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**Simenon's commissaire Maigret and crime fiction –
a case of Belgitude in a world literature paradigm?**

From the point of view of French – language high literature, Simenon, at the beginning of his success from the 1930s onwards, despite his temporary affiliation with the house of Gallimard, was a marginal author in every respect: a Belgian living in France who had written vast quantities of trivial and trashy literature (of which he was proud) before turning to the minor genre of the detective novel with the invention of the famous commissaire. And yet Georges Simenon became probably the most read, most translated and most filmed author in the world in his time. There is a lot of Simenon in the character of commissaire Maigret: both come from humble backgrounds, and the inspector's relationship with his criminals, marked by understanding and sympathy, is in keeping with Simenon's sympathetic view of his characters. Maigret is a petty bourgeois, married to a kind of mother – substitute; he has no children, but maintains a fatherly relationship with his subordinates. He does not care about circumstantial evidence, preferring to trust his knowledge of the milieu, his imagination and his empathy. He is not an analytical mind, nor are there any action scenes with him. No doubt, with this profile Maigret is a bizarre outsider in the world literary panorama of investigator characters, as his creator was one in the literary world. Yet the stories of which he is the hero and mediator consciousness are translated, read and filmed all over the world (Maigret has been played by actors from France, Germany, Italy, Great Britain, the Netherlands, the United States, Canada, the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Serbia, Russia, and Japan).

This paper addresses the question of the relationship between Simenon's and Maigret's world literary success and reputation on the one hand, and their original and inherent marginality on the other.