

CFP: Writing the ‘Good Life’ in Narratives of Canada

Deadline: April 30, 2023

WRITING THE ‘GOOD LIFE’ IN NARRATIVES OF CANADA

Call for Papers for a special issue of

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Guest Editors: Silvia Caporale Bizzini and María Jesús Llarena Ascanio

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In her book *The Promise of Happiness* (2010), Sara Ahmed explains how the concept of happiness is related to heteronormative notions of the “good life”: “The good life is the life that is lived in the right way, by doing the right things, over and over again” (Ahmed 2010, 36). Questioning the promise of a good life leads to unhappiness, but unhappiness (unlike happiness) can be productive for social change as it fosters a possibility to open to new affective spaces in the subject’s life. Ahmed describes individuals’ urges toward “the good life” as frequently grounded in attachments that, while often toxic and ultimately unfulfilling, are not recognized as such by the people who engage in these negative relations. Those feelings derive from the impossible emotional fantasy of living a good life—an emotional state that Lauren Berlant aptly defined as “cruel optimism,” a situation in which what people most desire is actually an obstacle to their flourishing. The cruelty comes from the fact that people tend to depend on “objects that block the very thriving that motivates our attachment in the first place” (Berlant 2012). Both notions of the good life and cruel optimism are connected to Kathleen Stewart’s “ordinary affects,” a “kind of contact zone where the over-determinations of circulations, events, conditions, technologies, and flows of power take place” (2007, 3). For Stewart, ordinary affects happen through unexpected events which may be shocking, perturbing, traumatic, or even funny, but which offer individuals the opportunity to move forward. The ordinary and the unexpected can merge to transform individuals’ lives and allow them to form new connections (2007, 95). In both Berlant’s and Stewart’s thinking, the unexpected has the power to redefine individuals’ inner landscapes and their perceptions of self—both of which are structured by a lifelong dynamic of intimate relationships and attachments.

The guest editors seek articles that analyze narratives of Canada that unravel the notions of the good life (Ahmed), and/or cruel optimism (Berlant), and/or ordinary affects and the unexpected (Stewart). Contributors are encouraged to examine how these notions articulate new places of critical potential in narratives of Canada.

Contributions may address, but are not limited to, the following areas:

- Narratives of dissent
- Insurgent utopias
- Indigenous resistance, reparation and resurgence
- Refugee writings
- Transnational narratives
- Queering Canada: gender, sexuality and beyond
- Feminist killjoys
- Posthuman approaches, dystopias, speculative realities
- Un/happiness and ugly feelings
- Environmental approaches to the good life

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All submissions to *Canada & Beyond* must be original, unpublished work. Articles, between 6,000 and 7500 words in length, including notes and works cited, should follow the current MLA bibliographic format. Submissions should be uploaded to *Canada & Beyond*'s online submissions system (<https://revistas.usal.es/index.php/2254-1179/about/submissions>) and simultaneously sent to caporale@ua.es and mllarena@ull.edu.es by **April 30, 2023**. For more information please contact the guest editors at the e-mail addresses above. Your submission will be peer-reviewed for volume 13, 2024.

Works Cited

Ahmed, Sara. 2010. *The Promise of Happiness*. Duke UP.

Berlant, Lauren. 2011. *Cruel Optimism*. Duke UP.

Berlant, Lauren. 2012. "Lauren Berlant on Her Book *Cruel Optimism: The Wide Angle*". Accessed November 2022.

http://rorotoko.com/interview/20120605_berlant_lauren_on_cruel_optimism/?page=2.

Stewart, Kathleen. 2007. *Ordinary Affects*. Duke UP.

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