

Symposium: Francophone Authors and the Story Economy

CRAL, Paris / Tuesday, 28 April 2026 – 9:30 am to 6:30 pm
54 bd Raspail (Maison des Sciences de l'Homme)
Salle BS1_05/BS1_28

Organizers

Consortium project *Authors of the Story Economy: Narrative and Digital Capital in the 21st-Century Literary Field* (Research Council of Finland 2024–2028)

<https://autostoryproject.wordpress.com/>

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Description

The contemporary dominance of personal storytelling across platforms crucially affects all actors in the literary field as it foregrounds the author's bodily and social habitus, moral positioning and ethos, experiential knowledge, and public identity work (e.g. Busse 2013, Gibbons & King 2023, Heynders 2023). Authors operate within a story economy (Mäkelä et al. 2021) where personal identity narratives and media visibility shape audience perceptions of authorial ethos more than the rhetoric or ethics of their literary works. Social media affordances and algorithms elevate individual lives and identities as exemplary and impose an expectation of consistent ethos, habitus, and moral positioning sustained across media and platforms (Mäkelä et al. 2025). The speakers of this symposium address the repositioning of francophone authors within the story economy from different perspectives ranging from narrative theory to the study of autosociobiographical novel and the sociology of literature. Among the questions to be addressed at the symposium are:

- How does the foregrounding of the author's personal story reshape the literary field? Does the imperative for authenticity erode the autonomy of the literary field in the 21st century? (See Mäkelä on É. Louis 2025)
- Francophone authors and the digital literary sphere (see Murray 2018, Skains 2019). Does the prominence of digital paratexts (Pignagnoli 2023) and social media contribute to the loss of autonomy of the literary field?
- The entanglements of public author image, ethos (Korthals Altes 2014), rhetoric and ethics in contemporary French literature (see e.g. Baroni on Houellebecq 2022)
- How do different authors align their narrative rhetoric and ethics with the values of the platformized literary field? How do different authors reject/deconstruct platform values and norms?

- Diachronic changes in authorship and “grammars of literary valuation” (Vermeulen 2023) in francophone literary fields

The talks are in English and in French; the discussions will be conducted in English.

Program

9.30–10.00 Opening words (Tiphaine Samoyault, CRAL)

10.00–10.45 Maria Mäkelä (Tampere):
Édouard Louis as a postdigital author

10.45–11.30 Raphaël Baroni (Lausanne):
Michel Houellebecq et son chien : vers une lecture externaliste des œuvres littéraires en egime médiatique

11.30–12.15 Larissa Muravieva (Grenoble):
Selling trauma: Contemporary Francophone autofiction within the logic of ‘autonarrative capitalism’

12.15–13.45 Lunch (complimentary for speakers)

13.45–14.30 Odile Heynders (Tilburg):
Transnational authors and public intellectuals: Kamel Daoud and Alain Mabanckou in comparison

14.30–15.15 Clara Verri (Helsinki):
The author before the novel: aspects of Norwegianness and Frenchness in the public appearances of Michel Houellebecq and Karl Ove Knausgård

15.15–15.45 Coffee

15.45–16.30 Lars Henk (Landau):
“Ce que socioautobiographer veut dire” – L’individualisation et le lien social au miroir de la littérature française contemporaine

16.30–17.15 TBA

17.15–18.30 Closing discussion & publication plans

19.00 Dinner (complimentary for speakers)

References

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