



Westwood Historical Society – in collaboration with the Westwood Public Library – Present:

A Legacy of Colonialism via Literature from those in Exile

Tuesday, March 9, 2021 (7:30 to 8:30 p.m. via Zoom)

Dr. Nancy Milner Kelly, Speaker

“Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted.” Edward Said, a noted Persian-American professor of literature at Columbia University, 1979

Dr. Nancy Milner Kelly uses Edward Said’s seminal work on colonialism and exile (*Portrait du colonisé précédé du portrait du colonisateur*) as background for her talk. Her focus is on today’s increasingly diverse world and how the pain of writers displaced from their respective homelands manifests itself in their writing. Never feeling at home in their new country – and never again in their country of birth – they consider themselves to be people *“de Nulle Part,”* or “from nowhere,” in the words of Linda Lê. (Lê is one of the Vietnamese boat people and is now an acclaimed novelist living in France and writing in French.)

During this program, Nancy will provide a brief overview of colonialism as background. She will then talk about the works of novelists and a poet who have relocated from Asia and Latin America as well as Africa and Caribbean countries. Images and themes of geographical, cultural, emotional, and linguistic exile are prevalent in this literature. However, these writers also talk about the solace they seek (and receive) in writing, with writing becoming a new kind of “homeland” for them. Frequently, they write in the language of their new country, partly to ensure a wider audience. Nancy will also use paintings, photos, and quotes from some of these post-colonial works to illustrate how these themes play out in the written word.

Recently retired from teaching at Tufts University, Nancy holds a PhD in French literature and has done considerable research in this field. She has presented at conferences in the U.S., Canada, and Europe and has published several articles on literary and pedagogical topics. She is a past president of the Massachusetts Foreign Language Association and a previous chair of the organization’s state conference. She is also a past president of the American Association of Teachers of French, Eastern Massachusetts Chapter, as well as a recipient of the AATF regional distinguished service award. Nancy lives in Westwood with her husband Paul.

To Register. Please visit the library website at <https://www.westwoodlibrary.org/calendar> (or call 781-320-1045) to sign up for this Zoom program. (Find the program on the calendar and use the “Click to Register” button to sign up.) You will receive an e-mail the day before the event with the information you need to join the program.

The Westwood Historical Society is a charitable, educational institution, organized under Chapter 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and completely supported through membership and private donations. For more about the Society, go to www.westwoodhistoricalsociety.com. (Membership and contribution forms are found under the “About Us” tab.)