

According to my analysis, only those among the various identified types of thresholds fulfill a truly mediating function and a symbolic role that allow a progressive approach to the work. Only they create a framework where a visitor's attitude can be adopted and where this process of identity micro-adjustments, with its fluid boundaries, can be accompanied. Even if these elaborated thresholds are often found in those museums that are best equipped in terms of funds and location, the problem can certainly not be reduced to these (albeit important) elements: it is above all the strategic aspect of the museum's mediation that has to be reconsidered – for which the threshold is no doubt only an indication.

#### **4.5 LITERATURE OF THE IN-BETWEEN. THE MULTILINGUAL STAGINGS OF THE PUBLISHER *ULTIMOMONDO***

*Till Dembeck*

This case studies looks into the linguistic and spatial situatedness of literary communication. It follows a line of research that has grown in recent years and which attempts to focus on literature beyond the limitations set by monolingualism – that is, beyond the segmentary differentiation according to territorially localizable languages. Point of departure of these studies is the observation that monolingualism is a norm that came about relatively late in history and was maintained only with massive cultural-political pressure. This norm – research also refers to it as the 'monolingual paradigm' (Yildiz 2012: 6) – consists in the notion that individual speakers 'by nature' have a (standardized) mother tongue and can produce literature appropriately only in this language (see Martyn 2014). In as far as it is subject to this paradigm, literature adjusts to national language segmentation on the one hand and to the mechanisms of transformation between the national monolingualisms on the other (see Gramling 2014). A great number of institutions are involved in this process, not the least and in particular the publishers which, besides the authors, have the most interest in the marketability of literary works (see Lennon 2010).

It is, however, by no means the case that the monolingual paradigm has at any time really had an all-pervasive effect. There are many examples of literature beyond monolingualism, not only but particularly so in a multilingual state such as Luxembourg. This literature uses as it were the interstices that necessarily remain from attempts to delineate and limit languages and linguistic areas. It draws on the fact that, historically and systematically, languages are and always have been hybrid, that is, they emanate from processes of creolization – and are therefore always open for new amalgamations. And it makes use of differences between languages to fuel its creative energy. The emerging new literary forms exploit a linguistic interstice when they generate structures that cannot be clearly

attributed to one language and occupy a place beyond the limits of all single languages.

In the following, I will discuss literature of interstitiality by taking a closer look at the way the Luxembourg publisher *ultimomondo* and its associate and leading author Guy Rewenig stage themselves in the public sphere. More precisely it is about an example of what Gérard Genette in his study on paratext has described as a publisher's "epitext" (Genette 1997 [1987]: 9). Here I turn to the border region of literary works themselves: Genette's study subsumes all those elements of a text or book under the term of paratext that constitute the threshold between text and non-text and serve the purpose of guiding reception. It is the paratext that makes a text identifiable in the first place, because it limits the text 'locationally' from various sides (e.g. as title, preface, footnote) and referentially, i.e. by identifying it as an entity (this too is a key function of the title). At the same time it is the privileged place where the "author and his allies"<sup>55</sup> (Genette 1997 [1987]: 2), in particular the publisher, can ensure, in their view, an appropriate reception. It is therefore a border region both in the sense that it marks the border between text and non-text, and in the sense that it regulates the recipients' access to the book. Epitext comprises that which is not directly attached to the text or the book, but circulates independently. Epitexts, in particular when they are produced by the publisher (programme leaflets, announcements, advertisements of any kind), are a primary medium for conveying literature into the (linguistic) spaces of the public sphere – and even more than that: they take a part in shaping this space or at least attempt to do so.

In the case of the publisher *ultimomondo* this happens under the premise that the space of reception is precisely not a monolingual one. In that sense the central question of this case study is not so much how epitextual conveyance of literary texts functions in multilingual spaces of communication, but rather how it itself attempts to relate language and space to each other. The epitextually conveyed language policy of the publisher *ultimomondo* is thus not only examined as a key factor of the publisher's identity construction but also considered as an attempt to influence the spatial localization of literature.

