

Textuality of Italian Migration in Luxembourg and the Great Region

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The Banca dati degli Autori della Grande Regione di Origine Italiana (BAGROI) is a bibliographical databank of texts by authors of Italian origin writing in the Great Region (an area encompassing Luxembourg, the French region of Lorraine, the Belgian region of Wallonia, and the German states of Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland).¹ The project's aim is to establish and document the literary activity of Italian authors or of authors of Italian origin living in Luxembourg and in the surrounding regions.

The impetus for the databank came about during development of the research project "Presence, History, Memoirs of Italians in Luxembourg and in the Great Region," which I had the privilege to lead at the University of Luxembourg between 2004 and 2007. My colleagues and I realized that an increasing number of Italians or persons of Italian origin in the Great Region were writing and publishing books. We started "collecting" these writings, using as groundwork the first studies in this field written by Joseph Boggiani (2005) and Anne Morelli (1996). We also listed announcements in area newspapers requesting submissions of works written by Italians. As news of our initiative spread, getting in contact with new authors became easier. The dimensions of the project (BAGROI currently has approximately one hundred authors) convinced us immediately that it was worth analysis because of its potential as a source of new sociocultural information. Consequently, I set up the databank asking for the following information from the authors:

1. Date of birth (and, depending on the case, of death)
2. Place of birth and generation of immigration
3. Place the texts were written
4. Titles and language of the writings
5. Status of work: published or not published
6. Name and city of publisher and year of publication

BAGROI became more fully developed during a new research project titled "Textuality of Italians of the Great Region and Integration" (TIGRI), which began in 2009 and will conclude in 2014. BAGROI will be online at www.italianistica.lu immediately after the publication of my book in progress *The Anthology of Italian Literature in Luxembourg*.

BAGROI includes the work of both well-known authors (e.g., Jean Portante, Aurélie Filippetti, and Girolamo Santocono) and unknown authors. We used three selective criteria in choosing texts:

1. Works written by first- and second-generation authors are recorded and documented regardless of content and the language in which they were written.
2. Works written by third-generation authors are recorded only if they are explicitly concerned with the topic of migration.
3. The form of the texts (manuscripts or published books) was not relevant for our selection.

BAGROI documents (in the manner of the Banca dati sugli Scrittori di Lingua Italiana nel Mondo [BASLIE] of the University of Lausanne, edited by J.J. Marchand, and the Banca dati degli Scrittori Immigrati in Lingua Italiana [BASILI] of the Università degli studi di Roma La Sapienza, edited by Armando Gnisci) the bibliographical details of the chosen texts, including the language of the writing, as well as important biographical data about each author (e.g., his or her generation and mother tongue), and a small extract of each text.

The criteria listed above indicate BAGROI's principal goal, which is to be less a literary investigation and more a helpful documentation of texts that will be useful from an interdisciplinary point of view. These texts will be thus understood as proof of cultural difference and not as a result of artistic experimentation. BAGROI provides an aid for studying migration in the Great Region vis-à-vis these writings. Therefore the text documents the immigration phenomenon and the degree of the author's integration into his or her respective country.

As might be expected, the body of texts is quite heterogeneous as a result of using a "large net" selection criterion, one that does not consider the quality of the text a decisive element. However, it would be a mistake to conclude that the quality of the texts, in terms that we would call "literary" (that is, texts that make use of aesthetic or artistic features), has been ignored in the process of collecting these works. In order to understand the phenomenology of migration, a text's quality has significance in relation to the authenticity of the writing itself. A "simple" text, or one written by an immigrant who has a "poor" literary and linguistic background, can be of greater importance than a consciously written text, one that uses literary, rhetorical, and stylistic elements. Therefore a "well-written" text will be, from a phenomenological point of view, less illustrative and meaningful than a text written in a simple, more naive, but inevitably more spontaneous and genuine manner. The objective of

BAGROI is to analyze this spontaneous and active communication, characteristic of any text that intends to “tell” something, while offering reliable sociological information derived from it. Such an approach of the written works of immigrants requires the use of various tools of analysis. Literary examination by itself will not be enough to decode the complexity of the chosen texts. That is why we also consider necessary a psychological analysis in order to get to the substance of the message contained therein. But let us stop here and define some fundamental terms that characterize the textual corpus.

