering works. These include *Frascht* (1990) by Nico Helminger, *Angscht virum Grouszen Tunn: Geschichten* (1992) by Jean-Michel Treinen (b. 1954), *Perl oder Pica* (1998), a novel by Jhemp Hoscheit (b. 1951), *Iwwer Waasser* (1998), a novel by Georges Hausemer, and a number of novels written in *Lëtzebuergesch* by Josy Braun (e.g. *Porto fir d'Affekoten*, 1997, *Kréiwinkel*, 1998, and *Meewäin*, 2007) and by Claudine Muno (e.g. *De Fleeschkinnek*, 2002, and *Frigo*, 2003).

Competition within the country

The above phase was also marked by a renaissance of francophone literature in Luxembourg. Jean Portante played a significant role in this with his novel about immigrants, entitled *Mrs Haroy ou la Mémoire de la baleine* (1993). Suddenly authors who had already been writing in French for some time, such as Edmond Dune (1914-1988), Anise Koltz, who had meanwhile made the switch from writing in German to French, Lambert Schlechter, Rosemarie Kieffer (1932-1994) and José Ensich (1942-2008), were joined by younger colleagues such as Anne Schmitt (b. 1953), Jean Sorrente (b. 1954), Félix Molitor (b. 1958), Danielle Hoffelt (b. 1963) and Tullio Forgiarini (b. 1966), who experimented with new contents and forms.



Anise Koltz, from *Chants de refus. Poèmes*, 1993

The same applied to the young German-speaking literature of Luxembourg, which had overcome competition from other languages in its own country during the 1990s and was seeking closer involvement with trends in the greater German-speaking world. Names such as Jean Krier (b. 1949), Roland Harsch (b. 1951), Maryse



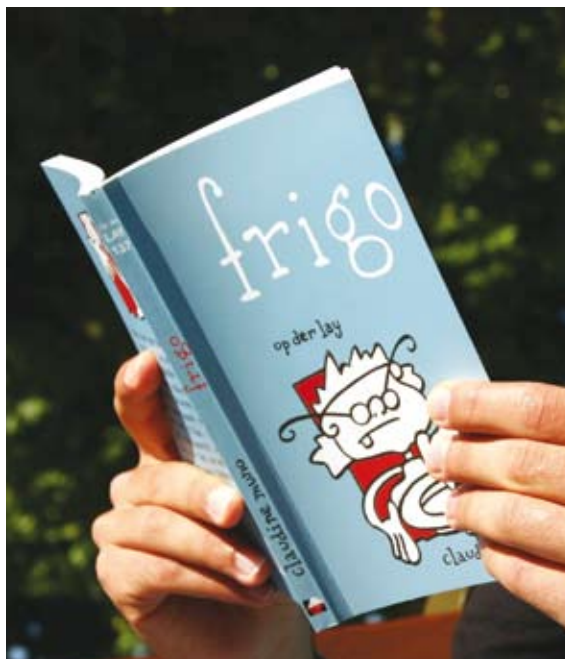
Lambert Schlechter
© Wolfgang Osterheld/SIP



Georges Hausemer
© Philippe Matsas/SIP



Anise Koltz
© Centre national de littérature/SIP



Claudine Muno is a promising talent of the new literary generation; she was awarded the 2004 Prix Servais for her novel *Frigo*
© SIP

Krier (b. 1953), Pit Hoerold (b. 1954), Léon Rinaldetti (b. 1957), Mario Fioretti (b. 1962), Guy Helminger (b. 1963) and Raoul Biltgen (b. 1974) vouch for high literary quality and have to some extent been published abroad.

The promising new generation of authors in Luxembourg also includes writers such as Linda Graf (b. 1967), Cathy Clement (b. 1979) and, above all, Claudine Muno (b. 1979), who despite her tender years has already published several significant works in various languages and the most wide-ranging of genres.

Mention must also be made of those Luxembourg authors who left their home country years and, in some cases, decades ago and now write in English without

nevertheless having completely abandoned their own country or altogether omitting the subject of uprooting. In this context, particular mention must be made of the poets Liliane Welch (b. 1937) and Pierre Joris (b. 1946). Jean-Paul Jacobs, who has lived in Berlin since 1966, Michèle Thoma, who has lived and worked in Vienna since the mid-1980s, and Guy Helminger, who has found his second home in Cologne, all write in German.