#### 4.5.1 A Publisher's Book as a Family Album and Bible

On 25 October 2010, a book was presented in Luxembourg's *Centre national de Littérature* which already by its cover distinguished itself from the vast majority of books that currently appear on the European market (see Fig. 1). The title is in four languages: *Bicherbuch. Livre des livres. Bücherbuch. Book of Books* (n. a. 2010); the name of the publisher, *ultimomondo*, comes from a fifth language; and on the back of the cover there is at least one word from a sixth language (*aficionados*). Obviously a book such as this does not conform to the mechanisms of a market

55 | Personal translation of: "Autor und seine Verbündeten."

primarily geared towards monolingualism and translation. It is therefore only logical that none of the books were released for sale. All of the one thousand copies were given away and in addition most of the pages are each identified as a gift by a sponsor.

The *Bicherbuch* belongs to a not so voluminous genre that could be referred to as a ‘publisher’s book’. This genre comprises books in which publishers showcase themselves and their history, i.e. in particular the books they have published and the authors linked to them. A similar book was published by the German publisher *Suhrkamp* in 2010 for its 60th anniversary (Fellinger 2010). A year later, a book was published about the then 32-year old publisher *MÄRZ-Verlag* (Bandel/Kalender/Schröder 2011). And in Luxembourg the ‘predecessor’, as it were, of *ultimomondo*, the *PHI-Verlag*, celebrated its 20th year of existence with a publisher’s book that was also a catalogue for an exhibition dedicated to the publisher in the *Centre national de littérature* (Delvaux/Janus/Marson 2001).

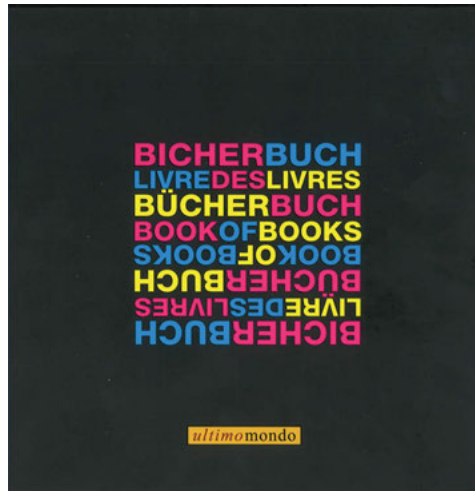


Figure 1: *Bicherbuch*, front cover

What is interesting about this genre? One could be tempted to disqualify publisher’s books – as instruments of self-advertisement and self-display – as a suitable subject of philological labour. One would then have to say that literature may pragmatically depend on publishers and markets, but its essence can only be understood independently of these conditions. This is the prevalent attitude and it is partly also justified. Indeed, as a reader of what would then be referred to as ‘autonomous’ literature one feels called on to judge texts only by ‘literary’ criteria, even by criteria that the specific texts provide *themselves*. However, one must also assume that their institutional frame in no way remains external to literary texts, but rather, as a ‘parergon’, never leaves their core untouched (see Derrida 1987 [1978]). Here the publishing house, as the author’s ‘ally’, plays a

key role, being already an institution of the public the text seeks to influence. It represents author and text, but at the same time has an agenda of its own. The interplay of text, paratext and publisher's epitext reveals all those strategies and tensions that constitute the cultural-political field in which literature operates. Publisher's books illustrate this interplay – albeit abridged and strategically staged – and thereby provide the opportunity to examine literature as a part of culture politics. What is additionally interesting in the case of the *Bicherbuch* is that the publisher – or at least Guy Rewenig as its leading author and associate – advocates, in certain respects, a 'pure' understanding of literature and culture and, in doing so, is intentionally engaging in cultural policy, a point I will return to later.