After a first reading, which I would call “macroscopic,” we identify a “migratory element” in our analysis of content explicitly related to migration: either memoirs or poems and other writings that deal with the topic of migration without connecting it with an autobiographical experience. Out of roughly 120 texts written by some 80 authors, the migratory element is present in about 50 percent of the texts written in Germany, in about 75 percent of those written in France, in 80 percent of those written in Belgium, and in 5 percent of those from Luxembourg. Even if we deal with a very heterogeneous body of texts, it is still interesting to make an analysis of the territorial distribution of the chosen works. These percentage variations can be explained by the difference in every author’s perception of the topic of migration, as a result of distinctions in historical and sociological backgrounds in the four territories of the Great Region.

The Written Production of Luxembourg in Comparison with Those of Neighboring Countries

The first study of Luxembourg’s Italian migration literature comes from Joseph Boggiani in 2005. After analyzing several authors, Boggiani reaches the conclusion that the writings found in Luxembourg have little to do with the migratory theme. Instead, most of the authors he examines concentrate on the general theme of “consideration on life” (Boggiani 2005, 147). We are therefore confronted with a body of work in which a migratory element is barely present. If someone were to make a study of “migration literature” (understanding the term the way Marchand defined it) in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, that researcher would likely be disappointed (Marchand 1991, xiii). Nevertheless, there are three elements germane to such a study that are part of the wider and more complex field of migratory phenomenology: (1) the quantity of literary production, (2) the author’s generation, and (3) the quality of the writings.

First of all, we have in Luxembourg an important quantity of literary production: There are at least 33 authors who write in Italian (Luxembourg

has only 511,000 inhabitants, 40 percent of whom are immigrants). The second consideration is generational: Almost all these authors are first-generation immigrants, their arrival in Luxembourg dating mostly to the 1960s. Lastly is the question of quality: Almost all these works (most of which rely on happenstance to get published) can be considered good literature and some of them even excellent literature.

The above-mentioned elements differ from those that characterize the writings of neighboring countries. First of all, there are fewer authors in the Lorraine, Saarland, or the Palatinate than in Luxembourg. Also, the literary production spans three generations in France, while in Germany and Belgium it involves only the first generation. From a literary point of view, there is a greater number of “well-written” works by first-generation authors in France and Belgium, as opposed to Germany, where the numbers are quite modest.

It is also true that, as stated above, the percentage of memoirs is much higher outside Luxembourg; consequently, a large number of works (particularly German ones) belonging to the first generation are selected because of the importance of their content from a historical and a sociological point of view, content that introduces the reader to certain emigrational experiences.

Going forward with our study on data and percentages, we think it is important to consider why there is such a difference in the literary production of these countries. The answer will inevitably be sought in the degree of integration or the self-image of Italians in these countries. These forms of integration are somewhat different from country to country, especially in Luxembourg. Italians living in Luxembourg have always had a different perception of their emigration than immigrants in France, Germany, and Belgium. There are three reasons for this perception.

The first has to do with the long period of time that characterizes the Italian presence: Italians reached the Grand Duchy shortly after 1890, working mainly in mines and factories. They tended to congregate in towns in the south of the country (in addition to the capital city of Luxembourg): Differdange, Dudelange, and Esch-sur-Alzette. Apart from the capital, these are also the most populous towns in the country. The number of Italians in the workplace was equal to or even greater than that of the autochthonous population or those of other immigrants (French, Polish, and German). Italians formed the Little Italies² in these cities, districts that grew to large dimensions in a short period of time. The host country’s suspicious attitude, sometimes taking the form of intolerance, was different than that in other countries because Italians did not constitute defined “minority” groups in many labor fields.

The second reason for the complete integration of the Italians in Luxembourg occurred after World War II, principally in the 1960s, when an immense wave of Portuguese immigrants arrived in the Grand Duchy. The large numbers of these new immigrants made the native population finally accept the Italian presence completely inasmuch as Italians were no longer seen as “the others” in comparison with the newcomers. This kind of integration is relevant from a demographic point of view: Italians were recognized and incorporated as a group (using a mechanism of “integration by exclusion”). Their image was principally associated with unskilled labor in the iron and steel industries and also with gastronomy (the first Italian restaurants in the Grand Duchy were opened in the 1960s [Lorenzini 2004] and spread quickly).

