

# Journeys across Borders in Canadian Studies

International Conference, June 09–11, 2022, Marburg Centre for Canadian Studies

Readings by **George Elliott Clarke** and **Larissa Lai**

## Keynote Lectures

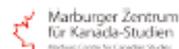
Johan Schimanski (University of Oslo)  
**Reading the Unknown: Cognitive Approaches  
to Literary Bordering**

Eleanor Ty (Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo)  
**Babies Crossing Borders: Transracial Adop-  
tees and Life Writing**

Astrid Fellner (Saarland University)  
**Border Cultures in Motion: At the Crossroads  
of Canadian Studies and Border Studies**

**Panels | Poster Presentations | Round Table Discussion: Canadian Studies Across Borders**

Hosts: Alessandra Boller and Walaa Said, Venues: Marburg University Library and University Museum of Arts, Registration: <https://www.uni-marburg.de/mzks/>



## JOHAN SCHIMANSKI (OSLO, NORWAY)

### Cognitive Approaches to Literary Bordering

Borders are central to spatially and culturally. How can we as readers use literary texts and other narratives in order to understand borders, borderings and border experiences? In this lecture I will be using a combination of border studies, border poetics, and cognitive approaches to help find out.

A border poetics approach proposes connecting borders met by characters in narrative story worlds with the borders of the narrative itself as they are met by readers or listeners. Many analyses of borders in literature still however focus mainly on borders that are presented in texts rather than on the borders of those presentations. The question of how these borders can be linked to the borders of those textual presentations remains to be answered fully.

I propose that 4E cognitive approaches (around Embodiment, Enactment, Extension and Embeddedness), involving also cultural cognition, emotion, predictive processing and kinesic cues can be combine with border poetics to provide answers to this question. I will also be drawing on cognitive approaches in the interdisciplinary field of border studies which focuses on the way in which narratives are co-constructed by tellers and readers/listeners.

To do this I will be carrying out analyses of borders in Aritha van Herk's *Places Far from Ellesmere* and Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*. These do not only address important bordering processes – postcolonial, centre/periphery, Arctic – in the Canadian context, but also reflect actively on cognition, reading and bodies. I will use border poetics analysis as a starting point, mapping the texts onto the geographical and bordered spaces of Canada, showing how they map these spaces on to a bordered textual space. After that I will show how they invoke various kinds of embodiment, movement and cognition for the reader, connecting these to topographical, cultural, architectural, epistemological and textual borders.

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**Johan Schimanski** is a Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Oslo. His research interests include border poetics, migration literature, Arctic discourses, science fiction, and literary museums. In 2021 he was Guest Professor of Border Studies at the University of the Greater Region Centre for Border Studies (at the Universities of Saarland and Luxembourg). Recent publications include a volume co-edited with Jopi Nyman, *Border Images*,

*Border Narratives* (2021) and a collection of writings on border poetics translated in to German, *Grenzungen* (2020).

ELEANOR TY (WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY, ONTARIO,  
CANADA)

**Babies Crossing Borders:  
Transracial Adoptees and Life Writing**

Though not always explicitly labelled as “memoir” or “autobiography,” Asian Canadian authors have engaged in life writing since before the “surge in the interest in memoirs” which Julie Rak dates to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Rak, *Boom!* 9). Recently Asian Canadian life writing has become increasingly more diverse in topic and style. Some of these memoirs are not only about personal growth, discovery, originary vs. adopted culture, but also engage with important socio-cultural issues. They deal with intersectional issues of race, religion, gender identity and disability. In this paper, I discuss how a recent award-winning memoir about transnational, transracial adoption by Asian Canadian Jenny Heijun Wills reveals the uneven treatment of border crossers and foreigners in Canada. *Older Sister. Not Necessarily Related* won the Hilary Weston Writers’ Trust Prize for Nonfiction in 2019. The memoir is about Jenny Wills’s effort to find her birth parents in Seoul, Korea, but it is also an indictment of the institutions that profited from transnational, transracial adoption from Korea to various Western countries, including Canada. Wills links her particularized experiences to larger issues of kinship, familial disruption, revealing the psychological and emotional repercussions of political and historical events on the individual. Jenny Heijun Wills’ *Older Sister. Not Necessarily Related* shows the way life writing can raise global, social, geo-political issues that go beyond the Canadian border. Her memoir links personal narrative to larger issues of national belonging, Oriental exoticization, and the use of babies as pawns between countries.

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**Eleanor Ty**, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, is Professor of English at Wilfrid Laurier University in Ontario. She has published on life writing, graphic narratives, cultural memory, Asian North American and 18th Century literature. She was Fulbright Canada Visiting Research Chair at UC Santa Barbara in 2019. Her recent works include: *Asianfail: Narratives of Disenchantment and the Model Minority* (U of Illinois P, 2017); *Unfastened: Globality and Asian North American Narratives* (U of Minnesota P, 2010), and *The Politics of the Visible in Asian North American Narratives* (U Toronto P 2004). With Candida Rifkind and Nima Naghibi, she co-edited an issue of *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* on Migration, Exile and Diaspora in Graphic Life Narratives (Spring 2020).

ASTRID M. FELLNER (SAARLAND UNIVERSITY,  
GERMANY)

## **Border Cultures in Motion:**

### **At the Crossroads of Canadian Studies and Border Studies**

This talk will focus on the role borders have played in Canadian Studies. Showing how writers have engaged in the negotiation of borders through aesthetic practices, I will argue that the border has become an important paradigm in Canadian literary studies. Border figurations have especially become important in narratives of cultural crossings. As I want to show, the newly emerging field of Cultural Border Studies offers theories and methods with which to approach these border narratives. Tracing a series of theoretical concerns and concepts which have been used in order to theorize borders, I will focus on the concept of bordertextures, a concept whose genealogy is rooted in conceptualizations of the border as a hybrid zone of interwoven and continuous existences. Bordertextures entail the creativity and the energy that emerges from subaltern subject positions and have the potential of making visible forgotten journeys across b/orders.

