



# The Grand Duchy Strikes Back

Hughes Schlueter

**Y**ou can hardly open certain German or French business thrillers without a Luxembourgish laundry ticket falling off the pages. And for sure: it will not return your Burberry, but a silver Zero Halliburton attaché with dubious contents. For years non-Lux writers have used Luxembourg in crime fiction as a popular setting for money transfers and hiding secrets. What a cheap trick! Wrong and unjust! But the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg is taking revenge: its homegrown crime novel scene is spreading quickly.

Let's have a short glimpse at the country first. Centered in Europe, smaller in area than Rhode Island, about five hundred thousand people live there, which means a writer is serving fewer readers than there are within the limits of Oklahoma City. Few people—many

languages. Luxembourg allows itself the luxury of four: Luxembourgish (a Franconian variant), German, French, and English. And if you run

What a tiny audience! No crime writer can make a living from selling copies in Luxembourg. All of us keep our day jobs in order to guarantee a warm meal at least once a week and occasional restaurant visits.

into a real Luxie—be it a minister, policeman, banker or housewife—you will be given fluent answers in at least three of these. Publications, especially fiction, are 50 percent in German, with the rest either in French or Luxembourgish. What an international scene! What a tiny audience! No crime writer can make a living from selling copies in Luxembourg. All of us keep our day jobs in

order to guarantee a warm meal at least once a week and occasional restaurant visits.

So, whom do we find in Luxembourg's active crime scene? A very heterogeneous lot, as would be expected from such a colorful country: a female bank employee, a female publishing house

**Hughes Schlueter** ([www.hugheschlueter.com](http://www.hugheschlueter.com)) is German, working in Luxembourg and Germany, and published his first Luxembourg crime novel, *Tod in Belval*, with fashion photographer Lou Schleck in October 2010.

employee, a proper state minister, a female state minister's assistant (no, they do not work in the same resort and leave the country's administration up to others), journalists and photographers, a psychiatrist and head of the psychiatric ward at a major hospital, a teacher and writer who has just published his second crime novel, a female director of corporate training films and now owner of a coffee farm in Australia, an illustrator and author of cartoon books and, yours truly, a marketing and communications advisor working in Germany and Luxembourg.

Marc Thill—who have successfully published a trilogy of photobooks leading readers to the country's secret and forgotten places, which are truly inspiring for writers and those who want to secretly dispose of, well, let's say, something.

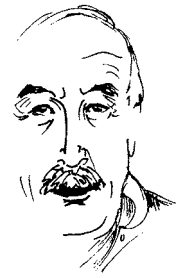
The scene is too young and small to have developed subgenres yet or a true series of well-established fictional characters and detectives, though Schank's Commissaire Mathieu or Feltgen's Kommissar Tom Becker investigate in two or more novels and are on the way to becoming classics associated with the Grand Duchy.



Monique Feltgen



Marco Schank



Jhemp Hoscheit



Luc Marteling

True murder and mystery in Luxembourgish fiction is a very, very young discipline, dating in its origins back not more than six or seven years. Not a long time for authors—having real-life jobs and being located outside a state penitentiary—to have written a plethora of books. Those who have done extremely well are Monique Feltgen and Marco Schank, with five and seven books, respectively, being regularly on top notches in Luxembourg's best-seller lists. Feltgen has also published some short crime stories as an audiobook. E-books are currently being tested by Luxembourg's most important publishing house, éditions saint-paul, which has also published an anthology of crime stories written by thirteen- to twenty-year-old students. I am glad to report, there will be no shortage of qualified culprits and killers in the years to come.

Taking a closer look at Luxembourg bookstore shelves (and you bet I did after my own first crime novel came out!), you will come across names like Corinne Bauer, Pierre Decock, Marc Graas, Jhemp Hoscheit, Laura Laberge, and a team—Marc Wilwert and his partners in crime Claude Feyereisen, Luc Marteling, and

Likewise, it is too early to discover common characteristics of Luxembourg's crime scene, such as violence against women as a popular topic in contemporary Swedish crime fiction, or an unhealthy trend of surgical details in serial-killer novels as a formal concept.

But if I were being interrogated by hitmen in a dark, soundproof building far, far away from here and was forced to issue a statement, I would suggest that Luxembourgish crime fiction is like the country and its population itself: charming, inviting, thrilling, and very creative, if convinced of an idea. Dangerously, if this happens to be crime.

So, non-Lux writers and dear readers: it pays to watch out for true Luxembourgish crime fiction and its genuine creators. Accept no fakes!

*Luxembourg / Frankfurt am Main*