In addition to those who have emigrated, newcomers must also be acknowledged – such as Margret Steckel (b. 1934), a storyteller hailing from the German Democratic Republic, or Angela Boeres-Vettor (b. 1939) and Claude Frisoni (b. 1954), both originating from France – as well as the children of immigrants, not to mention the travellers and commuters, all of whom enrich the latest literature from Luxembourg with their personal, foreign viewpoints and remind us of the arbitrariness of any insistence on national characteristics.

Guy Rewenig has also done pioneering work for children's literature in *Lëtzebuergesch*, which has reached new heights in the last decade. Since his collection of stories entitled *Muschkilusch* (1990), Rewenig has published numerous further volumes written in the same genre. Other established authors, such as Manderscheid and Hoscheit, have also emerged as authors of books for children and adolescents, resulting in some astonishing sales figures. Furthermore, various new authors have also made a name for themselves through books for children and young people, including Nicole Paulus (b. 1955) and Chantal Schenten-Keller (b. 1959).

*“first purely literary and intellectually
independent bilingual journal”*

Floréal, 1907

Literature with contours

At the start of the third millennium, Luxembourg literature spans three or even four languages and proves to be vastly diverse in terms of form and content. All literary genres are represented, with short prose (short stories, novellas, tales) prevailing among German-writing authors, their francophone colleagues frequently preferring lyric poetry. Epic poetry, lyric poetry and drama are represented in roughly equal measures in *Lëtzebuergesch*. As a result of increased translation activity and numerous cross-border contacts, literature from Luxembourg has recently also been gaining a certain reputation abroad. The publications of Luxembourg authors by foreign publishing houses, anthologies and literary journals, invitations to international writers' conventions, co-editions with foreign publishing houses, individual film adaptations of novels and the awarding of prestigious literature

prizes to authors from Luxembourg give cause for hope that the Grand Duchy will no longer be viewed as a blank spot on the European literary landscape.

Literary institutions

Various public and private institutions devote themselves to fostering and promoting the literature of Luxembourg.

The principal institution is the Centre national de littérature (CNL) (National Literature Centre). The archives, catalogues, exhibition rooms and conference rooms as well as the library of this documentation and research centre, which opened in Mersch in 1995, are available not just to researchers and scientists, but also to the public. The CNL furthermore publishes exhibition catalogues and an annual bibliog-

Eng geféierlech Wett

Ech kommen aus der Schoul, a wat gesinn ech?

Um Dësch as alles op der Kopp. Et läit eng Ficelle an der Zopp. Am Püree stécht eng Héngerplomm. Am Kabes rullt eng Eisebomm. D'Zalot as voller Spéngelskëpp. De Bifdeck schmaacht no Boxeknäpp. Am Gulasch schwëmmt en Tennisball.

Wéi as deen dann do dragefall?

Mäi Papp huet nees gekacht!

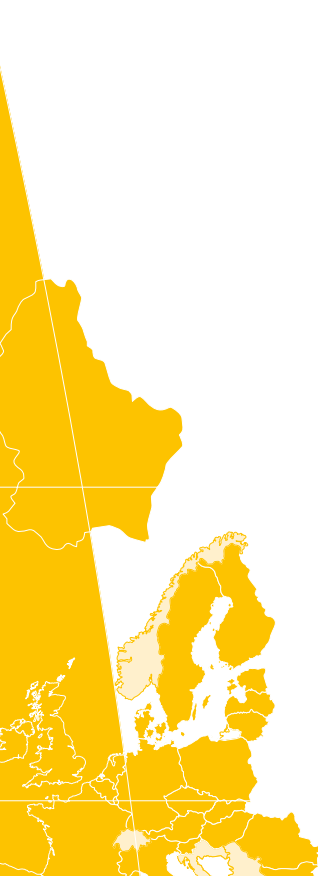
Well hien nët kache kann, fänkt hien iwwert dem Kachen un ze schweessen.

