



# Linguistic Areas of Literature: Between the World and the Nations

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## **Linguistic Areas of Literature: Between the World and the Nations**

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### **Abstract:**

In this chapter I seek to further elaborate on *linguistic areas of literature*, which have been under-researched by Casanova, who rather tried to map a broader picture of the world literary system, and who was more attentive to cases of Herderian congruence between nation and language. In so doing, I re-elaborate the theory of the field in a transnational and plurilingual perspective, focusing on the notions of in/dependence of literary spaces, and of *illusio*. Linguistic areas are dynamic international spaces revolving around one language, and organising a system of dependencies between local spaces, that are typically national. I develop a typology of linguistic areas. The polycentric Arabophone linguistic area is structured by the interdependence of national spaces in relation to each other. Thanks to the growing integration of its still existing peripheries, this linguistic area resembles an international literary field overarching the national (sub-)fields. By contrast, the monocentric Francophone linguistic area can be called a “literary system,” organized around a core literary field, the French one. This leads me to refine the model of the Francophone literary system proposed by Klinkenberg and Denis, and to propose a new way of sketching the literary history of the French language literature from a transnational perspective. Using a more institutional approach, I qualified Casanova’s assumptions that linguistic areas are “homogeneous,” while they are permanently crossed over by national borders and even linguistic issues (especially in local plurilingual spaces); and above all that they are “unchallenged”: I showed the dialectically evolving balance of power even in the most centralized linguistic areas, introducing more history in macro-models of World literature.

Attentive to the role played by the Herderian revolution in international literary space, Casanova did not further theorize those situations in which nation-state and linguistic unity do not overlap: I have analysed *plurilingual literary spaces* elsewhere (see also Leperlier, “La langue des champs”). I will focus here on *linguistic areas of literature*. They are of secondary importance in Casanova’s model of the *World Republic of Letters*, while arguably organizing most of the transnational circulation of books (avoiding for example the editorial costs of translation). In the few pages she devotes to them (see particularly 116-117), Casanova considers linguistic areas to be intermediate spaces between the global level (their structure

“mirrors that of worldwide literary space”) and the national level. She describes them as a “literature-world” (transposing Braudel’s notion of “economy-world”), “that is, a homogenous and autonomous sphere in which the legitimacy of its centralized power of consecration is unchallenged.” While the dominated can convert their literary dependence on the world center of literature (Paris) “into an instrument of emancipation and legitimacy,” the domination of the centers of linguistic areas over their “literary protectorates” remains unchallenged because it perpetuates a political domination. The work of a legitimized “eccentric” writer, part of a minority within a major language (Deleuze and Guattari), will mostly benefit the center of the linguistic area: they “annex peripheral literary innovations” (120).

These analyses, illustrated by the English colonial case, seem less convincing in the face of polycentric linguistic areas. There, as Casanova herself states, “dominated writers can exploit an unequal balance of power between linguistic and political capitals” (122). Which center benefits of the eccentric oeuvre of Mia Couto that she mentions (123-124)? Certainly, this Mozambican writer was emancipated from the Portuguese literary field when he appropriated Brazilian linguistic and literary experiments. But Casanova forgets to mention that he is published in Portugal: The independence of Mozambique and even Brazil, in terms of publishing and international distribution, cannot be taken for granted. Also the Camões Prize that he received in 2013, named for the famous Portuguese author, has been funded since 1988 by Portugal and Brazil.

A more institutional approach allows us to qualify the “homogeneous” character that Casanova lends to linguistic areas, as well as the “unchallenged” (the French text says “*univoque*”) and lasting character of the imposed domination. The relations of dependence between literary fields are indeed manifold, as I will show (symbolic, specific, linguistic, functional, consecratory). They emerge largely from extra-literary factors. These include international geopolitical factors, such as the internal organization of empires. For example, in

contrast to the French or British colonial empires, the continental empires, such as the Germanic or Ottoman, allowed their peripheries broader independence. Other international factors are economic (conquest of markets) or linguistic (anteriority of standardization, imposition or not of a standard on a territory) in nature. There may also be internal factors at play, particularly educational policies (creation of an intellectual pool and a literate public) and cultural policies (ranging between liberalism and interventionism, in the political or economic fields).

