**October 24, 2023**

**Department of Romance Languages and Literatures**

**University of Michigan**

**812 East Washington Street**

**Ann Arbor, Michigan**

**48109-1275**

**Subject: Application for the Position of Assistant Professor in Global French Studies**

Dear Members of the Search Committee,

**I am writing to express my strong interest in being considered for the above-named post in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures**. I recently completed my postdoctoral training funded by the Fonds de Recherche du Québec – Société et Culture at the University of Michigan, where I am currently a lecturer of French in the Residential College. Before coming to Ann Arbor in 2018, I graduated *summa cum laude* from a PhD program in literary studies convened jointly by the Université du Québec à Montréal and the Universität des Saarlandes, receiving both Canadian and German qualifications. I was also a visiting scholar in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at the Universität des Saarlandes (2017–2018), where I served as a substitute for Associate Professor Mechthild Gilzmer. I am a specialist in Quebec literature and culture and an adept generalist, having taught French as a second language at all levels, as well as courses on Francophone literatures since 2013. My research and teaching interests also show a commitment to an interdisciplinarity that benefits both my immediate colleagues and the institution: I have worked in Romance Studies and German Studies departments offering interdisciplinary B.A. programs such as “French Cultural Studies and Intercultural Communication,” and “Franco-German Studies: Cross-Border Communication and Cooperation.” **In addition, I am deeply involved in a wide array of research activities that benefit underrepresented communities outside the academic world, are expressly designed to address transnational perspectives and issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion**, and that make a significant contribution to the University’s engagement with the community it inhabits. In light of my wide-ranging and substantial experience in research, teaching, and community outreach, I am confident of my capacity to make a substantial contribution to the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures and represent an excellent fit with your stated goals if selected for this position.

*Research*

My research on modern and contemporary Quebec literature and culture focuses on intercultural issues, including imagology, theories of cross-cultural communication and cross-cultural intertextuality, theories of cultural transfer, and reception studies. My first monograph, based on my doctoral dissertation, *Les usages littéraires de Thomas Bernhard et de Peter Handke au Québec: Les modalités d’une affiliation interculturelle* was published in February 2021 by Éditions Nota Beneof Montreal. It explores the utility of “affiliation” as a concept in the intercultural analysis of contemporary Québec literature and draws on a representative corpus of poetry and prose works that conduct intertextual dialogue with Thomas Bernhard and Peter Handke’s works. Findings from my research on contemporary intercultural literature from Quebec and Germany have been published in French, English, and German in peer-reviewed journals such as *Littératures*, *Voix et Images*, *Eurostudia*, *Zeitschrift für Kanada Studien*, and *Seminar*.They have also appearedin German collections, such as *Klassik als kulturelle Praxis: Funktional, intermedial, transkulturell* (De Gruyter, 2019). Furthermore, I have conducted research on the representation of cross-cultural encounters in recent comics and graphic novels published in Quebec, France, and Germany, especially those that seek to “empower” migrant and refugee characters. **I am currently working on a book on a history of Québécois comics that will focus on issues of diversity within them.** As a scholar with interests in the theory of parody and the study of perceptions of Nazi Germany in Francophone Literature, I would especially look forward to the chance to collaborate with colleagues in the University of Michigan’s RLLs Department, and believe that there are significant prospects for synergies with the work of David Caron and Michèle Hannoosh, among others.

