March 9, 2022

Wojciech Tokarz, Ph.D.

Department of Modern Languages

St. Francis Xavier University

4130 University Avenue

Antigonish, Nova Scotia

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Dear Dr. Tokarz and Members of the Search Committee,

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

I am delighted to apply for the above-named post in the Department of Modern Languages at St. Francis Xavier University. I am currently a postdoctoral fellow funded by the Fonds de Recherche du Québec – Société et Culture at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, where I am also a lecturer of French in its Residential College (RC), a semi-independent liberal arts living-learning community that offers personalized college experiences studying in small groups, much like your institution so successfully does. 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. As a specialist in Québec literature and culture, and an adept generalist who has taught French as a second language at all levels and courses on Francophone literatures since 2013, 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: in light of my experience in research, teaching, and community outreach, my qualifications on the whole present as an excellent fit for the position currently advertised at your institution.

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 the 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 (ZKS)*, 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 St. Francis Xavier 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 ongoing research, could meet any requirements you have for a 300- or 400- 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. 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 three 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 St. Francis Xavier that I strongly believe would complement the institution’s offering, including ones on: Representations of LGBTQ+ identities in French-Canadian children’s and youth’s 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 St. Francis Xavier’s research programs and community outreach initiatives. As a postdoctoral fellow in Michigan, I have expanded my interests to historical preservation research. I lead on liaison with French-language communities on behalf of the MotorCities National Heritage Area Partnership, a US Congress-funded nonprofit corporation where I am both a researcher and member of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) 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 am responsible for initiating dialogue with key contacts within the French-language groups to better understand how our organization can 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. My involvement with other communities in southeast and central Michigan includes a collaboration with the state’s French-Canadian Heritage Society and involvement in the conceptualization and creation of the “Making Tracks II” website. The value your institution places on similar learning experiences would help me to further develop these interests and, in turn, enhance St Francis Xavier’s links with the wider community.

The inspiring initiatives St. Francis Xavier has created to support refugees – including the StFX for SAFE Committee and the Student Refugee Program – drive me to want to contribute to them and convince me that your institution would be the ideal place to further develop my work on contemporary narratives of migration, human rights, and social justice. I especially look forward to the chance of collaborating with colleagues across the disciplines and believe that there are great prospects for synergies with the work of Liza Bolen, Rebecca Wallace, Robin Neustaeter, Norine Verberg, among others. I would also be eager to contribute to your Social Justice Colloquium. St. Francis Xavier offers a laudable breadth of research opportunities and I find the prospect of contributing to that highly appealing. I would also work with dedication to develop similar forms of mentorship to those I have developed as a research fellow in Michigan and with the MotorCities program, involving and supporting students in research projects that benefit diaspora networks and the wider community.

Iam confident that I would contribute significantly to St. Francis Xavier University’s programs and would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss this with you at interview. My *curriculum vitae*, research and teaching statements, and referee details are enclosed. I would be happy to provide any additional materials you might require and thank you for considering my application.

Yours sincerely,

Louise-Hélène Filion