But back to the *Bicherbuch* itself and to its outer appearance, which is important since we are here dealing with the publishing aspect of books. It is, like all of the publisher's titles, a high-quality book production, a hardcover of over 250 pages with elaborately designed text and illustrations. A remarkable contrast is that many photographs in the book expressly do not have a professional finish but are – clearly an intended effect – recognizable as snapshots. The personal and private touch is also evident in the volume's dedication to Roger Manderscheid who had died shortly before publication ("Fir de Rosch" ('For Roger') (n. a. 2010: 5) with a personal message by Frank Wilhelm to Guy Rewenig) and the references to the home towns of the authors presented in the main section of the book. Even the already mentioned references to sponsors and the thanks to a series of organizations and persons in the imprint, in Guy Rewenig's introduction dealing with the publisher's history as well as the extensively illustrated section *Partnership* seem to testify more to personal obligations than to business ones. The publisher thus presents itself – "amitié oblige" ('friendship obliges') (n. a. 2010: 16) – as part of a network of Luxembourg institutions and public figures in which even the institutions are personalized: all have known each other for a long time and are looking back together.

However, despite the informal atmosphere, this is more than 'only' about personal remembrance. This is indicated by the names of both the book and of the publisher: the French and English version of the term *Bicherbuch* suggests a biblical format, and the very publishing house announces itself, almost somewhat apocalyptically, as a witness of a 'last world'. Both terms should be understood in a strictly ironic sense (considering we are here dealing with a publisher who describes the Catholic Church as a "folkloristic club"<sup>56</sup>) – they symbolize, in Friedrich Schlegel's words, a manner of speaking where "everything should be playful and serious"<sup>57</sup> (Schlegel 1991: 13).

56 | Personal translation of: "[...] folkloristische[n] Verein."

57 | Personal translation of: "[...] alles Scherz und alles Ernst."

### 4.5.2 Texts from the Last World

Regarding the name of the publishing house, we find statements by Rewenig who for instance remarked “the last world is the world of books and literature which for me is the ultimate refuge. So the world of free imagination, of dreams and yearnings, if you will”<sup>58</sup> (Rewenig 2010: 19). This fits well with the fact that the publisher was indeed established as a kind of refuge, namely when Francis van Maele left the *PHI-Verlag* – until then the regular publisher of Rewenig and Roger Manderscheid, the second prominent *ultimomondo* author and associate – and the publishing house was taken over by *editpress* with whose ideological and political connotation the authors were unable to identify (see n. a. 2010: 9). Apparently, van Maele had successfully mediated between these authors and a market that in the 1970s and 1980s had yet to be tapped into. In this sense, Manderscheid lauded his erstwhile publisher in the celebratory volume of the *PHI-Verlag*: van Maele had like no other conveyed ‘local’ literature to a ‘local’ audience (see Manderscheid 2001: 72) – and this seemingly without ever having come under suspicion of being commercially biased.

This already describes the claim which the new publisher makes: it vows to explicitly reject commercial thinking – the imprint of the *Bicherbuch* says the publisher is “toujours dans une situation précaire” (‘always in a precarious situation’) (n. a. 2010: 2). One sees oneself “inscrit dans la mouvance de gauche” (‘inscribed in the Left movement’) (n. a. 2010: 15) and refuses, with much clangor, to join the association of the *Lëtzebuurger Bicherrediteuren* (‘Luxembourg book publishers’). Since 2010, because of a dispute with the ministry of culture, the publishing house has claimed for itself the ‘honorary title’ of “Editeur discriminé par l’Etat luxembourgeois” (‘publisher discriminated by the state of Luxembourg’) (Dimmer/Rewenig/Scheuren/Thiltges 2010: 17). From a recent statement by Rewenig in which he rigorously contrasts the “radical open-mindedness of the creative artists” with the “unctuous, electorally useful fabrications” of Luxembourg’s cultural-political “representatives”<sup>59</sup> (Rewenig 2012a: 12), one can deduce that the publisher and author Rewenig – but actually also the publisher *ultimomondo* – is concerned with creating a space within which alternative accesses to the ‘world’ can be tested beyond economic and political stratagems. This creates ideally “[h]eiße Texte” (‘hot texts’) (n. a. 2010: 210), as the first part of the title for the launch event of the “Tour de lûx” (n. a. 2010: 209) was called with which the publisher celebrated its 10th anniversary. Whether the choice of the

**58** | Personal translation of: “[...] die letzte Welt [...] die Welt der Bücher und der Literatur, die für mich der ultime Zufluchtsort ist. Also die Welt der freien Imagination, der Träume und Sehnsüchte, wenn man möchte.”