Standing on Casanova's shoulders, and drawing on my previous research (Leperlier, *Algérie*), I will further elaborate the notion of *linguistic area*, and develop a typology. This will lead me to contribute to the theory of the field through a transnational and plurilingual perspective. Far from being "homogeneous," linguistic areas are affected by national and linguistic tensions. I define linguistic areas as monolingual international literary spaces that span between the unification and emancipation of (typically) national fields: They organize a system of international dependencies around a single language of writing. At the pole of interdependence, we observe *polycentric linguistic areas*, as exemplified by the Arabophone area. At the other pole, we find *monocentric linguistic areas*, which organize firm hierarchies between core and periphery, as exemplified by the Francophone area. Even in this case, however, it would be excessive to speak of "unchallenged" domination.

## THE LITERARY FIELD IN A TRANSNATIONAL AND PLURILINGUAL PERSPECTIVE

Pierre Bourdieu's study of the French literary field of the nineteenth century (Bourdieu, *Rules*) is not typical, but exceptional in three regards. First, as Alain Viala and Denis Saint-Jacques have argued, the great autonomy of this field is rarely to be found elsewhere or in other periods. Yet, this does not prevent us from talking about a field if a minimal level of autonomy from political, religious, and economic powers is reached. Second, the French case is very

territorialized. Inspired by Wallerstein's "world system" analysis, and trying to overcome "methodological nationalism" (Wimmer and Glick Schiller), Casanova and Gisèle Sapiro ("Transnational") have insisted on the fundamental character of the process of nationalization of literatures from the nineteenth century onwards (Anderson; Thiesse, *Transnational Creation*), as well as, following Bourdieu himself on the Belgian case (Bourdieu, "Littérature Belge"), on the possibility of an extension of the space in which writers compete beyond national borders. I have demonstrated elsewhere that peripheries usually form "transnational literary fields," structured by the opposition between a national pole and an international pole. Contrary to what Casanova suggested, though, this opposition is between two types and degrees of literary recognition, rather than strictly corresponding with an opposition between heteronomy and autonomy (Leperlier, "Champ littéraire transnational"). The third point in relation to the French case as studied by Bourdieu is that it is monolingual, while many literary fields are plurilingual. Mirroring Wimmer and Glick Schiller's concept, I call *methodological monolingualism* the widespread scholarly assumption that literature can be studied as a linguistically homogenous whole, itself a consequence of the "monolingual paradigm" (Yildiz), which has emerged since the nineteenth century (Leperlier, "Plurilingual Literary Spaces").

Can we speak of a field that would be less autonomous, transnational and plurilingual? Bourdieu insists on the historical process of the autonomization of a field to allow for its "methodological autonomization" (Bourdieu, "Champ"), but one can argue that there are four factors to take into account. The first one is the relative *specialization* of the field of activity called "literature" (such as the historical departure of 'literature' from 'Belles Lettres': see Viala). The second is its relative *autonomy* in relation to other fields seeking to *subject* it to their rules (mostly religious, political, and economic fields). The third factor is its relative *independence*, a notion that I borrow from Aron, which I will further elaborate. The fourth is the writers' '*illusio*': As a space of competition, the field cannot only be methodologically

autonomized by objective features but can also be detected thanks to the subjective investment of its actors (be it primary or secondary investment). The *illusio* is nevertheless framed by institutions.