In discussing the third reason for the distinctive integration of Italians, one should examine the end of the 1960s and the 1980s–1990s in order to identify a kind of integration that we could call qualitative. It was precisely during those years that a significant number of Italian professionals arrived in Luxembourg to work in banks or in other European institutions. This period of time marks the profound change of the Italians’ image in the eyes of the autochthonous population. Currently, as recent sociological inquiries demonstrate, the Italian community is the best integrated in the country (Fehlen 1999, 83–91; 2006, 27–44; Besch and Legrand 2007).

In addition to these three social factors, which are unique to Luxembourg, a geographical criterion can also be considered. Luxembourg covers only 2,586 square kilometers, and its population is just 511,000 inhabitants, 40 percent of whom have foreign origins. Such a small country with such a high percentage of immigrants has definitely played a very important role in the integration of Italians. They lived their migratory experience in the Grand Duchy in a way very different from that of minorities in other countries. The inquiries show that currently, one inhabitant in four (especially in the southern part of the country) is Italian or has Italian origins. Thirty-four percent of the population speaks some Italian, and 25 percent of it is fluent. These factors have contributed, and continue to contribute, to Italian integration in Luxembourg. So, it is not surprising that this social peculiarity corresponds to a different literary production of the Grand Duchy’s Italian immigrants compared with those in neighboring countries. The migratory elements disappear from the writings of the Italian immigrants in Luxembourg not by chance but as a consequence of that complete integration, which leads to a different perception of the immigrant status, a perception without the real trauma of cultural “uprooting.” Furthermore, the absence of a linguistic component,³ historically strong and well defined in Luxembourg (in

comparison with the German, French, and Belgian languages), determines a minor cultural impact: Italians can live and maintain their Italianism without problems.⁴ As a consequence, the migratory element in the writing is not represented negatively.

Ways of Writing

The literary production of Italian emigrants differs from one region to another both in terms of form and of content. Thus we present the distinctive characteristics of the writings included in BAGROI according to the places in which they were written.

Luxembourg

As already stated, a quantitative element stands out definitively and corresponds with a generational element: The high number of texts written in Luxembourg belongs almost completely to the first generation of immigrants.⁵ The authors, in most cases, come from the financial field (banks and insurance) or from the political-administrative sector (European institutions). These are persons who came to Luxembourg between the 1960s and 1990s with vocational training and relatively strong writing skills. Once in Luxembourg, they expressed themselves almost always in narrative terms. They wrote almost exclusively in Italian, and the presumptive audience seems to be the people of Italy and/or of the entire world. Regarding the low number of poems, what Boggiani writes is true:

The migratory theme tends to be replaced by the existential one, a token of humanism where elements of ethical nature dominate. In principle, these pieces of work express what [. . .] Marchand called a patrimony “of lessons on life, because they offer a vision of the human being in a world matured for a long time and in a hard way” (Marchand 1988, 463); we are talking about a few poetical works, whose themes (loneliness, death, metaphysical fear) do not depend on the place they were written. (Boggiani 2005, 142)

As for prose works, it is worth stating that there is a sort of pronounced “detachment” from the setting of Luxembourg that instead gives way to Italian contents and images—sometimes nostalgic, sometimes not. Even when the country of Luxembourg is evoked and described, it loses its contours and becomes the setting of a historical or fantastic romance. Corners of the Grand Duchy turn into gothic places where cruel crimes are committed.⁶ It could be surmised that the territory of Luxembourg is

used, and maybe also exploited, because it is a very small country, and its everyday realities are little known abroad. It is transformed into a mysterious topography in which the detective and gothic novels of at least three authors take place (Forgiarini 2000; Van der Noot 2005; Giordano 2007). Thus, Luxembourg becomes a bona fide rhetorical figure, so that the bond with the territory gets lost in the end even when it appears so present on the surface. Simona Giordano (b. Turin 1974), for example, describes the morphology of Grund, a quarter situated in the valley of the river Alzette:

Grund, the old part of town of Luxembourg, is a not very regular surface of concrete dug up in the rocks, a result of the secular erosive process, where water and wind together gave them the shape of a huge funnel, or of a throat, with the two spurs at the place of Rebecca's lips and her feet resting on the tonsils. On top of the walls, on what are real balconies—areas with a fine view from where it is possible to have a complete prospect of the wide valley—that means the heart of the city, with its shops, offices, and the traffic of the twentieth century. But down here, now, there is only a kind of antique cold air, streets made of cobblestones and medieval houses. Rebecca sets off with a spurt towards the little bridge of stone over the Alzette, a spit of black river, passes by a pub and gets to an open area. All around her, only rocks. Large blocks of dolomites and limestones that split into caves of a fiery red inside. (Giordano 2007)

Shortly before, in the prologue of the same manuscript, Giordano describes a truculent crime in the snow of Grund, detailed in a very cruel manner:

I plunge her face into a heap of snow and then I pull it back. Her nose, her eyes, her cheek tear up pieces of fresh snow, flocks of bright phosphorus under the cold light. Now she is breathing, no, she is gasping for breath, no. She is braying. Like a wounded donkey.

But she can't react, she is confused, dazed by my blows, by me, by the idea that I exist. I take out of the pocket of my coat the needle and point it to the throat, where the largest vein is pulsing. While her skin is flaking I tear up a tiny little piece of it, put my mouth on it and suck up in such a powerful way that at the end my jaws start aching. (Giordano 2007)

In this way a “dark,” sometimes metaphysical dimension of the Luxembourg area comes into being. The everyday objects and places of the Grand Duchy are absent; these physical and actual details, which might be found in memoirs or testimonial writings, unfortunately are almost nonexistent in the texts from this country.

France

One notices a completely different situation outside of Luxembourg. The dimensions seem to switch places: Texts are almost always on migration or nostalgic themes. However, one should take into consideration an important characteristic of the writings in the territory of the Lorraine. There is a small difference among the writings of the various generations. The migration theme is scarcely developed by the first generation and more present in the works of the subsequent generations. An almost singular case is that of immigrant Sylvain Tarantino (b. Tuglie, Lecce province, 1946). In his first book (Tarantino 1999), written in French and titled *Un printemps interrompu* (An interrupted spring), the author recalls his entire life story, beginning with one morning when the sun was about to rise in his native town of Tuglie and his mother woke him so they could catch a train to visit his father, who was working in Villerupt, France.

I realize confusedly that today an important event was going to occur, an event that would unsettle my entire youth, which has been anyway so happy and quiet in this sunny land surrounded by a wonderful blue sea. To tell the truth, I had been feeling for months that this event was going to happen, because I had heard my mother talking with my uncles and aunts about a future trip to France. (Tarantino 1999, 16)

The book is a chronicle of a journey and of a settlement; not at all dreamy or romantic, it is the minute reconstruction of moments, places, and events that reflect the author's world.

In contrast, Mina Zavaglia (b. Marliano, Pistoia province, 1919–d. Villerupt 2006), also a first-generation immigrant living in Villerupt, a famous and awarded poet, almost never wrote on migratory themes or used the Italian language in her poems, with the exception of the following poem, titled “Crepuscolo sul mare” (Twilight on the sea)

It is dusk,
Sitting on the gentle slope of the hill
I'm admiring in that sovereign hour
Under a magic sky
The beauty of creation.
The sun is setting, flames of fire
Light up the sky and the sea.
...
Lost in a mute contemplation, floating,
Immaterial,
I seem to be suspended in the infinity,
Among the turbines of atoms, in the starlit sky. (Zavaglia 1937)

Her choice of the Italian language seems to be a vehicle for naturalistic, existential feelings, not very different from those present in all her poems in French.

Most of the writers who deal with the migratory theme in France belong to the second or third generation. Joseph Ciccotelli (b. Nancy 1957), for example, addresses it in his first novel, *Enzo, c'est moi* (Enzo, it's me), a work that he calls "auto-fiction" and in which he describes an immigrant's life projected onto another character's life (Ciccotelli 2006). The following fragment serves as an illustration. The author demonstrates a remarkable easiness in retracing the path of his origins:

Despite their earlier arrival in France, their French didn't have a comprehensive level at that time, in comparison with their wives' who in the end spoke it fluently – the daily communication helps it – their French will never be really correct; it's the French who ended in integrating these new sounds. . . . Notice: "Italian" wasn't a neutral concept during those years; nowadays, the Italian image isn't anymore the image of an emigrant, it's associated with the image of a tourist, a student, an artist, a businessman, a restorer, or a sportsman, definitely of a European neighbor who comes to do business in our country, but once! (Ciccotelli 2006, 33)

