

Renert

Outline:

A monument of Luxembourg literature, published in 1872, the novel Renert written by Michel Rodange is a poetic and satirical farce in verse featuring the famous figure of the fox rolling all the other animals of the kingdom in flour.

Text:

A contemporary avatar of the 'fox story' tradition, Michel Rodange's "Renert" is a masterpiece of Luxembourg's national literature. In 1872, the Luxembourg poet adapted Goethe's version (Reineke Fuchs, 1852), transposing it into Luxembourgish under the title *De Renert oder de Fuuss am Frack an a Maansgréisst* (Renart or the fox in dress and at man's height). It is a comedy where the animals are given human characteristics and are individualised by proper names. It is naturally the pretext for political satire, as in *La Fontaine* - but undoubtedly more violent! Composed of fourteen songs and 6052 verses, this classic of Luxembourg literature, in which Michel Rodange uses the different national dialects, was censored when it was published. Indeed, by questioning in a rather direct way the Luxembourgish socio-political reality of the years 1865-1872, Rodange, a schoolteacher by profession, pleads for a popular education.

We follow the adventures of the animals of the kingdom, all dumber than each other, struggling with the cunning and disloyal Renart. Renart, with his cruel intelligence, martyred them one after the other, and gained the favour of the King despite all the crimes he committed.

The satirical side should not make us forget that Rodange's novel is also very funny! It can also be read as a tribute to the landscapes and the land of the young state of Luxembourg. Today, one of the high schools in the city of Luxembourg bears the name of the author and Michel Rodange's son, Albert, was the co-designer of the Adolphe Bridge. Another important tribute to the literary work of Rodange, to his influence on Luxembourg and to the symbolic figure of the fox, is the sculpture of the fox created in 1932 by sculptors François Demuth and Ernest Grosber. The stone original is kept in the Museum of History of the City of Luxembourg. A cast made in 1981 is now on the Michel Rodange monument, Place Guillaume II, which also displays the bronze portrait of the author.