The notion of the independence of a field points to a link with political independence of territories or nations, even though literary and political independence do not overlap. Writers do not invest their *illusio* in an abstract literary field, but in an identified one: Due to the international nationalizations of literatures since the nineteenth century, the writer's *illusio* is generally a national one. Even if the field is often transnational in its structuring, national identification maintains its predominance for the writers (for an instance of regional identification, see Ducournau). Only central literary fields like the XIX-XX century French one can be partly denationalized: there, the legitimate definition of national literature is of secondary importance for the writers, compared to the issue of its relative autonomy. Although excessive, Fredric Jameson's insistence on "national allegories" in third world countries' literatures points to an important feature of peripheral literary fields. The notions of "minor transnationalism" (Lionnet and Shi) or of "significant geography" (Laachir et al.) help us take into consideration that writers' *illusio* is not only driven by the power relation of the world literary system (towards the center). But acknowledging the multifold circulation and hybridization made by particular writers (not to mention the world they imagine in their literature), should not lead us to neglect the fact that institutionalized and identified geographies are strongly imposed on them, (Leperlier, "Algerian Worlds"), and differently depending on their position in the linguistic area. Writers of the peripheries will tend more to consider the linguistic area as a significant geography and invest their *illusio* into it, while writers of the centres (in our cases: French, and to a lesser extent Egyptian writers) will tend to forget the existence of a linguistic area beyond their national literary field. Methodologically, this reminds us to take into account both the

objective features of the linguistic area (its structure) and its subjective dimension (illusio), since they don't overlap.

I distinguish five types of literary independence, from the most symbolic to the most institutionalized: symbolic independence (identification of a literature as "Latin American," "Austrian," or "Basque," whatever the current political unity or independence of the designated group or territory), specific independence (aesthetical issues, density of intertextuality with works of compatriots: see Bonnet), linguistic independence, functional independence (publishing, distribution) and consecratory independence (allowing in particular the constitution of one's own classics). Independence is the result of a process of *emancipation* from a relationship of dependence. As we shall see for the linguistic areas, these relationships of dependence enable us to speak of centers and peripheries. The notion of independence also invites a more institutional approach (attention to publishing, to the State's policies, etc.) than that adopted by Casanova in *The World Republic of Letters*.

In the following, I will distinguish between the notions of field, subfield, and space. A 'field' is unified by the same illusio, the same main stake of competition, which is strongly objectified by institutions. It is very often (but not only) the defence and illustration of a sense of national 'identity'. A 'subfield' is not totally autonomous from the field which subsumes it: Its principles of opposition are imposed upon and refracted by the subfield (Bourdieu, *Sociologie générale* 24 and 165-8), defining an issue of secondary investment, while nevertheless being strongly institutionalized. A 'space' defines a secondary, occasional, and more weakly institutionalized issue of investment (See also the notion of a 'weak field' developed by Vauchez). For this reason, we can also use 'space' as an encompassing category.

I define linguistic areas as dynamic international spaces revolving around one language, and organizing a system of dependencies between local spaces. These local spaces are typically

national, hence why the linguistic areas are *international*. The monolingual feature of a linguistic area can be misleading, since it is crossed over by the linguistic issue: they are variants of the standard language (especially for diglossic languages such as Arabic), and interaction and even friction with other linguistic areas, especially in plurilingual literary spaces. Distinguishing between five types of literary independences/ dependencies prevents us from using too broad notion such as that of domination, and helps us considering paradoxical dependencies and dialectical processes of emancipation. Indeed the system of dependencies isn't fixed but dynamic, linked to literary, political or geopolitical historical evolutions. Though they are typically spaces, linguistic areas can come closer to fields, when they become integrated to an extent that national identifications tend to vanish. The linguistic areas are crossed over by a tension spanning unification of national sub-fields and emancipation of national fields. Depending on its structure, we can distinguish two types of linguistic areas. At the pole of interdependence, we observe *polycentric linguistic areas*, as exemplified by the Arabophone area. At the other pole, we find *monocentric linguistic areas*, which organize firm hierarchies between core and periphery, as exemplified by the Francophone area.

#### POLYCENTRIC AREAS: ARAB INTERDEPENDENCE

For linguistic areas, polycentrism is the rule, and monocentrism the exception. Not even the case of the German area developed by Casanova is truly monocentric, as she presents it: despite the undeniable ascendancy of Berlin at the turn of the twentieth century, Leipzig, Vienna, and even Prague remained important players in this linguistic area (*Kafka* 24-27).