As a case study, I want to zoom in on some altern(arrat)ives in Whoop-Up Country along the 49th parallel. The meaning of Whoop-Up Country may have faded into obscurity, but the hidden histories, geographies and knowledges of this border zone have survived and continue to resurface in the cultural imaginary. A series of writers have engaged in bordertexturing the region: Paul F. Sharp, Wallace Stegner, and most recently Thomas King, for instance, constitute heterogeneous border voices who have charted multidimensional (hi)stories of the Canada-U.S. border.

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**Astrid M. Fellner** is Chair of North American Literary and Cultural Studies at Saarland University, Germany. She is Co-Speaker in the DFG and Canadian SSHRC-funded interdisciplinary International Graduate Research Training Program “Diversity: Mediating Difference in Transcultural Space” that Saarland University and University of Trier are conducting with the Université de Montréal. She is also Project Leader of the EU-funded INTERREG Großregion VA-Project “University of the Greater Region Center for Border Studies” at Saarland U and is Action Coordinator of a trilingual Border Glossary, a handbook of 40 key terms in Border Studies. She has been involved in a DAAD-Eastpartnership project with Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University in Mykolaiv on the topic of “Bridging Borders” since 2014.

Since April 2021 she has also been a member of the interdisciplinary BMBF-project “Linking Borderlands,” in which she studies border films and industrial culture of the Greater Region in comparison with the German/Polish border.

Among her publications in the field of Canadian/Border Studies are: *Articulating Selves: Contemporary Chicana Self-Representation* (2002), the edited collection *Narratives of Border Crossings: Literary Approaches and Negotiations* (2021); together with Hugo Burgos a special issue of *Post(s)* entitled *Desbordes / Undoing Borders: Hacia Nuevas Epistemologías Fronterizas* (2021), and, forthcoming, the co-edited collection *Bordertextures. A Complexity Approach to Cultural Border Studies*.

WOLFGANG KLOOß (UNIVERSITY OF TRIER, GERMANY)

**Atwood Retells *The Tempest*:  
An Intertextual and Gendered Reading of *Hag-Seed***

Comparing *Hag-Seed* (2016) with *The Tempest* (1611), the presentation tries to disclose how Margaret Atwood shifts and extends perspectives in her novel by empowering the female voice in *Hag-Seed*. In contrast to Shakespeare's original and many of its post-colonial follow-ups, the latter of which have sustainably fuelled a political reading of the Bard's play, *Hag-Seed*, for instance, offers a view on Miranda which reverses the role of Prospero's daughter from that of a passive to an influential 'active' character who has a decisive say in many of her father's doings. In a similar vein, other female voices in the novel come to the fore as well. These observations are accompanied by brief intertextual references to a painting by William Hogarth (c. 1736) and Peter Greenaway's film *Prospero's Books* (1991). The presentation tries to show how aesthetic forms of expression and political rhetoric are interlinked, especially how aesthetic and (gender-)political values interplay.

THEODORE F. SHECKELS (RANDOLPH-MACON COLLEGE,  
VIRGINIA, USA)

**Dissolving Borders in Margaret Atwood's Fiction:  
An Evolving Motif**

Borders have played several roles in Margaret Atwood's fiction. In *Surfacing*, she notes the border between Ontario and Quebec, but makes more thematic use of the border between Canada and the United States. But, as soon as she points to the border, she dissolves it. Thus, Atwood initiates a pattern that we find in *Bodily Harm*, *The Blind Assassin*, and in the three books that comprise the "Maddaddam Trilogy." In all of these novels, there is a moment when the reader is lulled into thinking that the posited border separates safety from threat. In *Surfacing*, North of the border was once safe but is threatened from the South. In *Bodily Harm*, Toronto is found to be unsafe, whereas a fictitious Caribbean island is presumed by the central character to be a safe retreat. But no. In *The Blind Assassin*, the sci-fi world created by one of the characters (and shared during surreptitious trysts) is presumed to be a fantasy escape from the harsh realities of their true Toronto lives, but, no, that sci-fi world intrudes in several ways into these realities. And in the "Maddaddam Trilogy" (especially *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*), there is a presumed distinction between the safe corporate compounds and the much more threatening Plebelands. However, the safety of the one is found illusory and the threats of the other are, with struggles, conquerable.

What Atwood, then, is doing is offering dichotomies and exploding them. She, as a feminist author, wishes binary thinking away, but, more than that, she wishes to undermine our shared illusion that there is safety to be found if we are in "the right place." There is no such place, and, therefore, the threats cannot be escaped but must be confronted. In the first two novels considered, the confrontation is only incipient. It is stronger but still ambiguous in *The Blind Assassin*. In the "Maddaddam Trilogy," however, confrontation is front-and-center as a range of characters try to deal with various threats. What we then see is a motif in Atwood that not only becomes more sophisticated as we move through her canon but, surprisingly, more hopeful.

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**Theodore F. Sheckels**, PhD, is Charles J. Potts Professor of Social Science and Professor of English and Communication Studies at Randolph-Macon College (Virginia, USA). He is the author or co-author of over fifteen books, including one on a number of contemporary Canadian women authors and another on Margaret Atwood as a political writer. He has published widely

on international English literature, with books on South African writing and Australian film and journal articles on Margaret Atwood, L. M. Montgomery, Richard Flanagan, and John Marsden. He is former President of the Margaret Atwood Society and the founding editor of *Margaret Atwood Studies*. He is also the former President of the American Association of Australian Literary Studies. He is currently writing *Margaret Atwood's Evolving Quest for Social Justice* (under contract with Cambridge Scholars Press).

