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The Fictional World of Exile

                     The writings of migrants will differ significantly in the way the writer views their exile. This is shown in papers: “Reflections on Exile” by Edward W. Said and “Imaginary Homelands” by Salman Rushdie. Both writers have unique views on how migration is portrayed in literature. Said takes a perspective of exile being a steppingstone in a hero’s journey, while Rushdie’s idea is that of the duality of being from another place and being in a new home. However, both writers see the literary exile as one that comes from misconstrued memory and is fictional mainly in nature.

“Reflections on Exile” by Edward W. Said immediately kicks off by asking the reader why exile, a horrible thing for someone to go through, has been transformed into an enriching motif of modern culture. Writing about the literary exile as character development and a simple obstacle to get through, as opposed to the proper form of exile, which he describes as sad, and tragic. He discusses the origin of exile in its original condition: banishment. This was a punishment meant to doom someone to an “anomalous and miserable life, with the stigma of being an outsider.” This is a stark contrast to literature, which sees exile as seemingly a part of the hero’s journey, that exile is where a hero leaves to seek a new world or beginning. Unlike real life, in literature, exile is due to the exiled not wanting to belong instead of being forced out of the sense of belonging.

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“Imaginary Homelands” by Salman Rushdie refers to the literary form of exile as a lot more like the one experienced in real life. Rushdie refers to the place a migrant comes from as lost and imaginary. Rushdie compares the place one comes from as a fiction that we create from our memory, as the place that an exile comes from no longer exists. A place changes with time, while in their minds, it remains the same place they left. Rushdie speaks about how writers can and should embrace all aspects of their experience, from their former reality and their current one. And that the exiled place a writer writes about will always be fictional to an extent by design, As the memory of a said place is just that, a memory.

Salman Rushdie and Edward W. Said both make strong statements on how exile is portrayed in literature. Rushdie sees the literary exile as coming from a duality between being an exile in a new environment and being from another place, another home. In contrast, Said sees it as a glorification, a simple obstacle for our protagonist to use as growth. The location of exile in both Said and Rushdie’s works is fictional. Both are just fabrications drawn from memories of a former world that no longer exists in the form written of.

           Despite the fiction that both writers see in their history of exile, “Imaginary Homelands” By Salman Rushdie and “Reflections on Exile” by Edward W. Said differ in how they see exile written about in literature. Rushdie sees literary exile as an example of the duality of a migrant feeling tied to their old home while also being in a new place to call home. While

Said sees it as a stepping stone for a protagonist to get over, a simple obstacle. This shows how one’s view of their exile can affect how they see the fictional variant of it.

Bibliography

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