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Fiction and the Conflict of Worlds

Literary theory has a rich history of understanding the internal structure of fictional works as worlds, most productively by referencing the Leibnizian notion of possible worlds. On the other hand, a tendency in contemporary philosophy (in different guises, this tendency can be seen in the works of philosophers such as Jean – Luc Nancy, Gilles Deleuze, Alain Badiou, and Jacques Rancière) has recently developed the idea that the multiplicity of worlds is no longer confined to the realm of possibility, but has become actualised. Simultaneously inhabiting multiple worlds has, according to these philosophers, in fact become a part of the human condition. The paper will argue, first, that such a proliferation of actual worlds implies that “world” should be understood today as a fictional category, making the world – building devices of literature relevant for understanding the contemporary experience of reality. Second, drawing on Rancière’s conception of social fictions and politics as a conflict of worlds, the paper will explore how the fictional structure of such multiple worlds affects our understanding of inclusion, exclusion, and marginality in the globalised social reality.