Also belonging to the second generation, Louis Salvatore Bellanti (b. Thionville 1958) deals with the migratory theme in his first book, *Revoir la mer* (To see the sea again), in which he talks about emigration from Sicily:

"I'm going to make a long journey. Think about me." He asked me to think about him and I didn't do anything else. He smiled at me and I understood I had to leave him by himself. We've always understood our father's meaningful glance, his silence. (Bellanti 2005)

The memory of his Sicilian origins comes to the surface when reconstructing a melancholic episode of his life in this very short book when he talks about the transfer of his father's remains to Sicily (Bellanti 2005). In his book *Un soir sur la terre avec Pirandello* (An earthly evening with Pirandello), he imagines spending time in Porto Empedocle, Agrigento province, conversing with playwright Luigi Pirandello (Bellanti 2007).

The bond with one's own roots is also evident in Anna Bartolacci's (b. Villerupt 1923) handwritten text, titled "Villerupt, ma ville" (Villerupt, my town), written in 1983. The book is about Bartolacci's civil commitment to the feminist, trade unionist, and social struggles of the mining

community of Villerupt, where Italians represented 80 percent of the city's population. It is also the story of that community's victories and defeats in the quest to obtain its rights.

But the real "explosion" of the migratory theme in the Lorraine is evident in the writings of the third generation. One could speak about reclaiming individual memory, family memory, or a cultural revival. Books like those written by Mireille Poulain-Giorgi (b. Villerupt 1948) or Aurélie Filippetti (b. Villerupt 1973) show not only a real and sincere bond with the history of their family but also a study and authentic research containing historical facts. These are people who did not intend to write a simple family history in order that it not be forgotten; they also went to look for information on their ancestors, searching in antique dresser drawers and in parochial archives. The result, in the case of Poulain-Giorgi, is an authentic historical novel in which the first-person narrator is absent:

Her husband was the first to leave; he had always said he would leave. The first time, Jean left with him; the second time, he left by himself. He couldn't think of anything else than leaving between 1914 and 1923! He was talking only about his departure! Without ever asking himself if he should remain there. Maybe he was feeling as confused as those peasants of Gagliano who live in a land completely abandoned, who are neither Christians, nor men, because "Christ has never descended" [Carlo Levi, *Christ Stopped at Eboli*]. (Poulain-Giorgi 1999, 117)

In this way, Poulain-Giorgi describes her grandmother Giovanna's mood after the death of her husband, with whom she had emigrated to Villerupt.

The fundamental feature of the history of the Lorraine is the deep connection with political, working-class, and socialist activism: In almost all texts written by Italian immigrants there are references to the political climate in which the local populations lived. Aurélie Filippetti describes in third person the unconscious joy that she experienced as a little girl the moment the whole town of Audun-le-Tiche celebrated the victory of François Mitterand in the presidential elections in 1981:

Two children were dancing and springing in the deserted courtyard of the school. Two little girls surprised and delighted by the joy of the village. Nobody saw them going out. They did not understand why it was such a surprise that the left had won. They lived among communist and sometimes socialist activists. The right must have existed, since they even talked about it, but it was faraway. Were there really persons who didn't vote for the communists? They stopped asking themselves about the reasons for it. No matter why, it was an evening of celebration. They

felt a little bit ridiculous, but they had to mark the occasion. They climbed over the wall of the school, raised their faces towards the vault of stars, and cried as loud as their eight-year-old lungs could: "We have woooo!" (Filippetti 2003, 160)

These two authors are deeply engaged in the contexts they present, but they prefer to make no references to themselves; they seem to tell stories they know very well, using real places and events, yet at the same time they give the reader the sense that they do not belong to the story.