The Arabophone area is typical of this polycentrism. During the ninth and tenth centuries, the Arab world was politically and culturally divided between Cordoba and Baghdad, the capitals of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates respectively. But, as al-Musawi argues, Cairo soon became the major intellectual center of the Medieval Islamic Republic of Letters, which



he relates to its political as well as geographical status and cosmopolitan dimension. Turkish and then European domination prevented intra-Arab political domination, eventually fostering the development of pan-Arab ideology. The relative independence afforded to Lebanon and Egypt within the Ottoman Empire and the links they established very early on with Europe made Beirut and Cairo the two capitals of the *Nahda* (Toussouk), an Arab Renaissance that allowed, among other things, the (re)normalization of the Arabic language, disseminated in print, of which these two cities became the centers. While Egypt published 75% of all Arab books in 1960 (Gonzalez-Quijano), the Nasserite nationalizations of the 1960s and state censorship allowed Beirut to become “the Mecca of publishing in and for the Arab world” (Atiyeh 242), characterized by greater economic and political liberalism (Mermier, *Le Livre* 47): Due to political pressure in Egypt, Naguib Mahfouz published *Awlād hāratinā* at the Lebanese publishing house Dār al-ādāb in 1967. Thus, Beirut became the center of consecration for Arabic literature, as well as for avant-garde journals, such as the Syrian poet Adonis’ *Chi’r*. Beirut is also the capital of translation.

Nevertheless, the domination of Egyptian writers over the Arab area is such that they would often use “Egyptian” and “Arab” as synonyms to talk about themselves (Jacquemond, 27). From the 1960s onwards, a saying took hold that summarized the situation: “Egypt writes, Lebanon publishes, and Iraq reads.” I would add today, the Gulf sets the prices and prizes (*Le Golfe fixe les prix*). In the 1980-1990s, the embargo on Iraq and the civil war in Algeria led to an increasing dependency of the Arab publishing industry on the Gulf countries. Also, thanks to oil revenues, some Gulf States’ book fairs now manage to compete with those of Beirut. This is particularly true of the Abu Dhabi Book Fair, which is “reputed to be the most liberal in the peninsula” (Mermier, “Métropolisation” 112). Since 2007, it has been the home of the International Prize for Arab Fiction, awarded by the Booker Prize Foundation and (greatly) financed by the Emirates Foundation in Abu Dhabi. This prize rivals the Naguib Mahfouz

Medal awarded by the American University in Cairo since 1998. The Arabophone area is thus characterized by a functional polycentrism, with each center having its own specialty (even if it can change over time): they are interdependent. This being said, those literary prizes are signs of the consecratory dependency of the Arab linguistic area on greater linguistic areas in the world system of literature (here the English one).

Interdependence does not mean unity: within the linguistic area, the books do not circulate easily. This is due to national legal constraints (in particular censorship, like in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia), and to the deficiency of the distribution system: Piracy, national book fairs, and digitization have been diverse ways to try to overcome this issue (Al Qasimi). The inequalities between the national publishing industries are reinforced by the inequalities of the capacity of distribution: only some books published in Lebanon or Egypt are exported in the rest of the linguistic area. In particular, very few books published in the Maghreb reach the Near-East market.

Interdependence does not mean that there are no peripheries either. One peripheral region is the West Maghreb, which has long suffered from a deficit of academic, cultural, and literary institutions in Arabic due to French colonization. Still today, Algerian Arabophones, who are underrepresented in anthologies of Arabic literature within and without the Arab world (Leperlier, Canon), experience marginality in relation to the Mashreq. This has long been linked to a specific literary backwardness: after Algeria's late accession to independence and the even later emergence of substantial literary production in Arabic, Arabophone Algerians worked long on the national construction of an Arab Algeria, while the Eastern avant-gardes were becoming autonomous from the political powers.