**59** | Personal translation of: “[...] radikale Weltoffenheit [der] Kulturschaffende[n]” [gegen die] “salbungsvollen, elektoral nützlichen Zweckklügen [der kulturpolitischen] Repräsentanten.”

term used by the GDR censure jargon for ‘dangerous’ texts was a conscious one or not is not really important. Because it is clear by now that the publisher of the last world stages a form of subversive outsiderism.

This staging takes up a pragmatic challenge that in principle all Luxembourg publishers face, and even raises it. Because the field of activities of Luxembourg publishers is anyhow fundamentally different from that of publishers in most of the other European countries. On the one hand, they serve a multilingual readership and on the other, they have to almost completely refrain from publishing translated literature, since this business is firmly in the hands of German and French publishers.<sup>60</sup> This implies to a large degree a limitation to the Luxembourg market and to literature ‘from here’ – and this is what needs to be kept in mind when assessing *ultimomondo’s* publishing policy. Because the gesture of the ‘Nestbeschmutzer’ (‘one who dirties his own nest’) which Rewenig cultivates as an author is also of significance for the publisher – and for the the reading of the *Bicherbuch*. In the celebratory volume for the *PHI-Verlag*, Rewenig defines, in a glossary on the “Innenleben des Editörs” (‘inner life of the editor’), the “Großherzogtum” (‘Grand Duchy’) as a “kleinkulturturnum” (‘petty culture-ty’) (Rewenig 2001b: 84). As a satirist, there is little that Rewenig does not find fault with regarding his “home country” (“the only sports field where immobility is an athletic discipline”)<sup>61</sup>, or the language policy for Luxembourgish – for instance when he denounces the “Aktion Lëtzebuergesch” (‘Action Luxembourgish’) as “a quasi-racist variety of heritagism”<sup>62</sup> (Rewenig 1983: 35). Rewenig has made out a currently prevailing “identity stammering” in Luxembourg which serves no other purpose than that of self-isolation. Against this he sets the stipulation: “Identity is something that no national institution should be allowed to have a claim on, it belongs exclusively to the individual and it is only for the individual to be in charge of it”<sup>63</sup> (Rewenig 2012a: 12).

So what could it be that Rewenig seeks to achieve with his publisher? If one considers that his name is after all associated with the first modern novel in Luxembourgish, *Hannert dem Atlantik* (‘Beyond the Atlantic’) (1985), and that *ultimomondo* initially announced it would exclusively publish works by Luxembourgish authors (see n. a. 2001), it is quite obviously not a matter of turning one’s back to everything Luxembourgish. But that is not only because whoever dirties their nest also needs their nest. Rather it shows that the kind of

**60** | This of course does not regard translations into Luxembourgish, which are however rare. Recently the publisher *Capybara Books* has ventured into this field – it remains to be seen how successful this project will be.

**61** | Personal translation of: “[...] einziger Sportplatz, wo die Unbeweglichkeit eine athletische Disziplin ist.”

**62** | Personal translation of: “[...] eine quasi-rassistische Spielart der Heimattümelei.”

**63** | Personal translation of: “Über Identität hat keine nationale Instanz zu verfügen, sie ist das Ureigene, über das allein jedes Individuum entscheidet.”

literature that Rewenig and the publisher is passionate about can be produced, if not exclusively, but particularly in a place like Luxembourg, which in turn also has to do with language, also with the Luxembourgish one. Regarding his book *Ein unwiderstehliches Land* ('An irresistible country'), Rewenig writes: "My concern here is the cosmopolitanism of provinciality"<sup>64</sup> (Rewenig 1986). In a space that is patently restricted in multiple ways – what is at stake is literature 'from here', non-commercial texts *and* texts that cannot be politically co-opted – the publisher *ultimomondo* seeks to create urbanity against the odds. The staged blending of the formats 'family album' and 'bible' that we see in the *Bicherbuch* shows this very clearly.

