



Cosmopolitan Minds: Literature, Emotion, and the Transnational Imagination (Cognitive Approaches to Literature and Culture)

Alexa Weik von Mossner

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During World War II and the early Cold War period, factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation, or class made a number of American writers feel marginalized in U.S. society. *Cosmopolitan Minds* focuses on a core of transnational writers—Kay Boyle, Pearl S. Buck, William Gardner Smith, Richard Wright, and Paul Bowles—who found themselves prompted to seek experiences outside of their home country, experiences that profoundly changed their self-understanding and creative imagination as they encountered alternative points of views and cultural practices in Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Alexa Weik von Mossner offers a new perspective on the affective underpinnings of critical and reflexive cosmopolitanism by drawing on theories of emotion and literary imagination from cognitive psychology, philosophy, and cognitive literary studies. She analyzes how physical dislocation, and the sometimes violent shifts in understanding that result from our affective encounters with others, led Boyle, Buck, Smith, Wright, and Bowles to develop new, cosmopolitan solidarities across national, ethnic, and religious boundaries. She also shows how, in their literary texts, these writers employed strategic empathy to provoke strong emotions such as love, sympathy, compassion, fear, anger, guilt, shame, and disgust in their readers in order to challenge their parochial worldviews and practices. Reading these texts as emotionally powerful indictments of institutionalized racism and national violence inside and outside of the United States, Weik von Mossner demonstrates that our emotional engagements with others—real and imagined—are crucially important for the development of transnational and cosmopolitan imaginations.

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