In an interview I made with him, Waciny Laredj speaks of "ostracism" (Leperlier, "Laredj") and the negative identification that Algerian writers still suffer in the East (especially in relation to other Maghreb writers) because of colonial history. He recalls his own experience

in the 1980's with sarcasm: "It's 'weird,' an Algerian who writes in Arabic! Generally they write in French!" (Leonhardt Santini 258). Laredj has reversed the stigma of his Arabic-French bilingualism, transforming into an emblem by producing discrete heterolingual effects within his work in Arabic, and has achieved literary fame: he is published by the prestigious Lebanese publishing house Dār al-ādāb and regularly shortlisted for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction. His success symbolizes an ever-increasing integration of the Maghreb periphery into the Eastern center. He now considers himself as an Arab who writes to 300 million readers within a "unified linguistic horizon" (qtd in Laachir 191). This identification as "not quite Arab" is still noticeable, however, in the use of dialect. Mohamed Sari recounts that the Union of Arab Writers in Damascus asked him in 2000 to remove the dialogue in Algerian dialectal Arabic from his novel *Al-Waram* (Leperlier, "Sari"): This constitutes symbolic violence, given that the use of dialect has been commonplace in other national literatures since at least Naguib Mahfouz. Although perceived by the actors as a whole, the linguistic area is not homogeneous from a linguistic point of view, because of the existence of varieties of the same language (this being especially true for diglossic languages, such as Arabic), or because of the friction with other linguistic areas in the World literary system, or locally in "plurilingual literary fields."

Despite these hierarchies, the Arab literary area is unified enough to be perceived by many of its actors not only as a literary *space*, but sometimes as a literary *field*. Resembling the way nationalism and pan-Arab ideology have been considered compatible, Arabophone writers manage to articulate a national and an Arab *illusio*. A good hint of that would be the way writers spontaneously cite their counterparts. In an interview in Arabic, the Algerian poet Nacera Mohammedi (born in the 1970s), who is mostly published and known in Algeria, after recalling that she had wanted to "reach the East, to feel this lost belonging," spontaneously cited writers of other Arab countries (along with contemporary Algerian writers or French classics) (Leperlier, "Mohammedi"). Strikingly, while this was recurrent in my interviews with

Arabophone writers, it never happened with Francophone writers, even with those published and recognized in Paris (with the exception of Francophone Algerian poets). They never spontaneously cited contemporary French writers. Also, while Arabophone Algerians would boast their willingness to write for the pan-Arab audience, Francophone writers, at risk of being accused of cultural “alienation,” would always try to prove that they don’t write for a French audience (Leperlier, “D’Alger à Paris”). This difference relates to the geopolitical history of French colonization, and to the monocentric structure of the Francophone linguistic area.

### MONOCENTRIC AREAS: THE FRANCOPHONE SYSTEM

The Francophone case is ideal-typical of a monocentric area. The relations between center and periphery are not, however, stable, nor are they reducible to a “unchallenged” domination.

Following other research based on the Belgian case (among others: Lambert), Benoit Denis and Jean-Marie Klinkenberg have proposed a “gravitational model” to account for the Francophone linguistic area (see also: Halen). Like the solar system, it is a centralized literary system around which literary planets gravitate. Those planets are also animated secondarily by their rotations around their own axes. They never really meet because of their parallel courses around the center, and their relations to each other are mediated only by the latter (48). The cultural transfers in this context are always one-sided, flowing from the center to the peripheries. However, the peripheries fully reappropriate the models of the center, to the point of elaborating original forms that can later return to the center, which alone has the authority to consecrate them. This model is also dynamic, due to the existence of “centrifugal” and “centripetal” forces, which makes it possible to account for the evolution of the links of dependence between the peripheries and the center over several historical phases. However, Klinkenberg and Denis tend to neglect the institutional aspects of this dependence and too quickly reduce these forces to the strategies of the peripheral writers (with the centrifugal force

representing a search for differentiation, at the risk of ghettoization, and the centripetal force characterizing a search for assimilation to the center, at the risk of dilution: 64). Nevertheless, this model seems quite adequate, as long as we take into account the five types of dependence identified above.

