

CFP/appel à communications - colloque pluridisciplinaire ERIBIA, MRSH, université de Caen Normandie (France), **24-25 September 2026**.

Stories and histories of power
Histoires de Pouvoir: Comment le pouvoir se raconte

Based on the premise that any account is the result of a re-ordered selection in facts which is the mark of the power of the author and/or the institution or cultural group they stand for, this conference will examine factual and fictional narratives of power in the English-speaking world.

Regarding literature in general, Salman Rushdie aptly observes: "language is an enormous power that writers have to tell us the story of us, and particularly to tell the future the story of the present. In the present, all sorts of people have power. Writers have relatively little. But in the future, what remains of us is stories and that's in our hands to write".¹ More particularly, biographies, biofictions and biopics tell a rise or an attitude to power (a higher position of control and exertion of power politically or culturally) and historical fiction feeds and orientates the memory of power. The theme of power is rooted in authority, but also in everyday life. In many novels and short stories, it lends itself to specific representations, such as political figures, religious leaders or heads of families. These authority figures are often allegories on the paradigmatic axis. All representations of power in literature can be discussed here. We will also consider the shift in authors and subjects of stories and histories of power, focusing both on the process and the result of marginalisation and invisibilisation of non-dominant groups/minorities. How is this shift operated in fiction and how is the reader/viewer led to sympathise with it?

In a historical or cultural studies perspective, you are invited to interrogate the ways power is constructed, legitimized, or contested. Power tries to engage historians in producing such discourses as will bolster authority. Dominant powers seek to marginalize and exclude dissident voices, though counter-narratives will emerge to challenge established social and political orders. Through narrative practices such as public speeches and their scenography, biographies and autobiographies, power constructs and projects itself. Political actors will use language in the broad sense to bring closer to the people the abstract institutions that rule their lives within given social structures, whether they seek to strengthen or overthrow such institutions. Politics rest upon foundational myths transmitted, revisited or reappropriated through public festivals, media narratives and cultural accounts. Studying these various aspects will be an investigation of how authority is (re)configured, (re)modelled or resisted.

Besides individual proposals as usual, we also welcome dual proposals, with 2 related talks: the same topic considered in two different texts, geographic areas, or in two different approaches (fiction/history, history/visual arts...), a foundational myth at two distinct times, two consecutive events etc. Once you have agreed with a colleague, send us your abstracts

¹ Salman Rushdie in *Take 4 Books* (BBC Radio 4, 14 Dec 2025)

and bionotes in a single document under a joint title. Feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Abstracts (300 words) with a short bibliography and bionotes in English or French to be sent by May 15th, 2026 to

Bertrand Cardin (bertrand.cardin@unicaen.fr)

Anne-Catherine de Bouvier <anne-catherine.debouvier@unicaen.fr>

Taoufik Djebali <taoufik.djebali@unicaen.fr>

Armelle Parey (armelle.parey@unicaen.fr)