CARMEN BIRKLE (UNIVERSITY OF MARBURG, GERMANY)

**“The True North Strong and Free”:  
Canada and the Underground Railroad. Then and Now**

“The True North Strong and Free” is how the Canadian national anthem depicts Canada. Any one of these terms promises safety, protection, freedom, and truth. This promise, even before the anthem was used as such, has motivated people to cross the borders from the United States into Canada as escaped enslaved people, refugees, immigrants, and exiles for almost 200 years, starting with slavery and the Underground Railroad and (temporarily) ending with Donald Trump’s presidency and people’s virtual attempts at escape. In my paper, I will look at representations of Canada and the Underground Railroad in slave and neo-slave narratives, on the one hand, and of Canada and the New Underground in dystopian fiction, on the other hand. I will conclude with a brief analysis of Margaret Atwood’s Femaleroad and her protagonists’ escape from a Gileadian dictatorship in *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985) and *The Testaments* (2019). U.S.-American and Canadian representations of the Underground Railroad, the New Underground, the Virtual Underground, and Atwood’s Femaleroad will serve as concepts to make explicit the striking parallels in the vision of Canada from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries.

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**Carmen Birkle** is a professor of North American Literary and Cultural Studies at Philipps-Universität Marburg. She was president, vice president, executive director, and international delegate of the German Association for American Studies and currently serves as treasurer for the European Association for American Studies. She is Dean of the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Literatures, and Cultures at Philipps-Universität (2017-23). Apart from being the author of two monographs – *Women’s Stories of the Looking Glass* (1996) and *Migration—Miscegenation—Transculturation* (2004) – and of numerous articles and (co-) editor of 15 volumes of essays and special issues of journals, she is also General (Co-)Editor of the journal *Amerikastudien / American Studies* (open-access). Her current work on a monograph is situated at the intersection of American literature, culture, and medicine in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Moreover, her contribution to a larger interdisciplinary project on “Geschlecht—Macht—Staat” focuses on female presidents in U.S.-American TV series. A monograph on Muriel Gardiner and the edition of Gardiner’s correspondence are projects gradually taking shape.

**WALDEMAR ZACHARIASIEWICZ (VIENNA UNIVERSITY,  
AUSTRIA)**

## **Transnational Strains in Canadian Intergenerational Immigrant Narratives**

The presentation will consider several narrative texts, primarily by East European immigrants to Canada and their descendants, which reflect the very different ways of coping with the difficult language barrier and of overcoming the status of outsiders and of integrating into the society of the host country. The examples of intergenerational immigrant narratives also illustrate the feasibility of more recent newcomers to retain close links with the country of origin because of modern means of travel and communication, something rarely possible for earlier migrants, whose loss of their original home was permanent, while transmigrants may return repeatedly to those lands, and may develop a hybrid identity, also mirrored in the practice of translingualism. Among the North American texts discussed will be transnational narratives by Aleksandar Hemon, Hiromi Goto, Janice Kulyk Keefer, David Bezmozgis and Eva Hoffman.

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**Waldemar Zachariasiewicz** is a Professor Emeritus of North American Studies at Vienna University, where he was also the Director of the Centre for Canadian Studies from 1998 to 2014. An honorary doctor of Eötvös Lorand University in Budapest, he is the chair of the North Atlantic Triangle Commission of the Austrian Academy of Sciences and an International Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. His main research interests have been travel literature and imagology, transatlantic migration, and the literatures of Canada and the American South. He has published 7 monographs and edited or co-edited 25 volumes of essays and written more than 150 articles.

CARLA SCARANO D'ANTONIO (UNIVERSITY OF READING,  
ENGLAND)

**The Heroine's Journey:  
Trespassing and Transgressing B/Orders in Margaret Atwood's Work**

My paper will analyze the heroines' journeys in some of Margaret Atwood's works such as *Surfacing*, *Bodily Harm*, *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Testaments* in connection with the concept of personal, societal and national b/orders. Atwood defies the idea of borders as stable and proposes alternatives both for individuals and for countries. Borders are constructed boundaries that trigger transgression and reveal the vulnerability of this notion and of its physicality. They can be trespassed and also denied. Canada is seen as a more diverse and open country compared, for example, with the US. Nevertheless, Atwood reveals the weak aspects of this idea as the Canadian government does not seem to take a stand against injustices that occur in other countries. Besides, the discriminatory treatment of the First Nation peoples and the appropriation of their lands emphasize even more the incongruities of the existence of an unbiased concept of borders and invites us to reconceptualize it.

Atwood's heroines have a lone journey compared with the hero's journey as Joseph Campbell describes it in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. There is no reward, treasure or elixir for the heroine at the end of her experience. The female hero presented in *Surfacing*, for example, does not (and cannot) follow Campbell's pattern, that is, the pattern of traditional myths and fairy tales. Atwood reverses and subverts this pattern, exposing the marginalization of women in society, which is not a free choice or a temporary separation but an enduring element of her destiny.

Therefore, Atwood's protagonists inhabit a liminal space in a constant progression towards a freer and fairer concept of the self and in a continuous negotiation with the roles that society assigns to them.

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**Carla Scarano D'Antonio** lives in Surrey with her family. She has a degree in Foreign Languages and Literature and a degree in Italian Language and Literature from the University of Rome, La Sapienza. She obtained her Degree of Master of Arts in Creative Writing at Lancaster University in 2012. She has published her creative work in various magazines and reviews. Her short collection, *Negotiating Caponata*, was published in July 2020. She and Keith Lander won the first prize of the Dryden Translation Competition 2016 with translations of

Eugenio Montale's poems. She completed her PhD degree on Margaret Atwood's work at the University of Reading and graduated in April 2021.