Duerno gët hien ëmmer méi rout am Gesiicht. Duerno ziddere seng Fangeren. Da mécht hien alles falsch, wat een nëmme falsch maache kann.

"Wat deng Mamm konnt, kann ech scho laang!" brëllt hien da schwéier rosen.

Awer dat as nët wouer. Zanter meng Mamm fort as, gët bei eis am Haus nët méi uerdentlech gekacht.

Guy Rewenig, from *Muschkilusch. Geschichte fir Kanner*, 1990

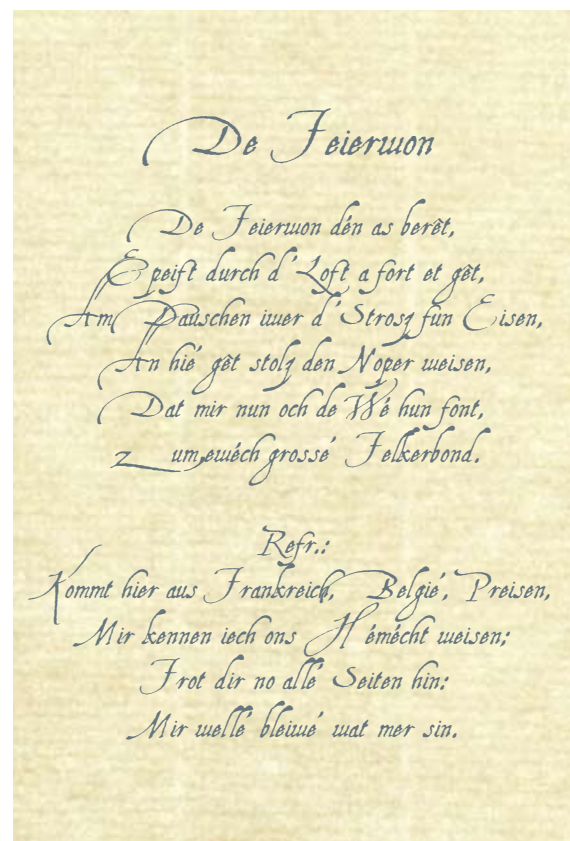


raphy of Luxembourg literature. It has in the meantime also gained recognition for bringing out new editions of classic works.

The Archives nationales (National Archives), the Bibliothèque nationale (National Library) and municipal and local libraries throughout the country also play an important role in the promotion of Luxembourg literature. Through organising readings and conferences, these institutions enable direct contact between contemporary authors and the public. The Institut grand-ducal (Grand-Ducal Institute) was founded back in 1868, housing a department of art and literature that once published the journal *Arts et lettres*. More recently, however, its focus has been on publishing anthologies of the various literary genres.



The National Literature Centre has been housed in the Maison Servais in Mersch since 1995. One of the objectives of this exemplary institution is to acquaint the public with Luxembourg literature.
© Guy Hoffmann/SIP



Michel Lentz, from *De Feierwon*, 1859

Launched by Anise Koltz and Nic Weber in 1962, the Journées littéraires de Mondorf (Mondorf Literature Days) represent one of Luxembourg's most prestigious literary events. Until 1974, every two years local writers used to get together at the thermal resort with colleagues from the German and French-speaking regions for lectures, discussions and readings. In 1995, when Luxembourg was appointed the European City of Culture, the Mondorf Literature Days were reinstated under the influence of Anise Koltz and Jean Portante and continued to run every two years until 2003.



