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Association for Canadian Studies in German-Speaking Countries (GKS)**

**ICCS Research Report**

**Project:** “‘They Were Not Human’: Rethinking Binaries, Bioethics and Eco-realities in Selected Works of Margaret Atwood and Larissa Lai”

**Gains and Experience**

As an international doctoral student conducting research in the field of Canadian Studies, the short-term research stay at University of Toronto under the supervision of renowned scholar Prof. Smaro Kamboureli has been an enriching academic experience. I visited the University of Toronto in the period of 11 July – 11 August 2022. Despite being on sabbatical, Prof. Kamboureli was thoughtful of my limited time in Toronto. Right after my arrival she sent me all the necessary documents so I could receive my library card immediately and have access to John P. Robarts Libray, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, and UTSC Library.

I had several in-person meetings with Prof. Kamboureli during my stay and I elaborately discussed my dissertation project with her. She was aware of my dissertation topic as I had the pleasure of meeting her in person when she attended a conference at Philipps University Marburg where I presented one of my work-in-progress chapter. Prof. Kamboureli is one of the celebrated figures in Canadian literary theory and criticism, therefore, it was of immense importance to receive her insightful comments on my dissertation chapters. Upon learning about my interest in nonhumanity, she agreed that I can look at the disposability of the sub/non-human lives which I believe is a fascinating take on contemporary Canadian speculative fictions. I must admit that I have tried my best to dig deeper and utilize all the resources provided by the libraries. I am beyond excited to have returned with a considerable amount of new research materials.

My ongoing dissertation is fundamentally interdisciplinary and there are different yet correlated avenues to explore. My 4-weeks research stay in Toronto helped me step outside my usual academic setting and experience different approaches, and most importantly, communicate with my peers. I strongly believe that not only Prof. Kamboureli’s guidance and feedback has been beneficial but she has helped me expand my research network as well. Having peers who share similar research interest was indeed a delightful experience during my short stay.

**Key Outcomes and Impacts of the Research-stay**

As I have mentioned earlier, Prof. Kamboureli ensured that I have access to all the library facilities and I have procured valuable research materials. Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library houses a wide range of newspaper articles and interviews on Margaret Atwood and Larissa Lai. Besides, Robarts

Library has a humongous collection on Canadian Literature and Criticism. As an avid reader, it was quite challenging to select the best suited secondary research materials for my research. As per Prof. Kamboureli's suggestion, I tried to get as many relevant books and articles scanned as possible. The in-depth interviews along with the literary criticisms are immensely helpful to have a better and clearer understanding of Canadian multiculturalism, Asian-Canadian relationships, 'Asiancy,' and Indigenous literature. I had access to several thought-provoking documentaries on climate crisis (*Chasing Ice* and *Anthropocene* for instance) and these documentaries are not only informative but relevant to my research as well. I have returned with a modified research focus which, as my supervisor hopes, will guarantee better research output.

### **Cultural Exposure**

Studying about a culture and exploring the culture in real time are two entirely different experience. Hence, from the very beginning, Prof. Kamboureli emphasized on the fact that I must prepare a concrete schedule to utilize my time to the fullest and handed me a list of cultural as well as natural landscapes. Following her guideline, I have tried my best to visit as many museums and art galleries as possible during the limited time-frame. I must admit that coming from a small town such as Marburg, I was captivated by the number of cultural events that took place in Toronto every weekend. Toronto is vibrant when it comes to celebrating cultural festivals and I managed to enjoy the Toronto Outdoor Art Fair, Taste of Vietnam Festival, Vegandale Festival, Caribana Fest, and AlohaFest. Besides, my friends from Toronto informed me about the Toronto City Pass which includes access to Royal Ontario Museum, Casa Loma, CN Tower, Ripley's Aquarium, and Toronto Zoo. Each of these attractions were fascinating and I have learned a lot about historic as well as socio-cultural perspectives ranging from Asian art collection to the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada. I have also visited the Museum of Contemporary Art, Toronto and the exhibitions were engrossing. I was able to explore the Toronto Islands too during one of the weekends. Last but not the least, I was mesmerized by the surreal beauty of Niagara Falls. I have watched several documentaries about it, however, the stunning view of the waterfall was beyond my imagination. All in all, Toronto is indeed one of the most multicultural cities that I have been to and exploring the diverse cultural landscapes have enriched and refined my understanding of Canadian literature.

This short-term research stay was truly a rewarding experience which I could not have dreamed of without receiving the financial support from ICCS. I would like to convey my gratitude to the selection committee for awarding me this scholarship. I am currently working hard to incorporate my research findings in my dissertation chapters and will acknowledge this enlightening experience accordingly in my doctoral dissertation.