LINA-ISABEL SOPHIA STOCKFISCH (UNIVERSITY OF  
MARBURG, GERMANY)

**“I don't want to be split”:**

**Discovering and Reclaiming Identities in Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners***

Margaret Laurence's novel *The Diviners* tells of Morag Gunn and her daughter Pique who cross many social and cultural borders throughout their lives. Morag begins to revisit and examine her relationship with her estranged Scottish ancestry, her past and present and the figurative borders that withheld her from realizing her Self. Hence, I will discuss her internal struggle and movement towards an understanding of her identity. Further, I will argue that transgressing concepts, such as cultural heritage and nationality, are inherent elements for both women to formulate their identity.

Whereas Morag regards her Scottish heritage, Pique sets out to reclaim her father's Métis culture which has not only been less accessible to her but also carries more prejudice than her mothers. Therefore, I will explore the covert and overt racism as well as the transgenerational trauma of Pique's narrative. She embarks on a literal and figurative journey to discover and to reclaim her father's culture for herself. Here, I will discuss the cultural borders Pique has to transgress to fuse the elements of her identity she has already realized with those she has yet to discover. She is torn between two worlds, neither of one she seemingly belongs to due to the binary and discriminatory understanding of cultural (and biracial) identity. Pique phrases her intent as wishing “to be together” and not to be “split” by any kind of borders between her mother's Scottish and her father's Métis heritage (Laurence 287).

Thus, I will examine the intersectionality of identity as well as the hinderances they face in terms of their respective heritages. I argue both women cross many figurative and physical borders to search for their identity and the realization of their true Self that defies categorization within a kaleidoscopic culture.

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**Lina-Isabel Sophia Stockfisch** began her studies at the Philipps-University of Marburg in the BA Anglophone Studies program which she completed in 2019. The topic of her BA thesis focusses on the presentation of occultism in M.R. James' short stories. In the same year, she continued her studies at Marburg University in the master's program MA North American Studies which she concluded in late 2021 with an interdisciplinary thesis that discussed and examined trauma, madness and memory in Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace*. She has frequently focused on topics such as identity and the Self, spirituality, womanhood as well as trauma, all the

while focusing on the intersectionality of the subjects at hand. Currently she is preparing for a PhD dissertation.

During her studies at university, she has worked as a tutor as well as an assistant which she is still active as. She is also a member of the Marburg Centre for Canadian Studies.

SABABA MONJUR (UNIVERSITY OF MARBURG,  
GERMANY)

**“We’re Not Designed for Wits or Willpower”:**

**ContamiNation of Agency and Identity in *The Heart Goes Last* and *Salt Fish Girl***

When nation-states start protecting corporate interests at the expense of the citizens, and normalize privatization and commodification of public bodies to ensure their docility, then freedom becomes nothing but an empty word. Pivoting around the dichotomy of freedom/imprisonment, the proposed paper will offer a comparative study of the (Un)Regulated Zones in *The Heart Goes Last* and *Salt Fish Girl*. The threshold of regulated/unregulated spaces are controlled and constantly monitored by the authority, however, the same biopolitical regime do not mind blurring the public/private binaries for the sake of capitalist gains. Furthermore, within the gated compounds, biomaterials and body parts are traded, illegal cloning of humans is normalized, and the authority alone can decide who lives and who dies. Hence, employing a Foucauldian approach, I will elaborately discuss the biopolitical practices of entrenched exclusion, systemic violence of incarceration, dehumanization, and mass-killing of those who are dubbed by Rita Wong as ‘extra-legal’ – people who are either unregistered and undocumented (as they are clones, thereby, denied ‘human’ status) or structurally downtrodden (as they are labeled as either criminals or imbeciles). Since chaos has the subversive potential to challenge and destabilize the socio-political order, I will enunciate how Jocelyn and Evie use their ‘insider’ status to move between center and margin, and orchestrate the downfall of the bifurcated and violent biopolitical regimes by exposing the fragility of the material as well as metaphorical b/orders. Lastly, while the infringement of their individual liberties are still at stake under the corporate-controlled world, the paper will explicate whether Charmaine and Miranda can truly reclaim their freedom, and if yes, how far are they allowed to go from their respective contaminated nation-states.

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**Sababa Monjur** is a PhD candidate in Canadian Studies at Philipps University, Marburg. She earned her MA in North American Studies from the same institute in 2019. Her general research interests are popular culture, gender studies, queer theory, SF, environmental studies and ecofeminism. The latter area is the focus of her doctoral project. She is a member of SFRA (Science Fiction Research Association).

## EMMA CHARLOTTE WEIHER (BERLIN, GERMANY)

### **Bodies “out of place”:**

#### **Mythic Women as Border-Crossers in Margaret Atwood and Anne Carson**

In the essay “Dirt and Desire: Essay on the Phenomenology of Female Pollution in Antiquity,” from her collection *Men in the Off Hours*, the Canadian poet and playwright Anne Carson explores the motif of “dirt” and its prevalent image in the crossing of physical and symbolic boundaries found in Ancient Greek texts and society. The chosen image of the transgressive female figure in Greek myths can be found in a growing number of contemporary fiction and poetry. Mirroring the spirit of Carson, Margaret Atwood has written similarly poignant texts on the female body and its various transgressive acts.

Two of the writers’ more recent works, namely Atwood’s novel *The Penelopiad* and Carson’s play *Norma Jeane Baker of Troy*, explore the figure of the mythic wife accepting and defying her marital borders and physical boundaries. They function as bodies out of order, or “matter out of place” (Carson 143). In most cases, the crossing of borders as it appears in mythic retellings such as the ones selected appears as a harmful and violent act.

I will explore the characters of Helen of Troy and Homer’s Penelope as depicted in Atwood’s novel on the basis of their choice to cross borders of marriage, physicality, and societal norm.