For me, the centrifugal and centripetal forces are in fact historical phases, related to literary, political and geopolitical evolutions. It allows me to sketch (before further elaboration) a literary history of the literature in French from a new perspective. I distinguish three centrifugal phases within the Francophone literary area: the phases of regionalism, of nationalism and of globalization. The first phase, carried out by Europeans, dates from the regionalist movement of the Belle Epoque (1880-1920 and during the Second World War); the second, essentially carried out by Africans, stems from the independence of former colonies (1930-1970); the third emerges with the growing hegemony of the Anglophone area in the editorial globalization (since 1980). The latter two phases have corresponding centripetal phases, as we shall see. Launched from the peripheries, the centrifugal phases blended literary stakes, that is access to Parisian recognition (particularly in the first and third phases) and political independence (particularly in the second phase). The aim was to constitute what Anne-Marie Thiesse calls a “counter-field” (*Écrire la France* 11) or even independent literary fields, with or without national bases. Thus, this relatively unified literary field (especially after the 1852 Franco-Belgian convention, which put an end to Belgian counterfeiting practices, to the benefit of French capitalist expansion, see Durand and Habrand) transformed into a French literary system (first phase), then into a Francophone literary system (second phase), which has always centered around the French literary field, itself centered in Paris. At the end of the second phase, “French literature,” without the set of newly (symbolically or even politically) independent national literatures, lost its strictly linguistic definition, leading to the invention of the notion of “francophonie” (Allouache). “French literature” in its common sense (in libraries

as well as in curricula) has largely been reduced to a territorial definition, or more precisely to a white European literature in the French language, which integrates Belgian, Swiss, and other “invited” Francophones (Beckett or Bianciotti) (Porra), but hesitates to integrate racialized writers from formerly colonized spaces (Césaire or Begag) (Burnautzki).

In addition to their symbolic emancipation, often linked to a search for political emancipation, the centrifugal phases are marked by a concern for aesthetic and linguistic emancipation. In a single context, the search for differentiation can vary. As Casanova showed, Germanized Zionist Jews could have, like Kafka, a defiant perception of German language, or experience, like Max Brod, a *Distanzliebe*, a distant love of it (*Kafka* 79). The strong centralization of the French language, compared to German or Arabic, has produced a “linguistic overconsciousness” (Gauvin) or “language anxiety” (Young) among peripheral Francophone writers. Such writers can differentiate their literature through the use of (an exotic) theme, through their style (Meizoz), or through the exhibition of linguistic markers, like ‘interlanguage’ (Ashcroft et al.), ‘heterolingualism’ (Grutman), or ‘indigenization’ (Zabus). It should be noted that, depending on the context, these last strategies are as much ways of affirming a difference as of nationalizing French. Such was the case when the Francophone Algerian Mustapha Benfodil packed his novel *Zarta* (2000) with dialectal Arabic and Kabyle. Characteristically, the third centrifugal phase has allowed for such forms of national appropriation of the colonial language and the legitimization of linguistic diversity and hybridization within the Francophone area, generally leading authors to exhibit fewer linguistic differences.

Some spaces have entirely left the Francophone area by emancipating themselves from a linguistic point of view: French is no longer part of their space of collective possibilities, nor is it even the main language of reference in translation anymore (for example, in Egypt or in ex-Indochina). Within the linguistic area, national policies in favor of local publishing, which vary

from country to country, have sometimes made it possible to establish a relative functional independence of national literary fields. What Pierre Halen (61) calls “satellite domains” of the Francophone system are productions that are functionally very independent of the systemic center, having only local existence and vocation (Zamenga Batukezanga is the incarnation of this in DRC) and therefore very little autonomy from local political, social, or religious constraints. On the whole, however, the peripheral spaces remain functionally dependent: Parisian publishing and distribution far exceed the capacities of the peripheral spaces. Only Brussels has achieved sufficient independence to become, at the turn of the century, the capital of the “second chance” (P. Casanova, *Republic* 131), a second capital for symbolism, surrealism, and fantasy, and later for market niches: comics since 1950 and theater since the 1990s (Lansman publishing house). The recent emancipation of the Quebecois literary field has allowed Montreal to play a role as a second capital for postcolonial (especially Caribbean) writers and to sometimes bypass the Parisian center (Doré). Both capitals have achieved some consecratory emancipation (Dozo and Provenzano), but not enough. The peripheries remain largely dependent on the center from the consecratory point of view: The recognition of the latter always appears superior to, and very often more autonomous than, that offered in the peripheral spaces.