Nico Helminger
© Philippe Matsas/SIP



Jean Portante
© Wolfgang Osterheld/SIP



Guy Rewenig
© Wolfgang Osterheld/SIP

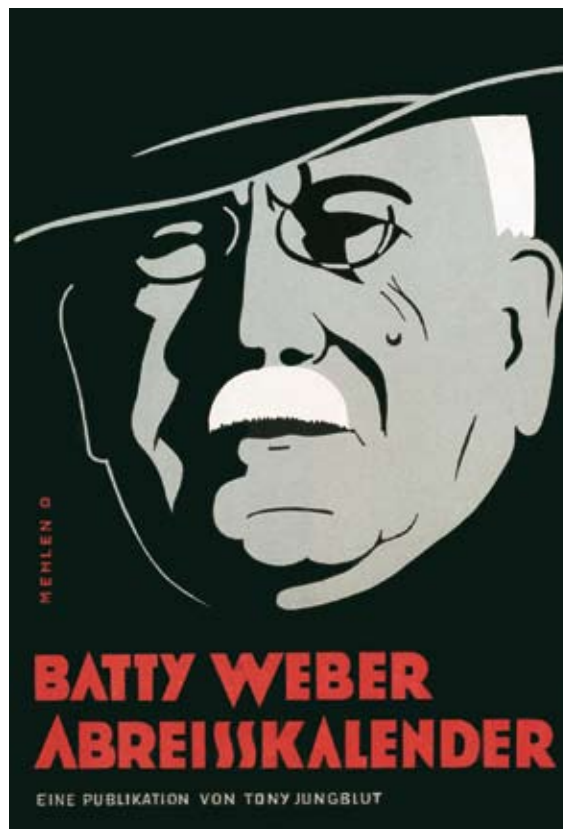
Two author association initiatives are involved in promoting literature and providing support for authors. However, the activities of the older Société des écrivains luxembourgeois de langue française (SELF) (Society of Luxembourg Authors writing in French), set up by Marcel Noppeney back in 1934, have substantially declined since 1989. Its once-renowned journal *Pages de la S.E.L.F.*, later renamed *Nouvelles Pages de la S.E.L.F.*, has not been published since 1989.

Formed in 1986, the Lëtzebuerger Schrëftstellerverband (LSV) (Luxembourg Writers' Association) is much more committed. This interest group, currently counting almost 100 members, is principally involved in the professional, social, legal and cultural issues pertaining to authors and organises readings on a regular basis.

In addition, there are private organisations, such as the "Freed um Liesen" (Joy of reading) initiative, which aim to promote Luxembourg literature and encourage reading. Since 1999, this association has annually published a themed collection featuring texts written by Luxembourg authors or writers living in Luxembourg, which it launches every year on 23 April, the World Book and Copyright Day.

Literary prizes and scholarships

Promoting literature in the form of prizes and scholarships is a relatively new phenomenon in Luxembourg, probably due to the fact that only a handful of freelance writers have endeavoured to live with and from their literary work since the 1980s. In addition, the value of promoting literature, in contrast with the other arts, was recognised in the Grand Duchy only around a quarter of a century ago.



The national literature prize, named after Batty Weber, is awarded every three years
© Raymon Mehlen

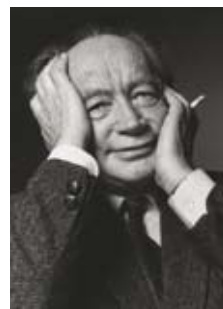
The first step in this direction was taken by the Ministry for Culture towards the end of the 1970s, when it set up the Concours littéraire national (National Literary Competition). Since then, this competition promoting literary creativity has been held on a yearly basis, and each time it is devoted to a certain theme or literary genre (novel, short story, essay, literature for children and young people, etc.). Texts may be entered in *Lëtzebuergesch*, French, German or English and are submitted anonymously to the jury.



José Ensich
© Philippe Matsas/SIP



Claudine Muno
© Philippe Matsas/SIP



Nic Weber
© Wolfgang Osterheld/SIP

The Ministry for Culture and the Fonds culturel national (National Culture Fund) also offer grants to publishing houses and award scholarships to authors on a regular basis, enabling selected literary projects to receive financial support.

Established in 1989, the Fondation Servais pour la littérature luxembourgeoise (Servais Foundation for Luxembourg Literature) has since 1992 been awarding the Prix Servais for the best belletristic work of the previous year.

Laureates to date include Roger Manderscheid, Pol Greisch, Jean Portante, Joseph Kohnen, Lex Jacoby, Margret Steckel, José Ensich, Jhemp Hoscheit, Pol Schmoetten, Roland Harsch, Guy Helming, Jean

Sorrente, Claudine Muno, Jean-Paul Jacobs, Guy Rewenig, Lambert Schlechter and Anise Koltz. The Prix d'encouragement de la Fondation Servais was introduced in 2000 and is awarded for a manuscript by a new author.