In both novel and play, the act of crossing a mostly imaginary border without substantial basis in physical reality appears as a transgressive and prohibited act. I will discuss how the female body dares to cross borders of varying natures within Canadian women’s writing. Particularly, as it is in writing based on a new manner of myth-making. Finally, I argue that only through such deliberate transgressions and a conscious blurring of highly conceptualized borders can we succeed in reforming and reshaping social and cultural spheres.

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**Emma Charlotte Weiher** recently graduated from Philipps University of Marburg. She earned her BA degrees in both Anglophone Studies and Art History, and hopes to continue and expand her research through interdisciplinary work. As a member of the Marburg Centre for Canadian Studies, she has also contributed to the continuous intercultural exchange and dialogue between German and Canadian universities. During her studies she has written extensively on representations of womanhood, ranging from 19th century Pre-Raphaelite muses and gothic heroines to contemporary re-imaginings of mythic female figures. For her Master’s thesis she chose to examine selected literary works by Margaret Atwood, Anne Carson, and Louise Glück,

with a focus on the corporeality of femininity in ancient myths and their contemporary re- and deconstructions. She currently lives and works in Berlin and is preparing her PhD dissertation with a focus on the disembodied and impersonal self in contemporary American poetry.

**FREDERIK BLEIBER (UNIVERSITY OF MARBURG,  
GERMANY)**

**Beautiful B/Orders:  
The Ideal of Beauty in Canadian Studies and Physics**

What do Canadian Studies, especially literary studies, and physics have in common? At first sight, very little. However, there appears to be an intersection of both scientific fields composed by the notion of beauty as a metaphorical concept of b/order in research practice. In 2020, Sabine Hossenfelder published *Lost in Math – How Beauty Leads Physics Astray* in which she elaborates on the limiting effects beauty has in physics and argues that the human desire to find beauty in physical orders prevents physicists from developing theories that succeed to accurately describe our “messy” universe. More importantly, she claims that uniquely awareness of ideals of beauty shared by a scientific community could prevent scientists from overlooking reality in favor of beauty.

Similar metaphorical notions of beauty in the concept of b/orders can be found in Canadian studies, both historical and contemporary and in research and literature. Examples are the historical emphasis of nature and wilderness as Canadian ideals of beauty in the 19th century (which endured until present), the strong cultural tension between Anglophone and Francophone Canada, or the search for Canadian literary identity in the context of left nationalism in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Therefore, this paper aims at offering an interdisciplinary look at Hossenfelder's theory of beauty in order to supplement research practice of Canadian studies by not only unveiling subconscious concepts of beauty but by raising the following questions:

- Are there ideals of beauty in historical and contemporary Canadian Studies, and, if yes, how do/did they conceptualize reality?
- What limits and/or risks do/did these conceptualizations contain?
- How can Hossenfelder's findings help to reduce these risks in order to describe and analyze the reality of Canadian b/order in its diverse complexity?

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**Frederik Bleiber** studied English and French to become a teacher at Philipp's University Marburg and graduated in 2017. Since 2017, he is a doctoral student and works on an

existentialist approach for the reading of contemporary Canadian literatures. He took part in the Echoing Ecologies conference at the Marburg Centre for Canadian Studies in 2019 and presented a talk entitled “Environmental Writing in a (De-)Colonized Environment: Chances and Limits for a Green Partnership”. In January 2021, he was a participant of the “Marburger Wissenschaftsgespräche” on the topic “Über das 'Fremde' und das 'Eigene’” with Bénédicte Savoy and had the chance to present and discuss his thesis in a colloquial format to other postdocs and PhD-students and Bénédicte Savoy. In mid-2021, he organized a virtual reading and open discussion with the Cree and Canadian author Frank Christopher Busch at the Marburg Centre for Canadian Studies.

ALESSANDRA BOLLER (UNIVERSITY OF MARBURG,  
GERMANY)

## Storytelling and/as Practice of Engagement

### Larissa Lai's and Margaret Atwood's Border-Crossing Narratives

In the face of global ecological crises, the need for approaches that transcend the limiting thought-structures of Anthropocene discourse and connected (grand) narratives of modernity is more urgent than ever before. Hence, these “mixed-up times” (Haraway) demand alternative epistemologies that can emerge with and from subversive patterns of reading, writing and thinking. The proposed paper will shine a light on the manifold ways in which Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* Trilogy and Larissa Lai's novels *Salt Fish Girl* and *The Tiger Flu* cross different borders and can thus be considered subversive narratives. My point of departure is the idea that all of these narratives can be read as “ustopias”, a term introduced by Atwood to designate a hybrid form that entangles utopia and dystopia. This particular position in-between the dystopian and the utopian mode renders them ideal thoughtspaces; they can prompt readers to reflect on normalised views of the world, e.g. pertaining to linear time and progress or to grand narratives that rigidly order the world and attempt to explain it in its totality.

This talk will briefly explore how *MaddAddam* disrupts basic ideologies and imagines a new beginning through intra-active storytelling, while *Salt Fish Girl* and *The Tiger Flu* transcend generic patterns, upset reading habits and challenge (biocolonialist) epistemological practices. By dissolving manifold borders, these narratives show – in different, but equally effective ways – how storytelling can become a practice of engagement in Karen Barad's sense. As tools to think-with, they can provide empowering alternatives to preconceived frameworks and grand narratives and can challenge the established “distribution of the sensible” (Rancière), thus helping to change cognitive structures and prejudiced schemata.

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**Alessandra Boller** is currently working as a post-doctoral researcher and lecturer at the University of Siegen, Germany. She is the author of one monograph (*Rethinking 'the Human' in Dystopian Times* (2018)) and the co-editor of two collective volumes (*Dystopia, Science Fiction, Post-Apocalypse* (2016) and *Canadian Ecologies Beyond Environmentalism* (2020)). She has published widely on her different research interests, which include feminist and new materialist

approaches to (Canadian) speculative fiction, bioethics, science and technology studies as well as Irish short fiction with a particular focus on narratives of community.