Germany

The literary works in the database from the German side of the Great Region seem to be authored exclusively by immigrants (to date no texts from the second or third generations have been identified) and are written in Italian. The authors emigrated from Italy into the region of the Saar River, arriving mostly in the 1960s and 1970s, and their writings bear witness solely to their immigration experience. Almost always (though this is not exclusive to Germany), these authors started writing their autobiographies with the intention of writing a "book for the family." The typical scenario is a writer who has access to printing and can produce copies for the members of the family. These are books born inside the home and not originally intended to be shared: Only a coincidence (at least it seemed so) led to their publication and exposure to a larger public. The tone in which the books are written is demonstrated by the first witty remarks of Salvatore Vella's (b. Favara, Agrigento province, 1929) manuscript (translated into and published in German) titled *Geliebte Töchter, Amate figlie* (Book of the family, life and memories of a father holding a colloquium with his daughters):

These typewritten pages, that I wanted to put together in a volume, do not form a work that deserves to be published, on one hand because it is badly written, on the other hand because it is on my private life. That is why I would like them to remain in the family. The main reason that made me put on paper the most important events of my life, with the various problems, difficulties, delusions, and sacrifices, was to leave a recollection and an evidence of my past for my daughters and my future grandchildren. (Vella 2007, Preface)

The social conditions of the Italians living in Germany have not progressed very far since the time of the post-World War II generation. This different form of integration in comparison with that of the Italians in Luxembourg,

Belgium, and France might explain the dearth of authors in the German part of the Great Region. No Italian author in the German area has become as famous as Aurélie Filippetti in France, Jean Portante in Luxembourg, or Girolamo Santocono in Belgium.

Belgium

The situation in Belgium is even more distinctive. To date, a considerable number of authors of Italian origin have been identified. Almost all of them belong to the first generation. The main themes in the chosen texts are homesickness and the distance from their country. If one were to use Marchand's syntagmatic distinction, almost the whole corpus could belong to the category "emigration literature." A very good example is a work by Ferruccio Esposito, published in 1987 and titled *Requiem per un emigrante* (Requiem for an emigrant); it is an autobiographical work in which the author deliberately alternates the first person with the third person singular:

On the 29th of September 1926, my poor mother gave birth to me on the holy land of Sotto il Monte, a humble little village (known all over the world now, for the simple fact that the divine force wished to choose among the most humble, and maybe the humblest, pushing him ahead, so that he reached the highest range of the ecclesiastic hierarchy, that is Pope John XXIII).

I lived the first twenty years of my life there, that means a hard life, a life of an incomparable poverty, so I lived the same life and maybe worse than that life presented by Ermanno Olmi in his film *L'albero degli zoccoli* (*The Tree of Wooden Clogs*). (Esposito 1987, 1)

Here we have a story based on the author's experiences written from the point of view of a person who has suffered in life, the circumstances of which he reacted to by working hard and observing fundamental Catholic values. The fragment in the third person could be interpreted almost as a medieval exemplum of his life conduct. After having described his experience as a beggar in Italy, Esposito goes on:

His father was finally employed at Italcementi. The family continues to increase. Ferruccio will not have to beg anymore. The poor family goes to live in Corna Street. Ferruccio goes into the woods to pasture the goats and gather dead branches of trees to make fire at home. Up there, near the Madonna of Caneve, he continues to grow up humbly, but decently. (6)

Esposito has been living at Jemeppe-sur-Sambre, a small village in the Wallonia, for more than fifty years. This village is not far away from Charleroi, a town known for its very high density of Italian immigrants.

Walter Vacca (b. Parma 1922?) dedicates a poem to Charleroi titled “La terra promessa” (The promised land):

Charleroi
 Lowers the tide
 The race has finished.
 People waiting
 Pick up their relatives:
 flesh for the mine.

Two days of friendship
 Are ruined instantly:
 a salute:
 Good-bye!
 And each one has his own destiny.

This
 is the promised land
 here grows the bread-tree
 I wonder, how much
 I will have to take care of it
 so that it would not dry up.
 I will water it
 With blood and sweat
 And so much work
 Infinite work. (Vacca 1996, 52)

Conclusion

This article briefly analyzes the works in BAGROI that deal with the migratory theme, regardless of the authors’ language and generation. For the most part, the texts that do not address that theme have not been examined. The literary works of fiction represent in some areas of the Great Region, especially in Luxembourg, the majority of the works included. Because of the intrinsic characteristics of these works (based more on invention than on autobiography), the collaborators of TIGRI decided to concentrate on the texts that have an autobiographical-migratory focus. The literary works chosen for this present analysis distinguish themselves by their phenomenological representativeness. Even if this article has examined closely only a particular subset of the corpus, some conclusions