The Prix Batty Weber, which the Ministry for Culture has bestowed every three years since 1987, is awarded to an author in recognition for his or her complete works. Its laureates include Edmond Dune (1987), Roger Manderscheid (1990), Léopold Hoffmann (1993), Anise Koltz (1996), Nic Weber (1999), Pol Greisch (2002), Guy Rewenig (2005) and Nico Helming (2008).

The Prix Tony Bourg has been bestowed twice and is dedicated to promoting francophone literature in Luxembourg. In 1993, the prize went to both Jean Portante and Jean Sorrente and in 1998 to Félix Molitor. Since 2000, the Liberté de conscience (Liberty of Conscience) association has awarded its literary prize Prix libertés to Maryse Krier and Jhemp Hoscheit.

Literary and cultural journals

Luxembourg's literary and cultural journals look back on a longer history. To enable a better comprehension of this history, it must be pointed out that until 1900 Luxembourg was not home to much of a literary scene. Publishing houses, freelance authors, literary criticism – all were considered deficient, a fact the intellectuals of the day simply would not accept. One way to spread the art and literature of Luxembourg was, as in later decades, to establish journals, via which authors were able to reach their public.

In this context, the ambitious literary journal *Floréal* appeared between April 1907 and February 1908.



Nic Weber relaunched the *nouvelle série* of the *Cahiers luxembourgeois* in 1988
© SIP



Roger Manderscheid
© Wolfgang Osterheld/SIP



Jean Sorrente
© Wolfgang Osterheld/SIP



Jhemp Hoscheit
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Founded by Marcel Noppeney, Frantz Clement and Eugène Forman, it purported to be the “first purely literary and intellectually independent bilingual journal”. However, its modest print run, the absence of financial security and a lack of staying power on the part of its staff meant the journal folded after only twelve issues.

In 1923, Nicolas Ries brought out Luxembourg’s most influential literary journal to date, entitled *Les Cahiers luxembourgeois*. The *Cahiers* tended towards the left in terms of philosophy and politics and appeared until 1965, before being relaunched in 1988 with the *nouvelle série* that has since been edited by Nic Weber.

The 1960s witnessed movement on the market for literary journals in Luxembourg. One of the most active players in the field was Cornel Meder, who edited the *impuls* series around 1965, before publishing the *doppelpunkt* journal from 1968 to 1969 – a forum for domestic and foreign authors devoted to the latest literary movements of the time in Europe.

In the early 1970s the authors’ publishing house Lochness started up, offering Luxembourg authors an opportunity for a short time to publish their works in the *lochnessheften*.

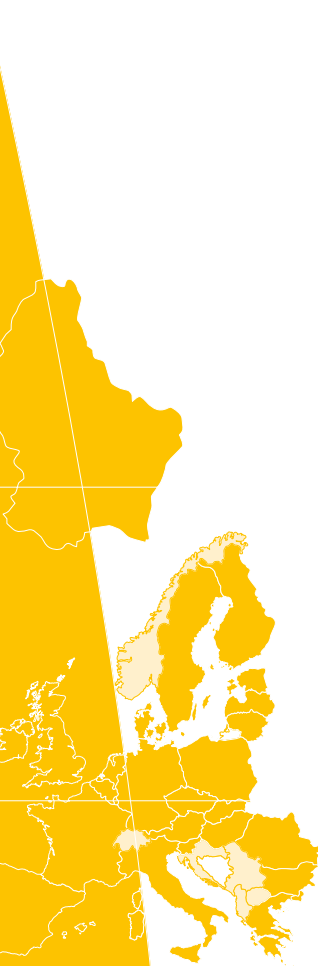
A further journal dealing with literature, among other things, is the quarterly *Galerie. Revue culturelle et pédagogique*, launched in 1982 also by Cornel Meder. Other titles include *Arts et lettres*, *nos cahiers* and *eis sprooch*, as well as *Estuaires*, which was discontinued in 2002.