UMBRIN BUKAN (YORK UNIVERSITY, TORONTO,  
CANADA)

**From Egypt to Canada with Britain in between:  
Amassing Artefacts to Advance the Canadian National Project**

This paper examines the politics of the colonial relations that allowed for the movement of Egyptian artefacts across borders, during the making of the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM). It traces the ways in which one of the largest collections of Egyptian antiquities outside of Egypt was amassed by Charles Trick Currelly, one of the founders of the ROM, largely between the 1910s and 1920s. His collection was central to the establishment of the museum and is recognized as the story of its creation. This paper discusses the freedom of movement Currelly had, and with it the power to purchase and ship artefacts to both Britain and Canada from Egypt, due to the colonial relations of the states and his connections. Canada and Egypt were both under the rule of the British Empire but in markedly different ways, Canada was a settler colony while Egypt was occupied. Although all three states were connected by imperial relations, they all had their own socio-economic positions in the Empire, allowing hegemonic and hierarchical practices of exchange and exploitation. The paper goes on to show how Egyptology played an important role in the formations of colonial power, which included not just knowledge production and economic exploitation, but also cultural, political, and nationalist processes that were further institutionalized through public museums like the ROM. In particular, the museum was an institution that allowed an emerging western nation state like Canada to showcase its status, culture, history, and possessions, and to produce Canadian citizens and give them the structures and meanings of national identity. This paper examines the role of such relations in the movement of artefacts across borders that were at once defined and blurred under the colonial paradigm for the development and advancement of the Canadian national project.

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**Umbrin Bukan** is a PhD student in the Social and Political Thought programme at York University. Her research interests include comparative politics, international relations, nation building, and nationalism and museums. Her dissertation explores nationalism in Canadian and Egyptian museums, particularly the Royal Ontario Museum and the Grand Egyptian Museum.

**GEORGETTE MORRIS (CARLETON UNIVERSITY, OTTAWA,  
CANADA)**

**Care Here, Care There, Can Care Be Everywhere?**  
**An Ethics of Care Analysis of Migrant Live-in-Caregivers and Privately Sponsored  
Nannies**

The paper seeks to expose the way in which care work is conceptualized both legally and politically in within the Live in Caregiver Program in Canada. Assessing and addressing the legal and ethical responsibilities of stakeholder, such as families, and nanny agencies is a focal point of the work. Care work as a local and global feedback cycle reinforcing one another is explored alongside the points of entry, stakeholders, and ethical obligations. Within the context of care work being at the forefront of Canada's immigration strategy amidst a pandemic, this is an important topic to highlight and inform future conversations and strategies. The second section will look at moral and political implications including difference in equality, targeting populations and program pathology in how programs are established to attract a marginalized population. Next, assessing the role of globalization as a facilitator of servitude and inequity, addressing accountability to nation states. Lastly, a specialized commission of care will be offered as a pragmatic step the Government of Canada can take to addressing issue of care specifically, employers, agencies and other entities and establishing standard for those who employ care workers both formally and informally.

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**Georgette Morris** is a PhD student in the Doctoral Program in Legal Studies at Carleton University, in Ottawa, Canada. She holds an Honours BA in Human Rights and Equity Studies, a BA in Social Science and an MA in Public Policy Administration and Law, all from York University. Her primary research interests have been around labour, policy, equity, human rights and citizenship, focusing specifically on labour-conditions for those employed in precarious areas (Live in caregiver). Future research will focus on the experiences of racialized Jamaican women in service-based work in the GTA.

ISIS LUXENBURGER (SAARLAND UNIVERSITY,  
GERMANY)

**A Train Journey across Overlapping B/Orders:  
Films on a Railroad through the East Canadian North**

In the 1950s, a railroad was constructed through the Indigenous hunting territory of the Innu and Naskapi peoples in the Canadian provinces of Quebec and Labrador to render accessible an iron ore deposit in the North. Thereby, the nascent mining town of Schefferville, located at the geographical border between the two provinces, was connected to Seven-Islands on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River. The railroad, which has been used to transport iron ore, people and supplies, has attracted cameramen and filmmakers since its construction and many films on the train, the railroad and the town of Schefferville were made: i.a. *Road of Iron* (1955), *Ti-Jean in the Land of Iron* (1958), *La Route Du Fer* (1972), *Le Dernier Glacier* (1984), *Les Enfants de Schefferville* (1996), *Tshiuetin* (2016), and *Train du Grand Nord* (2019). The train journey between the South and the North is central to many of these films, whose titles also display the linguistic borders between the Anglophone, the Francophone and the Indigenous sphere.

Although no national border is crossed during this journey through Canada, the train meanders through a space of manifold borders entangled with each other. In addition to geographical, linguistic and spatial borders, the divide between nature and culture—wilderness and civilization—has played an important role in the railroad’s history, which is closely linked to the exploitation, pollution and destruction of nature. Besides the intersection of different borders, different orders are also present along the railroad. The Indigenous and the Western perception and conceptualization of the world as well as conflicts arising from their opposition are intertwined with the different borders overlapping in the North. Hence, cinematic representations of the intra-Canadian train journey across b/orders between Seven-Islands and Schefferville constitute a fruitful object of research for the interdisciplinary investigation of b/orders at the interface of Cultural Studies, Border Studies and Film Studies.

