



**OAW**  
Österreichische Akademie  
der Wissenschaften

**ikt**  
Institut  
für Kulturwissenschaften  
und Theatergeschichte

UNIVERSITÄT  WIEN

**Jour fixe Kulturwissenschaften**  
**Donnerstag, 16. Juni 2011 / 16.30 Uhr**  
**Ort: Museumszimmer, Ignaz Seipel Platz 2, Wien 1.**

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### **FWF funded Project: "Border Crossings in North American Literature"**

Supervisor: Univ. Prof. Dr. Waldemar Zacharasiewicz

Mag. Drennig investigates the utopian imaginaries of space in the transnational region of the Pacific Northwest. His main interest lies in the cultural construction of the region's urban centers as cities that redefine urbanity in the late 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup> century, and thus are central to a discourse that views itself as exemplary and setting trends for all of North America. Vancouver, Seattle, and Portland, also termed Mainstreet Cascadia, have in the 1960s and 1970s begun to construct an image of being a part of a region that combines an awareness of its natural surroundings with a focus on quality of life in the urban setting. Mag. Drennig investigates how these trends have found reflection in literature and other modes of cultural production, from the work of authors such as Douglas Coupland, Timothy Taylor, David Guterson, and Jonathan Raban, to the deliberate propagation of narratives about Mainstreet Cascadia as the urban region of the 21<sup>st</sup> century across new media.

Mag. Rössler has been researching novels composed by Canadian and US American writers of indigenous background, and has focused, like Mag. Drennig on literary and cultural trends on the Pacific Rim. She is interested in the role of nature as an agent in such narratives, i.e. perspectives that anthropomorphize the non-human in a blend of traditional and modern storytelling conventions. Eden Robinson's novels, for example, fuse Haisla mysticism in its conception of aspects of the natural world as sentient entities, with contemporary realism in the context of Canadian society. The Stó:lō author Lee Maracle, on the other hand, emphasizes the role tricksters such as Raven often play in the lives of aboriginal people and seeks to interweave supernatural and physical aspects. Thus, some indigenous authors of the Pacific Rim embrace hybridity not only in the form of their writing, but also in their conception of reality, and offer alternative models of understanding nature that have crossed over into the popular discourse and culture of the region as a whole.

Mag. Kopetzky takes a comparative approach in her study of the depiction of the region of the Prairies/Great Plains in fiction of the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on both sides of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. The temporal difference in the settlement of the Plains in the US and the Prairies in Canada not only led to different approaches in "westernizing" these regions, but naturally also resulted in two distinct literary traditions. While Canadian realism reflected the harsh conditions of life and death in the early settlement phases, US American texts produced at the same time proved to take a more modernist approach. The investigation is based on the study of texts by authors such as Willa Cather, Martha Ostenso and Sinclair Ross, in which not only the impact of these on the subsequent fictional production will be analyzed, but also the importance these products of the mind have for the (inter)national imagination and memory of these regions, including historical, cultural and sociological aspects.