can certainly be drawn. There are evident differences among the writings of the different nations of the Great Region. The German contribution accounts for a relatively small number of authors, all of them belonging to the first generation. The linguistic element plays, of course, a very important role: Saarland and the Palatinate are not francophone territories, and the Italians have more difficulty with the German language than with French. Furthermore, the social conditions of the Italians living in this part of Germany have barely progressed since the time of the post-World War II generation.⁷ If we take into account popular sentiment and legislative reality, which distinguish Germany⁸ on the matter of immigration from the other countries, we can imagine the different self-perceptions of Italian immigrants in Germany, thus generating a different way of expressing themselves in written works. The lack of representative texts from this part of Germany reveals a certain difficulty of integration and of communication (also with the wider public and not only with one's own family) and a different form of integration in comparison with other countries. It is not a coincidence that the very few texts are all written in Italian and are addressed only to the family.

Another example of difficult integration, though a more "dynamic" one, is found in the writings of Italian emigrants in the Lorraine (a generation that has produced very little writing). The fundamental difference between the texts written in this region and those written in Germany is the use of the language of the adopted country in all of them. The first generation in France seems to have been actively involved in learning French and adopting the culture, in accordance with the laws at the time. For this reason, there are fewer authors. The next two generations deal in their writings with migration as it affected the lives of their parents or grandparents. One could say that the problems of cultural dislocation that immigration brings were overcome by the time of the second generation.

The situation is even more remarkable in Belgium, where historically Italians were generally perceived as working class. The significant presence of Italian immigrants in many territories of Wallonia, along with the political rights they obtained in Belgium after the agreements with the Italian government between 1945 and 1946,⁹ validated their immigrant experience and inspired them to incorporate that experience into their writing, expressed principally via poetry. It is in Wallonia that one finds the highest percentage of authors belonging to the first generation who dealt with their migratory experience in the Italian language.

Still more notable is the Italian immigrant situation in Luxembourg, where the migratory theme is not very often present in the writings. There it is replaced by other literary themes as previously discussed, especially

among immigrants who arrived in Luxembourg between the 1960s and 1990s and who were part of the professional class. The migratory theme is not found in the written works of subsequent generations either.¹⁰ This fact is explained by the different forms of integration of the Italian emigrants and also by the period of time when they arrived in the Grand Duchy. The first wave of Italians in Luxembourg dates back 130 years (much earlier than in Germany and Belgium). There was a high rate of illiteracy among these primarily working-class immigrants. Italians, already very numerous in the area and continuously present there, even during the two world wars, integrated themselves quickly and transformed the migratory experience into a less painful, important, but not decisive episode of their history.

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Notes

1. This present work is a modified version of part of an article that I wrote in Italian and that was published in the conference proceedings *Rêves d'Italie, Italies de rêve*, edited by Joseph Boggiani, Maria Luisa Caldognetto, Claudio Cicotti, and Antoinette Reuters (Luxembourg: Saint Paul, 2009). I have not included the quoted authors' original Italian, French, and German texts.
2. The district "Brill-Frontiera" in Esch-sur-Alzette, the district "Italia" in Dudelange, and the district "Italian" in Differdange.
3. It is important to note that until 1984 Luxembourg had no official national language. In that year Luxembourgish became the national language, and French and German became official languages.
4. There are more than sixty Italian voluntary associations in Luxembourg.
5. There are only two memoirs by second-generation authors dealing with the topic of migration: Jean Portante's successful novel *Mrs. Haroy ou la mémoire de la baleine: Chronique d'une immigration* (1993), and Silvio Grilli's recent book *Ein außergewöhnlich interessantes Leben im Minette* (2007).
6. In Simona Giordano's case, this can be seen in the manuscript of her unpublished novel "Veglia profonda."
7. The poetic lessons of the so-called *Gastarbeiterliteratur* (guest worker literature) or of the group *PoLiKunst* emerged out of Germany's specific socioterritorial reality and are thus inapplicable to this study of the Great Region. (See Amodeo 2006, 395–407.)
8. Germany did not consider itself a country of immigration until the end of the 1990s. The first law that controls immigration is dated 2001.
9. The agreement between the Belgian and Italian governments, ratified in 1946, stipulated that Belgium would send Italy two or three tons of coal in exchange for 2,000 immigrant mine workers. (See Franciosi 1997.)
10. Except for second-generation author Jean Portante's invaluable example.

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