

## Department of Germanic and Romance Studies

### University of Delhi

#### Winter school: Understanding displacement

22 – 26 February 2021

“...it was just and reasonable for us to be chastised with the punishment of exile: lenient and mild, according to some, but for us it was the most terrible one we could have received. No matter where we are we weep for Spain, for, after all, we were born here and it is our native country; nowhere do we find the haven our misfortune longs for, and in Barbary and all the places in Africa where we hoped to be received; welcomed, and taken in, that is where they most offend and mistreat us. We did not know our good fortune until we lost it, and the greatest desire in almost all of us is to return to Spain; most of those, and there are many of them, who know the language as well as I do...”  
(Words of Ricote the Morisco in conversation with Sancho Panza, *Don Quixote* Second Part Chapter LIV)

Ricote’s mixed discourse in this moving passage might seem puzzling for those unaware of the age of conflicts that Cervantes and his protagonists lived in when the body politic of Spain was sought to be homogenized and expunged of all non-Catholics. Ricote’s words say one thing and then just as soon unsay them, a strategy used by his creator to escape the insidious reach of the Inquisition.

Though Ricote’s words belong to early modern Spain, his exile and nomadism is a feature of postcolonial times as well and the significance of this year’s theme for the Winter School lies in the manner in which texts on displacements can rise above particularist approaches and ethnogeographical categories.

Displacement is lived distinctly in different contexts. An intellectual émigré from the Holocaust understands his displacement differently as compared to a migrant labourer, internally displaced people or political refugees. Brecht, in his poetry, captured the pain of displacement in the wake of Nazism very well: the loss of home, of rootedness, of freedom, but above all the loss of agency in defining their experience. The theme of displacement still finds resonance in various contexts of migration, exile, refugees, homelessness, cultural identities, memory etc. has become a powerful trope in contemporary literary and cultural productions.

And yet, can we still talk of displacement only in terms of spatiality? Can one find rootedness in movement? Can one feel displaced in being forced to non-movement? Can displacement be articulated as Nomadism, following the writings of Gloria Anzaldúa or Sandra Cisneros which overlaps with immigrant writers, negotiating between conflicting traditions while carving out new lives in Western metropoli? Does the current scenario of large-scale displacement on the one hand and forced restriction on movement on the other in the context of the pandemic point to an underlying structural malaise of our times?

The winter school proposes to engage with the theme of displacement from a critical and interdisciplinary perspective. The objective of the course is to help in decoding the physical,

psychological, cultural, social and philosophical complexities of deracination as it has emerged in the contemporary postcolonial and globalised world. Apart from analysing the causes of displacement and its forms, the course will also focus on its destabilising consequences through a critical appraisal of various theoretical and methodological debates related to the theme. At the same time, it will aim at studying the representation of this theme in contemporary literary, artistic, cinematic and other cultural productions. The sessions will be highly interactive since the experts of specific field will analyse both primary and secondary resources available on a particular perspective along with presentations and discussions by participants. The Winter School will be focussing on the following subthemes:

- Displacement and home
- Displacement, migration and travel
- Displacement and Exile
- Displacement and diaspora
- Displacement and identity
- Displacement: hybridity, nomadism and métissage
- Displacement and liminality
- Displacement and gender
- Displacement and the Subaltern

Eligibility: The course is open to Ph.D students and postdoctoral researchers. Attendance is obligatory for all participants. A certificate of participation will be issued at the end of the course. Lectures and discussions will be open to all those interested in attending.

Interested participants are requested to send their statement of interest along with their updated academic CV by clearly mentioning the topic of presentation by the 31st of January 2021 to [head@grs.du.ac.in](mailto:head@grs.du.ac.in) or [minnisawhney@yahoo.com](mailto:minnisawhney@yahoo.com)