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## *Why World Literature Now?*

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**Abstract:** *How is the spectacular re-emergence of “world literature” since the turn of the third millennium to be explained? I suggest that ever since the coining of the term in the early nineteenth century, but especially so since the year 2000, world literature has been defined and redefined to fit the needs of particular times and places, in accordance with the shifting fates of specific linguistic and cultural entities on the world map. To this end I consider some recent European, American and Chinese discussions of world literature by a.o. David Damrosch, Pascal Casanova, Franco Moretti and Wang Ning. However, I first argue that world literature in fact is only the latest paradigm to be used to serve the ends of particular groups of scholars, with the study of modernism and postmodernism serving as my examples of earlier such paradigms, specifically in the United States.*