The centripetal phases confirm these power relations between center and periphery. This is particularly true for the second centripetal phase, beginning in the 1990s, which was caused by economic crises and many African states' choice to reduce their cultural policies, leading to a regression of the functional (i.e. editorial) independence of their national literary fields and a corresponding reinforcement of the share of publications in France (Thierry; Leperlier, “Polarization”). Also, during both centripetal phases, a desire for greater recognition in Paris, autonomous from the political issues that have dominated their original literary field since the previous centrifugal phases, has led some writers to distance themselves from certain aspects

of independence and to seek assimilation to the center. Their own literary space thus becomes a subfield of the French literary field. In the 1930s, following the Regionalist phase, the writers of the École d'Alger (Camus, Audisio) and the authors of the Manifesto of the Groupe du Lundi (Poulet, Hellens) refused respectively Algerian and Belgian identification for Parisian literary "universality," as they called it. In 2004, during the second centripetal phase, Anouar Benmalek declared: "I am not an Algerian writer. I am a writer and Algerian. I claim my roots in Algeria and my right to universality" (Benmalek). During these phases, linguistic overconsciousness does not disappear, but it is expressed only in a paradoxical way. The "white writing" of Camus in *The Stranger* is an exemplary case: It is as much as a literary statement in the French literary field (Barthes), as in the Algerian subfield against the "Algerianistes," who had been trying to develop an independent literature by exhibiting exotic themes and linguistic differentiation (Leperlier, "Camus").

These centripetal phases nevertheless preserve some of the achievements of the previous centrifugal phase, in a dialectical way. Founded in 1920, the Académie de langue et de littérature françaises, which could have served as a symbol *par excellence* of functional and consecratory independence from France, asserted at the same time in its statutes that Belgian literature is a part of a more comprehensive French literature (Biron 185). This centripetal move, after decades of promoting an independant Belgian literature during the first centrifugal phase, can be understood in the context of the second centrifugal phase: it was a reaction to the emancipation of the Flemish subfield as well as being based on its model (when in 1886 the Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde, Royal Academy of Dutch Language and Literature, was founded in Ghent). This is how Pierre Halen summarized the centripetal strategy of the Groupe du Lundi in the 1930s: "Since we are not home in Flanders anymore, at least we have Paris left" (Berg and Halen 337).



Shifting our point of view from that of the peripheries to that of the center, this dialectical dimension between the centrifugal and centripetal phases appears clearly. The centripetal phases—that is, the assimilation of the peripheries to the center after their budding self-emancipation in the previous centrifugal phase—can also be analyzed as a way for the center to “come together” in reaction to the emergence of new centrifugal forces. Indeed, the recognition of the peripheries by the center also constitutes a new form of appropriation. This appropriation works towards the depoliticization of the works, as Casanova points out when analyzing the Manifestos of Ramuz *Raison d'être* (1914), and Chamoiseau, Bernabé and Confiant's *Eloge de la Créolité* (1988) (P. Casanova, *Republic* 296sqg). Ramuz' search for linguistic differentiation was first polemically debated (in Péguy's *Les Cahiers de la quinzaine* in 1926) and then recognized in Paris. During the centripetal phase of the interwar period, regionalism became an important literary reference in France (particularly under the Vichy regime), and the counter-field created by regionalism during the first centrifugal phase disappeared (though the inequalities in the French literary field did not: see Bois). This assimilation of regionalism occurred at the start of the second centrifugal phase, a more political phase with higher linguistic and national claims in the regions (Flemish movement, *Gwalarn* in Brittany) and in the colonies.