*Teaching*

A Canadian native speaker of French, I have successfully taught French language courses to non-native speakers at all levels and advanced undergraduate cultural and literary studies courses I designed in both Germany and the United States, as well as a large lecture-based survey course, again of my own design, for undergraduate native speakers of French at the Université du Québec à Montréal. I believe I can offer the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures new avenues to explore in teaching that will both enhance the student experience and stimulate new research possibilities. My advanced, seminar-style undergraduate course, “From Comics to Graphic Novels: Interculturality and Ethnicity,” which draws on my own ongoing research, could meet any requirements you have for a 300-level course in French, for example. This course, which exemplifies my commitment to addressing classroom diversity and inclusion issues, examines graphic narratives with a strong focus on intercultural relations. Class discussions center on how these graphic narratives depict intercultural encounters and reflect on transcultural and ethnic issues through reflections on comics as a medium. Since arriving at the University of Michigan, I have continued to design courses around culturally diverse topics, such as “Road Narratives Reclaimed: Diverse Expressions of Mobility in Post-1950s North America,” responding flexibly to changing institutional and student needs. For example, in the winter of 2021, I adapted my course on “Migrant Writing in Québec” to reflect the objectives of a third-year seminar within an intensive and semi-immersive language program. **I would relish the opportunity to develop courses at the University of Michigan that I strongly believe would enhance our institution’s programming. These would include graduate-level courses on the Cultural Transfer Approach and Cultural and Spatial Mobilities in North American Francophone Cultures, as well as one at undergraduate level on the Transnational Dimensions of Contemporary Canadian French-language Indigenous Literature and Culture.** I would also value the opportunity to further engage with other dimensions of Global French researchers within the Department are involved in studying. I am confident that my teaching experience has prepared me to make meaningful contributions in line with the priorities of the Romance Languages and Literatures (RLL) department, including your signature research cluster, “Migration, Diaspora, Globalization.”

*Community Outreach*

In addition, allow me to note my steadfast commitment to the circulation of knowledge outside the academic community, which I believe would serve both the University of Michigan’s research programs and community outreach initiatives. As a postdoctoral fellow in Michigan, I expanded my interests to historical preservation research, leading a liaison with French-language communities on behalf of the MotorCities National Heritage Area Partnership, a US Congress-funded nonprofit corporation in which I have acted as a researcher and member of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee. The MotorCities partnership is dedicated to preserving and explaining the historic role southeast and central Michigan communities played in the development of the automotive industry. In this program, I have been responsible for initiating dialogue with key contacts within the French-language groups to better understand how our organization could showcase their contribution and thereby make that historical account more inclusive. For example, in collaboration with the Haitian Network Group of Detroit, in September 2021 I recorded oral histories in Detroit of the personal experiences and journeys of Haitian-American engineers, which were published on MotorCities’ website in February 2022. I was also involved in the planning of outreach activities with Latin American communities in the neighborhood of Southwest Detroit and in the conceptualization and creation of the “Making Tracks II. The African American Experience in the Auto Industry” website. At the University of Michigan, I would relish the opportunity to further develop similar projects and new learning experiences for students, geared toward immigrants and diaspora networks, especially around car culture. I would create mentorship programs and would be especially interested in creating new opportunities for graduate students through programs such as the Dean’s Strategic Initiatives I (DSI-I) Fund. These experiences would, in turn, enhance the University of Michigan’s links with the wider community.

-----

**A number of other experiences I have had and contributions I have made and have encouraged me to applyfor the LSA Senior Collegiate Fellowship, in addition to my current position. In particular, I would draw your attention to my longstanding record of engagement in public scholarship. I would also highlight the intergroup and intercultural skills I have acquired through my training and teaching experience at the Université du Québec à Montréal, a large public institution that has consistently distinguished itself by championing democratization and accessibility in higher education, especially for French Canadians who have historically been utterly underrepresented within it in Quebec. These were values I also consistently strove to promote while at the Department of Intercultural Communication at the Universität des Saarlandes**.

The possibility of joining the RLL community in a role that would allow me to continue my current teaching at the University of Michigan while enjoying more resources and support for research in the field of Quebec and North American Francophone Literatures is particularly exciting. While efforts have certainly been made to move away from the Eurocentric bias in many French Departments in the country, the field of Quebec and North American Francophone Literatures is still woefully underrepresented in the United States. This is unfortunate given the historical significance of the French aspect of North American history and as a language of the world and of immigrants to North America.

I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss the additional courses I could offer that best complement your undergraduate and graduate programs at the interview. The materials you have requested, including a writing sample, are attached. I would be happy to provide any additional materials you might require.

Thank you for considering my application.

Yours sincerely,

Louise-Hélène Filion, Ph.D.