January 10, 2023

David Creelman, Ph.D.

Department of Humanities and Languages

University of New Brunswick Saint John

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Dear Dr. Creelman and Members of the Search Committee,

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

I am delighted to apply for the above-named post in the Department of Humanities and Languages at the University of New Brunswick in Saint John (UNB Saint John). I recently finished postdoctoral training funded by the Fonds de Recherche du Québec – Société et Culture (Quebec Research Fund – Society and Culture) at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, where I am currently a lecturer of French in its 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 (2017–2018) in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at the Universität des Saarlandes, where I acted as a substitute for Associate Professor Mechthild Gilzmer. I am a specialist in Quebec literature and culture and an adept generalist who has taught French as a second language at all levels, as well as courses on Francophone literatures since 2013, including an advanced undergraduate course on “Migrant Writing in Quebec”. My research and teaching interests also show a commitment to an interdisciplinarity that benefits both my immediate colleagues and the institution more widely. I am also involved in a wide array of research activities that benefit communities outside the academic world and that are expressly designed to address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. I believe, in light of my broad and substantial experience in research, teaching, and community outreach, I would make a substantial contribution to your institution if selected for the position and represent an excellent fit with your avowed goals.

My research on modern and contemporary Quebec literature and culture focuses on intercultural issues, including imagology, theories of cross-cultural communication and of cross-cultural intertextuality, theories of cultural transfer, and reception studies. My first monograph, based on my doctoral dissertation, is entitled *Les usages littéraires de Thomas Bernhard et de Peter Handke au Québec: Les modalités d’une affiliation interculturelle* and was published in February 2021 by Éditions Nota Beneof Montreal. It explores the utility of “affiliation” as a concept in intercultural analysis of contemporary Quebec 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). I have also conducted research on the representation of cross-cultural encounters in comics and graphic novels published in both Quebec and Germany, especially those that seek to “empower” migrant and refugee characters.

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 that I have designed in both Germany and the United States, as well as a 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 UNB Saint John new avenues to explore in teaching that will both enhance the student experience and prompt new research possibilities. My advanced, seminar-style undergraduate course, “De la bande dessinée au roman graphique: Interculturalité et ethnicité,” which draws on my own ongoing research, could meet any requirements you have for a 3000- or 4000-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 centre on how these graphic narratives depict intercultural encounters and reflect on transcultural and ethnic issues through reflections on comics as a medium. In Germany, I taught French oral comprehension and expression to both beginners and more advanced students at the Universität des Saarlandes, focusing around themes such as territorial inequalities. I have also acquired substantial teaching experience at the University of Michigan over the last four years and have demonstrated my flexible attitude toward changing institutional and student needs. In the winter of 2021, for example, I adapted my course on “Migrant Writing in Quebec” to align with the objectives of a third-year seminar in the context of an intensive and semi-immersive language program. I would relish the chance to develop courses at UNB Saint John that I strongly believe would enhance the institution’s offering, including ones on: Representations of LGBTQ+ identities in French-Canadian children’s and youth literature; a translation course involving community engagement; and Canadian French-language indigenous literature and culture from the perspective of “resistance” to European colonization. I have given further details on these in my teaching statement. I also maintain an active German Studies research agenda, meaning I could contribute to the curriculum in this field too.

In addition, I wish to point out my steadfast commitment to the circulation of knowledge outside the academic community, which I believe would serve both UNB’s research programs and community outreach initiatives. As a postdoctoral fellow in Michigan, I expanded my interests to historical preservation research. I led on liaison with French-language communities on behalf of the MotorCities National Heritage Area Partnership, a US Congress-funded nonprofit corporation where I have been both 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. I was 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, I recorded oral histories in Detroit in September 2021 of the personal experiences and journeys of Haitian-American engineers with whom I had forged links. These were published on the MotorCities’ website in February 2022. I was also involved in the planning of outreach activities with Latin American communities in the neighbourhood of Southwest Detroit and in the conceptualization and creation of the “Making Tracks II. The African American Experience in the Auto Industry” website. I believe that a collaboration with the YMCA Saint John especially through its “Newcomer Connections” program, or with the UNB Saint John Newcomers Centre (SJNC) would help me further develop similar lines of interest and new learning experiences for your students geared toward immigrants and diaspora networks. These experiences would, in turn, enhance UNB’s links with the wider community.

I would work with dedication to create such forms of mentorship, involving and supporting students in research projects similar to those I have conducted as a research fellow and with the MotorCities program. The City of Saint John’s recently unveiled “Succeed and Stay Immigration Strategy,” as well as your Urban and Community Studies Institute’s essential work, All of this convinces me that your institution would be the ideal place to further develop my work on contemporary narratives of migration, human rights, and social justice. As scholar who has always sought to maintain a research profile across literary traditions, including in the study of migrant writing, I would especially relish the chance of working in an interdisciplinary department like yours, where I believe that there would be great prospects for synergies with the research and teaching interests of many of your faculty, especially as far as literary theory and children’s literature are concerned.

Iam confident that I would contribute significantly to the UNB Saint John’s programs and would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss this with you at interview. My *curriculum vitae*, research statement, and teaching dossier are enclosed. I have also asked three faculty members to submit their confidential letters of recommendation. I would be happy to provide any additional materials you might require and thank you for considering my application.

Yours sincerely,

Louise-Hélène Filion