



**Frankfurt Welcomes France
For podcast release
Monday, October 9, 2017**

KENNEALLY: This week, the Frankfurt Book Fair resembles a political summit as much a publishing industry trade show. For the first time since 1989, France is event's Guest of Honor. The program will open on Wednesday with a display of European unity that has become rare in the age of populist politics.

Welcome to Copyright Clearance Center's podcast series. I'm Christopher Kenneally for Beyond the Book.

France last enjoyed the spotlight at Frankfurt Book Fair in 1989, another year of political and social upheaval, one that 2017 seems determined – perhaps even destined – to emulate. In publishing and so much else, of course, the intervening three decades have witnessed tremendous change. Frankfurt Book Fair CEO Jurgen Boos, says the 2017 celebration may be for France but it is also about much more.

BOOS: Now France is going to show its literature. It's going to show the language, not the nation, which is quite interesting. They are covering every author from all over the world who has French as their mother tongue. It reaches from French-speaking Switzerland to north Africa and to the Caribbean as well.

We have a lot of issues to cover, especially in the field of culture, as well. There are copyright issues related to digital media, but there are also a lot of political issues to try to unify Europe, to have a common understanding where we are.

KENNEALLY: Indeed. You've said that the future of the European media landscape depends upon giving the economic union a cultural identity, as well. Can you speak about how the Franco-German efforts that are coming together in this program will sort of move that forward?

BOOS: Yeah, obviously as I mentioned before, we have to have a joint digital agenda in Europe. We are seeing that China is investing a lot in its digital infrastructure. There are huge media conglomerates actually trying to control the market in all fields of the creative industry. We are lucky, actually, to have Frankfurt as the meeting place for intellectual property trade. We have

people from 150 nations coming here, and I think Europe with its very liberal tradition actually can lead the discussion where we are heading to.

KENNEALLY: The cultural and business facets of the Guest of Honor program may be most prominent on the Frankfurt fairgrounds, yet the political dimension is inescapable this year. Fabrice Piault, editor-in-chief at Livres Hebdo, France's leading weekly trade publication covering the book business, expects French politicians to seize on longstanding Franco-German ties in publishing in order to make their own case for the Franco-German political alliance.

PIAULT: There is a political context related to the election of Macron, as Macron is maybe the first important political person and president who really defends Europe and he's in favor of Europe. Usually in many European countries, politicians try always to say Europe is responsible for every bad thing in the countries. This time, we have a president who wants to build something in Europe. So it's an opportunity to strengthen the links between Germany – there is a sort of Franco-German axis which is a little center of Europe, especially now as the UK is going out with the Brexit. That's the context.

If you look at the publishing side, there are very ancient and important links between German and French publishing industry. First, we share the same idea of how you can sell books. We both have fixed price. We both trust in the importance of booksellers and independent booksellers. So the two countries have important links, and they often fight together on many dossiers in the European Union. That's an important part of the debate, I think. During the Frankfurt Book Fair, there will probably be some discussions about the fixed price and about copyrights, author rights, etc. So that's important. Especially in the digital world, the problem publishers face with Google, with Amazon, and so on – there is strong cooperation between the two countries.

And there are also a lot of exchanges of rights. French publishers translate – German is the third language more translated in France after English and Japanese because of mangas, mainly. So it's very important. Also, German is among the fifth countries buying more rights from France. So there are really strong relations, and I think French publishers now want to develop their sales this year. I think they will do. Many authors are already going to Germany. There are many meetings organized everywhere in Germany. That will probably help to develop French literature in Germany.

KENNEALLY: Among francophones and francophiles in Germany or anywhere, French authors are admired for their revolutionary insights and their romantic expression – from Albert Camus, who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1957, and Jean-Paul Sartre, who declined to accept the same award in 1964, to Simone de Beauvoir, who received the Prix Goncourt in 1954, and Yasmina Reza, who was Prix Renaudot laureate in 2016.

Classic backlist titles from Gallimard and Julliard, though, now complete with a new generation of authors and publishers. Fabrice Piault says the pace of change has accelerated in recent years.

PIAULT: France is well known for its quality literature – high-quality literature. Usually in France, the bestsellers of popular literature was coming from the United States, and it's still the case. But I think there is an emerging of a French popular literature which started maybe about two years ago or something. We always had a few writers doing this type of literature, like Marc Levy or Guillaume Musso, or a little more recently, Katherine Pancol or Anna Gavalda. But now we have dozens, actually. And if you look at the bestseller list this summer, most of the 20 bestsellers are coming from this type of books – popular literature.

I think it's an opportunity for France to show that its publishing industry has changed, actually. I talked about this development of French popular literature, but there is also a renewal of the human sciences. Children's publishing is very, very dynamic, and it's well known for its innovation ability. There is also what we call *bandes dessinées*, sort of comics industry, which is one of the three most important in the world beside the American one and the Japanese one. So I think France has a lot to show, and French publishers expect to show what they are doing now and what they have changed in the past years.

KENNEALLY: It sounds like the dynamism and the even revolutionary tendencies of the last election are reflected in part in the publishing business. Would you think that we're going to see many more changes in the coming years in the same way that we've seen such changes on the political scene?

PIAULT: You mean in the publishing industry? Well, difficult to say. I think there are many changes coming, with more young publishers – there are new publishing houses – and we see, yeah, a lot of dynamism with new trends. But as everywhere in the world, the book industry is not expanding a lot. It's a mature industry. So we can't expect a revolution. You talk about revolutionary. I don't think there will be a revolution. But a renewal, certainly.

KENNEALLY: If a renewal it is, then so be it. *Vive le renouvellement!* With France in the spotlight this week at the Frankfurt Book Fair, *la langue française* is sure to be heard often on the messe grounds. Louis Passet of l'Institut Français, a government agency that promotes French language and culture, says don't expect that the speakers will have traveled only from Paris.

PRESSET: The French language – this extremely wide and open language, very living language, and diverse – this French language doesn't belong to the French people anymore. It's not the language of the French people. It's really the language shared by many people.

KENNEALLY: For Beyond the Book, I'm Christopher Kenneally, reporting from Frankfurt Book Fair.

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