How does this work in detail? Here is a sample: "Leef Landsleit! Mir mussen hei am Pays alleguer Lëttschtebeudjesch reden. Dat ist jo awer parfaitement klar. Wie sech weigert, eis Nationalsprache quotidiennement ze parléieren, deen ass weiter nichts wéi e Landesverräter" ('Dear countrymen! We have to speak Luxembourgish everywhere in this country. That's totally clear. Anyone who refuses to speak our national language in daily life is nothing more than a traitor to their country') (Rewenig 2012b: 12). These sentences from a satirical comment by Rewenig on the subject of 'national language' indicate a strategy which brings us back to the point of departure of this case study, the extreme multilingualism of the cover of the *Bicherbuch*. Rewenig here attempts to play out the identity-political language purism of Luxembourgish *ad absurdum* by, as it were, overstraining the existing possibilities of incorporating French and German words into Luxembourgish. One does not *have* to say "quotidiennement" instead of "aldeegelech", but it also can't be entirely excluded. This possibility is what seems to be Rewenig's concern – or, conversely, the impossibility to keep language pure as a fixed entity. For Rewenig – and this could also be the reason for working with formats such as dictionary and glossary – what is concentrated in Luxembourgish is the possibility (actually present in all languages) to use the 'impurity' of language to be not only aesthetically innovative but also cosmopolitan – in any case more cosmopolitan than a merely patriotic and local literature would be, but also more so than the national literatures of the 'large' neighbouring countries.

One could describe the stipulation with which the publishing house *ultimomondo* presents itself and 'its' literature as an alternative, equally ironic and subversive cosmopolitanism. While the national literatures of for instance Germany and France have at least since the end of the 18th century tended to expect the standardization of competencies in the mother-tongue on the part of the recipients and producers, indeed even have regarded it as the precondition for producing any kind of literature of artistic quality, compensating the resulting encapsulation by institutionalizing translation; so while the German and French literary public has been staging a cosmopolitanism of monolingualism as it were, the self-presentation of *ultimomondo* precisely reverses this strategy. The

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64 | Personal translation of: "Es geht mir [...] um die Weltläufigkeit in der Provinzialität."

publishing programme's multilingualism forms a sharp contrast to the marked limitation of the area of distribution. And the 'scandals' that in particular Rewenig has recently provoked stage in a self-mocking way 'storms in a tea cup', which also point to the fact that there is nothing unusual in producing literature that subverts the establishment of linguistic and cultural borders.

### 4.5.3 Publishing Policy in the Times of Babel

The enterprise of *ultimomondo* is however not merely subversive but also constructive in the sense that it implies an alternative option for the spatial structuring of language and literature. This becomes clear when we revisit the *Urtext* of all western theories of multilingualism, the Old Testament story of Babel. We can safely draw on this parallel passage, considering the biblical format the publishing house has given its anniversary book.

At the beginning of the story of Babel is the wish of men to preserve the unity of their language – they want to “make a name for themselves” and avoid being “scattered” over the face of the earth (Genesis 11; see also Dembeck 2014). They erect the tower visible from afar as a beacon to ensure togetherness. Here the unity of language guarantees the very existence of a centre – and only in being too far removed from the centre lies the danger of being scattered. The notion of language unity that the business model of almost all European publishers relies on is a totally different one – as I have pointed out at the beginning: the monolingual paradigm presumes that individual languages are bound to a more or less clearly defined territory, but also each represent close systematic orders in themselves.

If *ultimomondo* subverts these linguistic barriers, on the one hand, and on the other, finds it important to operate from a precisely determined place; if, in pronounced self-sufficiency, it nevertheless seeks to be more cosmopolitan than all great powers, then it basically attempts to establish, tongue-in-cheek, a new Babel that aspires to being the point of departure of a movement for overcoming rigid language differences. This enterprise is tongue-in-cheek because it acts on the assumption that it can only claim universality under conditions of (self-)limitation. The *Bicherbuch* is a manifest of cultural-political claim that is voiced in a both muted and ironic manner. But what is laid claim to is precisely not the domain of single or national languages, but rather a space beyond the boundaries formed by the systematic and territorial basis of languages. Beyond these boundaries and on the basis of a limited locality the publisher seeks to create a literature of the in-between. And it is in creating this in-betweenness, this interstitiality, that it attempts to find its identity.