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Exilic Writing and the Making of World Literature

In this paper I focus on the centrality of exile and exilic writing in the making of world literature. Not only is writing about exile a specific mode of producing a particular version of the world; it is also a way of thinking about movement, mediations, transfers, and boundaries. Crucially, exile is one of the foundational discourses of modernity that interrogates memory, identity, and language. Today’s notion of world literature is inseparable from a transnational and cosmopolitan perspective, which is intimately – and in a characteristically contradictory manner – linked to exilic experiences and the practice of exilic writing. I refer to a number of literary texts, but also to a text which falls in the genre of “philosophy of history”, in order to consider how exile and exilic writing have been inscribed in the very notion of world literature with which we work today.

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