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**Isis Luxenburger**, M.A., Bachelor’s degree in Translation, Language and Cultural Studies (French, English) and Master’s degree in Translation Studies (French, English), is a doctoral researcher in the International Research Training Group “Diversity. Mediating Difference in Transcultural Spaces” at Saarland University, in cooperation with the University of Trier and the University of Montreal. Since 2020, she teaches courses on industrial film, industrial aesthetics and industrial culture at Saarland University. Her research interests

include the cultural studies of (industrial) films and, in general, investigating research subjects rooted in other disciplines – especially Film Studies, Border Studies, Computer Gaming Studies and Translation Studies – from a Cultural Studies perspective. She is currently working on her interdisciplinary dissertation project on the mediation of industrial culture in films and documentaries in the Canadian province of Quebec and the Greater Region SaarLorLux+.

## CHRISTIAN JUNGE (BAMBERG, GERMANY)

### **Transnational Arab Culture from a European Perspektive**

This paper discusses approaches to transnational Arab literature from the perspective of cultural studies. Based on Stuart Hall's analytical framework of a "circuit of culture", it sheds light on the role of regulation, production and consumption for Arab literature that crosses borders and establishes transnational orders. As a case in point, it discusses Arab German literature beyond the notions of "diaspora literature" (adab al-mahjar) and "migrant literature" (adab al-muhajirin).

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**Christian Junge** is a researcher and lecturer of Arabic Studies at the Center for Near and Middle Eastern Studies at Marburg University and recently visiting professor of Cultural Studies of the Middle East at Bamberg University. His main areas of research include philology and social criticism of the 19th century Levante and literature and its reception in contemporary Egypt. His recent research project focuses on "Affective Readings. Society and Emotion in Egyptian Literature, 1990-2020" ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EY6h9pESo\\_g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EY6h9pESo_g)). Among his latest publications is the co-authored monograph "Arabistik. Eine literatur- und kulturwissenschaftliche Einführung" (Metzler 2021, together with Y. Albers, I. Braune, F. Lang, F. Pannewick).

MAY TELMISSANY (UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA, CANADA)

## **When Invisibility Strikes: The Arab Canadian Filmmakers and their Struggle for Recognition**

Despite the quantitative and qualitative significance of their films, the filmmakers of the Arab Canadian diaspora remain largely unknown to academics, film critics and public audiences in general. In the emerging field of Arab Canadian studies, very few scholarly publications examine cinema produced by Canadians of Arab origin. However, the prolific work of these filmmakers sheds a significant light on the social and political debates surrounding visible minorities in Canada. Some of the main issues discussed in their films relate to the status of Arab-Muslim-Canadian women, the debates around religious fundamentalism and communitarianism as a threat to the secularist apparatuses in Quebec and Canada, the challenges facing the integration of minorities within the Canadian/Quebecois fabric, and the politics of recognition associated with the plurality of individual, national, linguistic, and cultural identities in Canada. The invisibility of the Arab Canadian filmmakers is also evident in the general history books of Canadian and Quebecois cinemas. Despite evidence, Canadian filmmakers of Arab descent produce knowledge about Arabs in Canada that complements and engages with historical and sociological research done in this field by scholars such as Bahaa Abu Laban (1980; 1998), Rachad Antonius (2000; 2021), Paul Eid (2010) and Houda Assal (2016).

Invisible to film critics and unknown to the public, Canadian filmmakers of Arab origin played a prominent role in the history of cinema in Canada. Of Lebanese origin, Canadian director Donald Shebib, is viewed as the pioneer of the emergent English Canadian cinema (Christine Ramsay, 1993; Christopher Gittings, 2011). Shebib's ground-breaking film *Goin' Down the Road* (1970) is recognized by film historians as the first feature film marking the beginning of film industry in English Canada. Similarly, although with a more obvious attachment to her country of origin, Egyptian Canadian filmmaker Tahani Rached contributed several important films to the National Film Board (NFB). Her career as a prominent documentarist stretched over several decades between the 1980s and the 2010s. Some of her documentaries provide a historical-critical inquiry into Arab societies and cultures from a feminist standpoint, namely *Four Women from Egypt* (shot in Egypt and produced by the NFB, 1997), *Soraida, A Woman of Palestine* (shot in Palestine and produced by the NFB, 2004) and *These Girls* (shot and produced in Cairo, 2006).

In this presentation, I argue that Arab Canadian filmmakers consciously and actively participate in the global phenomenon of interculturalism and transnationalism, which involves the double knowledge of the particularities and generalities of cultures. This participation

expresses itself most notably through the aesthetic expression of the diasporic/multiple intercultural identities and seeks to establish recognition not only within the general Canadian fabric but within the Arab Canadian communities as well. Cultural multiplicities and transfers, I claim, have a huge impact on the art of film: as much as film can be viewed as culturally bound, it is increasingly produced across borders, globally circulated through traditional as well as cyber channels, impacting the intercultural/transnational dialogue on mobility and belonging on a global scale and calling for new forms of political and cultural recognition. The aesthetic codes, conventions and signatures instated by Arab Canadian diasporic filmmakers create awareness of the filmmaker's transnational culture and highlights by the same token the subversive practices of *auteur cinema* in and beyond the borders of "national cinema" apparatus. In other words, the cinematic subjectivity of the *auteur* filmmaker is often marked by intercultural/transnational identification, physical and artistic border crossing, stylistic sophistication, and the struggle for visibility and recognition.

