



**CALL FOR PAPERS
APPEL À COMMUNICATIONS**

**Crisis and Beyond
The Literatures of Canada and Quebec**

**Écriture de la crise : dans la tourmente et au-delà
Les littératures au Canada et au Québec**

Part 1: 30 September – 2 October 2015, University of Innsbruck, Austria

Part 2: September 2016, The Banff Centre, Canada

In the midst of global violence, unrest, and environmental disaster, a sense of crisis encapsulates us. According to Slavoj Žižek in *Living in the End Times* (2010), “the global capitalist system is approaching an apocalyptic zero point,” comprised of “the ecological crisis, the consequences of the biogenetic revolution, imbalances within the system itself (problems with intellectual property; forthcoming struggles over raw materials, food and water), and the explosive growth of social divisions and exclusions.” On the other hand, recent theorizations in the field of affect studies, such as Lauren Berlant’s *Cruel Optimism* (2011), prompt us not only to rethink our attachments to previously held notions of the good life – attachments that have led to our contemporary crises – but to articulate new modes of being or becoming. Writers in turn intervene in ways of thinking about and relating to a time of crisis. In the post-9/11 backdrop of the critical essays of *L’horizon du fragment* (2004) Nicole Brossard articulates her “desire to take up again the senseless quest for meaning and beauty” while other writers rely on derision, humor, and irony to show ways and means of “how to succeed in one’s hypermodernity and save the rest of one’s life” (see Nicolas Langelier, 2010; Nicolas Dickner, 2009).

Organized by the Canadian Studies Centre (CSC) at the University of Innsbruck and the Canadian Literature Centre (CLC) at the University of Alberta, this two-part bilingual (English-French) conference seeks to explore how crisis directs or transforms First Nations, Québécois, and Canadian writings in English and French, and how authors and intellectuals endeavour to counterbalance the social, economic, and ideological

insecurities we live in. Are there identifiable thematic or stylistic characteristics that mark a literature *of* crisis, *in* crisis, and leading *beyond* it? We seek to understand how writing deals – on either an aesthetic, a thematic, a political, or a personal plane – with global disorder and which strategies it employs to stand up against the hauntings of planetary death, ideological and epistemological collapse, financial breakdown, the contemporary legacies of history, environmental disaster, or the electronic age. How can crisis merge, through writing, with deliberate mobilization, political resistance, radical transgression, and agency towards social change and transformation? Can irony – or even humor – counterbalance disaster and give humanity new hope? We are interested in all forms of narratives (fictional, poetic, non-fictional, theoretical, cinematic, performative) of vulnerability, trauma or dystopia, and in ways that lead beyond crisis. Of particular interest are productions that reveal First Nations, Québécois, and Canadian literatures as transnational, cross-border, postcolonial, feminist, or transgender practices.

Among other related lines of critical inquiry, participants are encouraged to consider the following questions:

- What is the relationship between crisis and vulnerability, fatigue, or nostalgia? Can these elements figure as a position of connection, openness, ethics, and social change?
- How do uncertainties about the present – conveyed through a sense of lateness, ending, or apocalyptic apprehension – emerge in literature?
- How are historiographical writing, testimony, and the ethics of those practices determined by crisis?
- How can feminist, queer, and transgender readings reconfigure our understanding of crisis?
- How does the electronic shift in communication produce a sense of instantaneity and anxiety of unmapped and rapidly transformed territories? What are the positive effects of modern communication methods and how do they affect literary production?
- How does the body experience crisis? What are the relationships between crisis, trauma, writing, corporeality, affect, and embodiment?
- How do literatures negotiate boundaries: between the local and the global, between material and virtual environments, between different times and spaces, between the human and the non-human?
- Does the critical predominance of the prefix “post” (postmodernism, postcolonialism, postfeminism, postnationalism, or more recently, posthuman) figure today as a sense of an ending or of a dawning? Does the “post” announce the creation of new and alternative poetic and political paradigms?

- What new ethical, political, and aesthetic constructions emerge in literature in an age of information and surveillance and in the very decay of damage, violence, and the violation of human rights?
- What new futurities emerge from dystopian writing? Does dystopian writing substitute the need for new utopias?
- Is the writing of crisis at the beginning of the 21st century a “First World” (Alfred Sauvy) phenomenon? How do the literatures of the so-called developed, capitalist, and industrial countries extend to concrete experiences of Canada’s First Nations and of the so-called “Third World”?
- Is crisis writing a prerogative of the privileged?

In the treatment of any of these possible and other related topics, we encourage comparative, multidisciplinary, and interdisciplinary perspectives and methodologies. We invite proposals of traditional 20-minute papers as well as other forms of presentation such as short 10-minute position papers, panel discussions, or pecha kucha presentations.

Conference or 3-4 people panel proposals (250 words), **in English or French**, with a short biographical note (50 words), should be submitted to Ursula Moser (ursula.moser@uibk.ac.at) and Marie Carrière (carriere@ualberta.ca) **by January 1, 2015**.

Organizers

- Ursula Moser, Director, Canadian Studies Centre, University of Innsbruck, Chair of the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures
- Marie Carrière, Director, Canadian Literature Center/Centre de littérature canadienne, University of Alberta

Conference Committee 2015

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- Srilata Ravi, University of Alberta

The first symposium will take place in the beautiful historic city of Innsbruck from September 30 to October 2, 2015. Innsbruck is situated in the valley of the river Inn at the heart of the Alps in the west of Austria. It is close both to the Italian and to the German borders. For further information concerning the Canadian Studies Centre of the University of Innsbruck please consult www.uibk.ac.at/canada.

The second symposium will take place at the Banff Centre in Canada in September 2016. There will be a separate call for papers. Situated in the Banff National Park, surrounded by the magnificent scenery of the Rockies, the Banff Centre is a unique place to promote the arts and all scientific disciplines on a Canadian and on an international level. For further information concerning the Canadian Literature Centre of the University of Alberta please consult www.abclc.ca.