

Department of Germanic & Romance Studies
Call for papers for the Annual International Conference: 17-19 February 2027

Cartographies of Transit: Negotiating Identity, Space and Belonging



© TMarios Diakourtis (April 2022): *The Ash That Travelled*

*"We know ourselves as part and as crowd, in an unknown that does not terrify.
We cry our cry of poetry.*

Our boats are open, and we sail them for everyone."

----Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (1990), trans. Betsy Wing, University of Michigan Press, 1997

To be human is, in many ways, to be in transit. Viewed diachronically, human history reveals itself as a history of movement of peoples and civilisations, languages and literatures, ideas and beliefs, memories and texts, images and cultures, continually traversing geographical, political, linguistic, and imaginative boundaries. Yet transit extends far beyond the physical act of moving from one place to another. It is a historically situated and culturally mediated condition of encounter, negotiation, transformation, and becoming through which identities are continually constituted, contested, and reimagined in various forms.

As Liselotte Glage observes in the introduction to *Being/s in Transit: Travelling, Migration, Dislocation*, "All migrants are travelers, but not all travelers are migrants". This distinction reminds us that mobility assumes multiple forms: travel, migration, exile, pilgrimage, exploration, displacement, translation, diaspora, and transnational circulation – each embodying distinct historical experiences and existential conditions. Some journeys are voluntary, inspired by curiosity, education, commerce, diplomacy, artistic exchange, or

intellectual pursuit; others are compelled by war, persecution, colonialism, environmental catastrophes, or economic necessity. Transit may also occur within the self, through transformations of gender, embodiment, consciousness, and identity: individuals may experience forms of passage beyond geography, yet deeply connected to how they inhabit and negotiate the social world—whether through attachment or estrangement, topophilia or topophobia.

The significance of movement extends beyond physical displacement. As Yi-Fu Tuan reminds us, places are not merely geographical locations but lived spaces endowed with memory, attachment, and meaning. Likewise, James Clifford encourages us to think in terms of routes as well as roots, revealing mobility as a constitutive dimension of cultural identity rather than its disruption. More recently, Tim Cresswell has demonstrated that mobility is never a neutral act of movement but is embedded in histories of power, privilege, regulation, exclusion, and social inequality. Read together, these perspectives invite us to understand transit not simply as movement across space but as a dynamic process through which identities, cultures, languages, and forms of knowledge are continually negotiated, transformed, and reimagined.

The twenty-first century has witnessed unprecedented global interconnectedness alongside increasingly contested borders. Multiple forms of mobility and displacement have unsettled inherited notions of home, nation, language, citizenship, and belonging. Across literary, philosophical, historical, artistic, and digital practices, movement has long moulded the circulation of knowledge and the evolution and transformation of cultures. Transit, therefore, is not merely a contemporary geopolitical phenomenon but an enduring condition of human existence. This conference conceives of transit not simply as movement between locations, but as a condition of transformation, negotiation, and becoming. It considers how passages across cultural, linguistic, spatial, embodied, intellectual, and aesthetic domains destabilize formerly entrenched categories and engender new forms of experience and expression. From an interdisciplinary perspective, the conference examines transit as a liminal and transformative condition that reshapes identities, knowledge, cultural forms, and relations between self and other.

The conference welcomes interdisciplinary and/or comparative contributions engaging with, but not limited to, the following themes:

Themes

- Mobility, Migration, Diaspora, and Exile
- Transit, Identity, and Belonging
- Space, Place, Borders, and Geocritical Perspectives
- Travel Writing and Cultural Encounters
- Translation, Multilingualism, and Cultural Circulation
- Memory, Liminality, and Experiences of Displacement
- Colonial, Postcolonial, and Decolonial Mobilities
- Gender, Embodiment, and Identity in Transit
- Literature, Cinema, Media, and the Arts of Movement
- Digital Mobility, Virtual Spaces, and Emerging Forms of Belonging
- Philosophical, Ontological, Hermeneutic, and Epistemological Dimensions of Transit & Identity

Submission guidelines:

Submissions should include a **300-word abstract and a brief bio-note in a single document**, with the author's name and institutional affiliation clearly indicated. Interested participants are requested to send their abstract along with their name, institutional affiliation, email ID, phone number, and a short bio-note by **15th December 2026** to akyadav@qrs.du.ac.in