

Exile and Displacement in the Contemporary Imagination

Fall 2011
Wednesdays 6-9 PM
Class held at: Olin 334

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Poster for Stanley Kubrick's film *Lolita* (1962), based on Nabokov's novel.

With the unprecedented upheavals of our time, exile and displacement have become the norm rather than the exception. Contemporary imagination, in turn, has been affected by the narratives of migration and dislocation. After first establishing the classic paradigms of exile and displacement in the Hebrew Bible and antiquity, we will study novels, essays, poems, and films dealing with the experience of exiles and migrants in the 20th and the 21st centuries. We will encounter stories in which exile is a source of creativity while being deeply enmeshed in a history of wars and violence, immigration and colonization. Taking a cross-cultural approach, we will consider narratives of homecomings alongside narratives of no return, stories of voluntary exile alongside stories of forced displacement, looking closely at the concepts of identity, home, language, and memory.

REQUIRED BOOKS (ordered at the bookstore, but feel free to look for used copies elsewhere):

- 1) Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis* (you can buy parts One and Two separately, or as a box set, or *The Complete Persepolis*);
- 2) Eva Hoffman, *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language*;
- 3) Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*;
- 4) Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* (published by Vintage);
- 5) Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (make sure to get *The Annotated Lolita* edition, published by Vintage).

Additional readings and film links will be posted on the course website.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES:

(The schedule might be adjusted slightly and additional short readings may be assigned. There will be a number of optional readings recommended to interested students throughout the course).

NOTE: Weeks with heavier reading assignments tend to be interspersed with weeks when there are no class meetings or when films are screened in class. This is designed to give you some extra time to do the readings for subsequent weeks. Assignments in the three weeks after Thanksgiving will be significantly shorter than some of the earlier assignments.

- Sept 7 **Introduction: Journeys Away From Home**
(all readings for this introductory session will be done in class, jointly by all students)
- The Book of Genesis (excerpts: Adam and Eve; Cain; Abraham; Lot's wife)
 - Andre Aciman, "In a Double Exile" (a short essay)
 - Agha Shahid Ali, "A Postcard from Kashmir" (a poem)
 - Yehudit Heller, "Salt Women" (a poem)
 - Art installations by Krzysztof Wodiczko
- Sept 14 **Displacement and Nostalgia**
- Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (pp. 1-55)
 - Joseph Brodsky, "On the Condition We Call Exile" and "In a Room and a Half"
 - Salman Rushdie "Imaginary Homelands"
 - Bharati Mukherjee, "Nostalgia"
- Sept 21 **Revolution, Adolescence, and Exile**
- Marjane Satrapi, *Persopolis* (a graphic novel)
 - Marianne Hirsch, "Pictures of a Displaced Girlhood"
- Sept 28 NO CLASS: Rosh Hashana; we'll make up the class during reading period. Use the break to get ahead with reading.
- Oct 5 **Exile and Language**
- Eva Hoffman, *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language*
- Oct 12 **Old/New Homelands: Displacement and Legacies of Colonialism**
- Film (watch at home): Exiles (dir. Tony Gatlif, France/Algeria)
 - Film (in class): *The House* (dir. Amos Gitai, Israel)
- Oct 19 **Dissent, Political Exile, and Kitsch**
- Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*
- Oct 26 **Displacement and Sexuality**
- Film (watch at home): *My Beautiful Launderette* (dir. Stephen Frears, England)
 - Film (in class): *White* (dir. Krzysztof Kieslowski, France/Poland)
- Nov 2 **Exile and Autobiography**
- Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited*
- Nov 9 **Nabokov's *Lolita* (I): European Dandy as American Exile**
- Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Part One)
 "Spring in Fialta" (short story)

- Nov 16 **Nabokov's *Lolita* (II): Émigré as Sex Offender, or On the Road in America**
- Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Part Two)
 - Agha Shahid Ali, "A Nostalgist's Map of America" (a poem)

Nov 23 NO CLASS: Thanksgiving recess begins.

- Nov 30 **Displacement and Second Generation Memory (I): The Holocaust**
- Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer, "We Would Not Have Come Without You: Generations of Nostalgia"
 - David Grossman, "Momik"
 - Art Spiegelman, *Maus* (excerpts from the graphic novel)
 - Art by Shimon Attie

- Dec 7 **Displacement and Second Generation Memory (II): The Armenian Genocide**
- Film (watch at home): *Ararat* (dir. Atom Egoyan, Canada)
 - Film (in class): *Calendar* (dir. Atom Egoyan, Canada/Armenia)

- Dec ?? **Conclusions: Journeys Home**
- K. Cavafy, "Ithaca" (a poem)
 - Milan Kundera, "The Great Return" (a short story)

NOTE: This last meeting is a class party and dinner at the professor's house (10 minutes by foot from Tufts). We will schedule this event during the reading period at a time convenient for all students.



From Marjane Satrapi's graphic novel *Persepolis*