Founded by a group of EU officials with a particular passion for literature, the Spanish-language journal *abril* merits particular attention; it has appeared twice a year since January 1991 and regularly prints texts by Luxembourg authors, as well as entire dossiers on contemporary Luxembourg literature translated into

Once Upon a Time

*When Spring mornings give
their gift of ancient voices, the streets
in Luxembourg smile with open markets, roses
stitched on windows: Siegfried, Mélusine.
I meet them in museums, side-walk cafés.
Legends playing hide-and-go-seek. I
untie a love-knot, and free
the nymph from that water dance,
the dark well where she stamps. Saturdays
she slipped away to her chamber’s stillness,
to rebirth. My Muse
she glides through half a century of
days I want to write alone in my room.
Siegfried forever jailed his wife
peeping through the keyhole
to live the wet heartbeat.
His eyes fixed, briefly, on her supple limbs.
Our mouths meet once upon a time.*

Liliane Welch, from *Fire to the Looms Below*, 1990



Spanish. Wider public distribution of local literature is also ensured by the regular book and literature supplements published with the daily papers *Tageblatt* and *Luxemburger Wort*, as well as the weeklies *Woxx* and *d'Lëtzebuerger Land*.

Several publishing houses were established during the 1990s in the wake of Phi and Guy Binsfeld, some considerably successful and able to absorb the output of local authors. These include the publishers Op der Lay, Éditions Schortgen, Ultimomondo, Éditions Saint-Paul and Éditions Le Phare.

Publishing environment

The first publishing houses in Luxembourg worthy of the name were founded during the late 1970s and early 1980s, when a new generation of writers attracted attention. Through the establishment of editorial teams and marketing and sales departments, Francis van Maele (Éditions Phi) and Guy Binsfeld (Éditions Guy Binsfeld) went a long way to enhancing the professionalism of the literary business in Luxembourg. Their work was preceded during the 1960s and 1970s by several endeavours in a similar direction by authors themselves, albeit with only marginal success. In this context, the Lochness authors' publishing house referred to above and the *MOL* series edited by Cornel Meder deserve a mention.

e gelungent duerf

wat war dat fir e gelungent duerf, dat duerf do? d' duerf mam fuusselach? d' duerf vun den izeger zigeiner, och nach „itzig-kleinasien“ genannt? eleng, hätt ech nët gär dra gewunnt. vu klengem u war all schiet mer onheemlech, huet all geräisch mech erfëiert, hun ech an all däischteren eck, an all stëbsege scheierfong dem däiweel seng binett gesinn. hun ech nët an engem bëisen, verfluchtenen, verduerwenen duerf gewunnt? all ablack konnt dee mam päerdsfouss hannert enger heck eraus op dech duersprangen, fir der deng séil ofzegotzelen, wéi en em klautche seng séil ofgegotzelt hat fir e grapp voll huffeisenneel aus gold.

Roger Manderscheid, from *schacko klak. biller aus der kandheet, 1935-1945*, 1988

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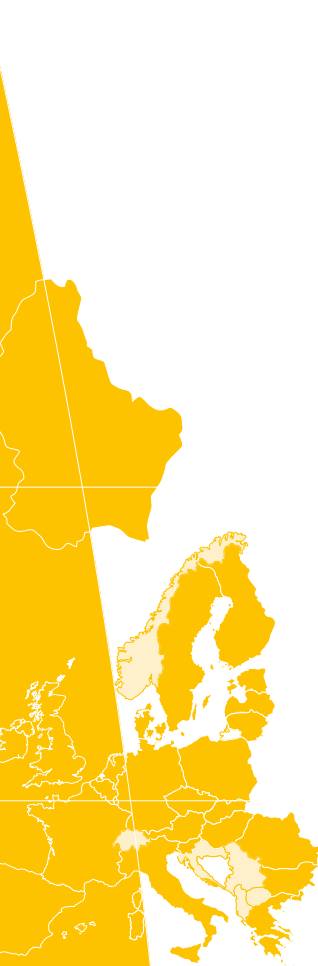
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