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**May Telmissany** is an established Egyptian Canadian novelist and Associate professor of Cinema and Arabic Studies at the University of Ottawa. She is the former director of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, and the World Cinemas Program. She is the founding member and director of the Arab Canadian Studies Research Group (ACANS) established in 2011. Her PhD *La Hara dans le Cinéma Egyptien. Quartier populaire et identité nationale* was published in French in 2010 and translated into Arabic in 2014. Telmissany is the co-editor of *Counterpoints. Edward Said's Legacy* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010) and the co-author of *The Last Hammams of Cairo* (American University in Cairo Press, 2011). Her scholarly articles published in France, the USA, Canada, and Egypt discuss the representation of the popular neighborhood in cinema, the emergence of Minor cinemas in Europe and the Middle East and the rise of transnational filmmaking within the Arab diaspora. She contributed numerous articles on renowned filmmakers such as Michel Khleifi, Nadir Moknèche, Wajdi Mouawad, and Deepa Mehta as well as foundational publications on transnational cinema from a postcolonial perspective and women filmmakers and their role in the January 2011 Egyptian Revolution. Telmissany published her first novel *Duniyazad* in 1997. It was translated into eight languages and received Egyptian and international awards. Her creative works include: *Repetitive Sculpture* (short stories, 1995); *Mental Betrayals* (short stories, 1999); *Heliopolis* (novel, 2000); *Gates of Paradise* (Memoirs, 2009), *Acappella* (novel, 2012), *Magic Eye* (Short stories, 2016), and *Every One Says I Love You* (novel, 2021). In 2021, Telmissany was awarded the Order of *Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres* by the French Republic.

**WALAA SAID (UNIVERSITY OF MARBURG, GERMANY)**

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**Walaa Said** is a researcher and lecturer of New English and Canadian Studies for the Institute of English and American Studies (IAA) at Marburg University. Before she was a research fellow of Arabic Studies at the Center for Near and Middle Eastern Studies at Marburg University. At the moment, she is writing a PhD as a cross-cultural study in the intersection between border studies and dystopian fiction bringing novels from Canadian, South African, and Egyptian literatures.

## ALBERT RAU (UNIVERSITY OF COLOGNE, GERMANY)

### **CanLit in the German EFL-Classroom: More than only a Glimpse Across the Border**

Since not all students have the chance to embark on a student exchange programme or the possibility of travelling to Canada, there have to be other ways of introducing students to foreign cultures. Classroom work can resort, for example, to films, music, newspaper reports, magazines, however, when students read a country's literature, this can help them to cross the border and to open up a door to experience a foreign culture. Yet, a discussion of different cultures in the classroom is often determined by clichés which are rather based on prejudices than on profound information. Therefore, a literature-led immersion into a foreign culture can only be successful if there is a readiness to understand differences. Literary texts can be particularly rewarding here, since, instead of relying on stereotypes, students are encouraged to understand the culture and world that is different from their own. A prominent topic in the classroom has always been the situation of the native people's in North America. The presentation takes a look at various literary texts that have been suggested in the past forty years to introduce Canada's native peoples, the First Nations, the Inuit and the Métis to the German ESL classroom.

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**Albert Rau** teaches English Canadian Drama and literature at the University of Cologne and he taught English at high school level. His publications discuss aspects of Canadian drama and deal with the didactics of Canadian plays and literary texts for the ESL (English as a second language) classroom. His most recent publication from April 2019, co-edited with Martin Kuester, is a special focus on "Canadian Drama in the New Millenium" in *Anglistik*, a journal published on behalf of the German Association for the Study of English. In May 2011 he was awarded the *Certificate of Mérit* by the ICCS.

## MATTHIAS DICKERT (GELNHAUSEN, GERMANY)

### **Border crossing as the fruition of the Muslim male?**

#### **Canadian Muslim Writing and a Selected Presentation of Male Characters in CanLit**

Reflections on border have – just like borderlands, borderlines, border zones, journey, crossing, survival, ecology, concepts of regionalism, nation or transnationalism – found a fixed place in Canadian literature. Next to the above-mentioned visible concepts of border it is the notion of mental borders whose consequences can be spotted in the presence of tribalism, regionalism, nationalism or religious fundamentalism all of which create borders of various kind. Daily life of Muslims living in Canada has been drastically changed by the events of 9/11 and the Anti-terrorism Act of December 18th, 2001 which created new and static ethnic, cultural and religious borders – both visible and invisible - between Muslim communities and the ROC.

It is exactly here where the group of Canadian Muslim writers (writers being born in Muslim countries but now living in Canada) have tried to bring Islam closer to Canadian society while reflecting on what Larissa Lai calls a “politics and poetics of relation “. These writers dispose of a double perspective and are therefore insiders and outsiders at the same time. This enables them to describe and reflect matters of identity, belonging, transnationalism, morality as well as notions of in-betweenness, the hybrid or border from two sides. It is at this crossroad between East and West where they look at and critically discuss traditional family structures, male -female relationships, moral expectations or the concept of the male from a Muslim perspective.

The selected characters presented here are shown in their crossings and journeys of national, cultural, moral and religious borders which are too often marked by the personal chaos of being a male Muslim in the West whose destiny is finally changed at borders old and new. It is here where things are ordered privately and publicly as well as religiously for the better or the worse.

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**Matthias Dickert** teaches English and Religious Education at the Grimmelshausen Gymnasium Gelnhausen (Hessen). His school is one of the partner schools of the Marburg Center for Canadian Studies and there have been a large number of common projects since 2013. Mr. Dickert did his PhD on Muslim writing in English speaking literature and most of his publications and lectures are on that topic. Being an alumnus of Durham University (GB) he has recently intensified his cooperation with the Department of Theology there.

## CANADIAN STUDIES ACROSS BORDERS

**CHAIR:** MARTIN KUESTER (UNIVERSITY OF MARBURG, GERMANY)

The afternoon of the June 11 is dedicated to an exploration of the development of Canadian Studies and, at the same time, wants to celebrate the work of the Marburg Centre for Canadian Studies, which turned 20 in the year 2021, and its founder Martin Kuester.

The panel Canadian Studies in/and Marburg—a Retrospective combines personal, academic and creative views to offer a retrospective look at the development of Canadian Studies in Marburg and beyond. Afterwards, Sylvia Langwald and Andrea Wolff-Wölk take the audience on a Journey through 20 Years in Pictures before the participants of the Round-Table Discussion reflect on and discuss the development of Canadian Studies to identify challenges, potentials and chances, topics and themes as well as possible new approaches and cooperations.