The same can be said of the second centripetal phase, beginning in the 1990s, which has led to a wider recognition of postcolonial literatures. In turn, the endeavor of the peripheries' pushes for independence is being depoliticized, as Huggan also showed. Patrick Chamoiseau, one of the authors of the *Eloge de la créolité* that defended a greater symbolic and linguistic emancipation of French Caribbean literature, was granted the Prix Goncourt for *Texaco* (1992), and was celebrated as a “universal” author. Again, this centripetal phase is partly a reaction to the third centrifugal phase of globalization. For example, the writers who drafted the Manifesto “Pour une ‘littérature-monde’ en français” in 2007, while generally adopting a (centripetal)

strategy of assimilation to the Parisian center, nevertheless declared that the center “is no longer the center,” a centrifugal statement that relies on the Anglophone example and the notion of World Literature. This has allowed French publishing to develop a centripetal strategy of appropriating the peripheries: Gallimard in particular (where the “Manifeste” was republished) has repositioned itself in an American-dominated international literature market, which increasingly appreciates postcolonial writers (Ducournau 31sq). Similarly, at the turn of the 1990s, the French National Book Center (CNL) decided to no longer fund “French writers” but “French-language writers” (Sapiro, “Transnational”). Casanova rightly says that “the work of writers from outlying lands has become a major element in (the) struggles” between systemic centers (P. Casanova, *Republic* 119). Furthermore, the CNL has instituted a unique policy of “intratranslation” grants, i.e. for translations from foreign languages into French. This recognition and appropriation of small languages allows France to position itself as the champion of “cultural diversity” in the face of Anglophone hegemony (Sapiro, “Mondialisation” 296-7).

Despite such centrifugal phases, the center of the Francophone literary system has managed to remain the center. However, contrary to “dependency theories” that focus on the perpetuation of this domination, we should reintroduce history, and emphasize the dialectical character of centrifugal and centripetal historical processes, the reality of the peripheries acquiring independence at different levels (to the point of sometimes constituting secondary centers; or, conversely, quitting the linguistic area), and the existence of inter-systemic competition (particularly here: Francophone vs Anglophone). Taking into account the diverse types of dependencies (symbolic, specific, linguistic, functional, consecratory) makes it possible to avoid reducing the relations between centers and peripheries to a “unchallenged” domination. In contrast, the relations between the literary fields of a linguistic area, shifting in history, are very different in polycentric and monocentric areas.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has sought to further elaborate on *linguistic areas of literature*, which have been under-researched by Casanova, who rather tried to map a broader picture of the world literary system, and who was more attentive to cases of Herderian congruence between nation and language. I have thus tried to re-elaborate the notion of the field in a transnational and plurilingual perspective. This requires us to distance ourselves from a maximalist conception of the autonomy of fields, which prevents us from observing those configurations in which national and linguistic stakes are major. It also leads us to re-evaluate the criterion of *illusio* as an investment of writers structured by institutions, and to take into account the relative independence of fields from one another: I have distinguished five types of independence, from the most symbolic to the most institutional.

Linguistic areas are dynamic international spaces revolving around one language, and organising a system of dependencies between local spaces, that are typically national. The linguistic areas are crossed over by a tension spanning unification of national sub-fields and emancipation of national fields. The Arabophone and the Francophone linguistic areas represent the two opposite ideal-typical cases. The polycentric Arabophone linguistic area is structured by the interdependence of national spaces in relation to each other. Thanks to the growing integration of its still existing peripheries, this linguistic area resembles an international literary field overarching the national (sub-)fields. By contrast, the monocentric Francophone linguistic area can be called a “literary system,” organized around a core literary field, the French one. This led me to refine the model of the Francophone literary system proposed by Klinkenberg and Denis, and to propose a new way of sketching the literary history of the French language literature from a transnational perspective. Using a more institutional approach, I qualified Casanova’s assumptions that linguistic areas are “homogeneous,” while they are permanently crossed over by national borders and even linguistic issues (especially in local plurilingual

spaces); and above all that they are “unchallenged”: I showed the dialectically evolving balance of power even in the most centralized linguistic areas, introducing more history in macro-models of World literature.

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