

Denisa Krásná, Doctoral Candidate
Department of English and American Studies
Faculty of Arts | Masaryk University

Research period: January 9 – March 5, 2023

Host institutions: University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

Thanks to the support of the EAAS Transatlantic Travel Grant, I spent 8 weeks at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (January 9 – March 5, 2023). I was hosted by the Center for Biographical research and mentored by Dr Craig Howes. I had two main goals for my stay and am happy to say that I have achieved both.

My first goal was to finalize my dissertation with the help of local resources and local researchers. Not only had I the opportunity to use a wide range of resources at the University of Hawaii but I also managed to gain access to the library at the Brigham Young University-Hawaii (BYU-Hawaii) where I spent most of my days writing my dissertation in a very academically stimulating environment. My dissertation treats settler colonialism as an interspecies issue and focuses on the intersection of animal colonialism and gender violence in North America and their representation in recent writings by predominantly Indigenous writers. It employs the so-called “decolonial animal ethic” proposed by the scholar and writer Billy-Ray Belcourt (Driftpile Cree) as both a theoretical and practical framework through which nonhuman animals are seen as “colonial subjects” and partners in decolonization alongside Indigenous peoples.



Brigham Young University-Hawaii (BYU-Hawaii)

Using frameworks and concepts from ecofeminism, Indigenous studies, and Critical Animal and Plant studies, the dissertation shows how colonization has disrupted harmonious interspecies coexistence on the continent and led to environmental degradation. By re-imagining alterNative horizontal harmonious kinships with other animals, plants, and the land and by positing meaningful interspecies connections as a form of decolonial healing, Indigenous literatures assume an active role in decolonization of both human and nonhuman animals and in restoring environmental balance.

In Hawaii, vast natural areas have been destroyed by agriculture, military bases, and hotel development. Corporate tourism has had detrimental effects on human and nonhuman inhabitants, the land, and Native Hawaiian culture. Indigenous women face gender violence and are being over-sexualized and stereotyped as Native princesses in popular culture and the Hawaiian islands are similarly fictionalized, romanticized, abused, and represented as a fantasy escape for corporate tourists. I have been academically interested in the ongoing colonization of Hawaii for several years now but have been reluctant to contribute to scholarship myself due to the ethical concerns that it

involves. While I am also a cultural outsider as a scholar of Indigenous cultures and literatures in North America, the region of Pacific Islands has a very specific history, culture, and ongoing politics which requires a thorough study and contact with local researchers. As such, I feel very fortunate to have been able to get a small taste of the life on the islands, both personal and academic. While I now feel more confident to incorporate more Hawaiian content in my teaching, I am even more determined to continue a more thorough research in the future.



Brigham Young University-Hawaii (BYU-Hawaii)

My second goal for my research stay was to learn from Dr Craig Howes, an expert on life writing, who helped me with questions of methodology and guided me through the process of writing, publishing, as well as analyzing life writing narratives. We discussed in detail my edited book collection on outdoor counternarratives written by women in the sports of white water kayaking, climbing, and highlining. The book aims to visibilize the experiences of women in "extreme" sports and provide a nuanced analysis of the role of gender, race, class, age, and sexuality in the social construction of adventure sports. The collection is composed of a diverse group of authors from different backgrounds and experiences, who share their personal stories and reflections on their journey in the world of adventure sports. These stories provide an intimate and authentic look into the challenges and triumphs that women face in these male-dominated fields, and how they navigate the intersection of their identities with the sport they love. The book also addresses the disparities in access to the outdoors and the barriers that prevent many people, particularly women and people of color, from participating in adventure sports. The authors provide a critical examination of the systemic issues that contribute to these inequalities and offer personal embodied experiences and suggestions for how the community can work towards greater inclusivity and accessibility.

Hence, the highlight of my stay at the University of Hawaii was a public talk that I had to opportunity to give at the University of Hawaii. I was honoured to be invited by the Center for Biographical Research to present my book project as part of a well-established Brown Bag Biography series that focuses on discussions of life writing narratives. My talk was held on February 9, both in person and online on Zoom. Around 25 people attended the talk that is also available to be viewed on YouTube here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqkIx89Lsc&ab_channel=CenterforBiographicalResearch


The talk not only helped me visibilize my project but also to get more well-established writers interested in contributing a chapter to my book.

BROWN BAG BIOGRAPHY SPRING 2023

Flow: Outdoor Counternarratives by Women from Rivers, Rock, and Sky

Cosponsored by Hamilton Library, the Hawaiʻi/Ūkēka School of Hawaiian Knowledge, the Spark M. Matsunaga Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, the School of Cinematic Arts, the School of Communication & Information, the Departments of Anthropology, History, and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

In this Brown Bag talk, Denisa Krásná introduces her forthcoming lifewriting collection on outdoor counternarratives. Co-edited with Alena Rainsberry, the collection features the personal stories of women whitewater kayakers, climbers/mountaineers, and highliners from North America and Europe, with the aim of visibilizing female experiences in "extreme" sports. Though the book primarily focuses on the female experience, the authors take an intersectional approach in their analysis of the role of gender, race, class, and sexuality in the social construction of "extreme" sports, as well as in their consideration of disparities in access to the outdoors.



Denisa Krásná is a doctoral candidate at the department of English and American Studies at Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic, specializing in critical animal studies, ecofeminism, and North American Indigenous literatures. Last year, she was awarded a grant to develop a research project on decolonial outdoor counternarratives, focusing on representation of women in extreme sports. She has conducted research in Mexico, Spain, US, and Canada. An avid highliner and climber, Denisa strives to find balance in life so that she can pursue both her academic and outdoor goals.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9
Biomed B-104 and ZOOM / 12 PM to 1:15 PM HST
Meeting ID: 978 1926 1096 / Password: 246138

Poster invitation for my talk

It was my hope that at the end of my stay I would be equipped with the necessary tools to publish my planned book and I am glad to say that the center for biographical research fully supported my endeavour and got me one step closer to achieving my goal.

All in all, I was fortunate to have spent 8 weeks at the University of Hawaii, thanks to the generous support of the EAAS Transatlantic Travel Grant. Without their assistance, this trip would not have been possible. My ability to spend a significant amount of time in Hawaii has greatly influenced the current and future direction of my research and I am happy to report that my stay was greatly productive and got me much closer to achieving my two main goals.



Me on a highline that I have established with a friend on the island of Oahu (180m, name: Paka'a)