



On Literary Worlds

Eric Hayot

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Although literature is not a technology, the historical models literary scholars use to describe it owe a great deal to the languages of originality, novelty, progress, and invention that characterize technological development. However this quintessentially modern mindset--putting progress at the center of historicity--makes it difficult for anyone eager to mount a case for why someone interested in the history of modern literary aesthetics ought to read the literature of the non-Western world. In this groundbreaking book, Eric Hayot argues that contemporary debates about world literature and world literary systems can be rethought through an attention to the world-creating force of aesthetic objects. As he rethinks from the ground up our concepts of literary progress and historicity, Hayot re-describes the history of modern literature as we know it (or as we think we know it), developing new concepts and new formal languages to describe the aesthetic physics of the socially and imaginatively possible. Connecting this physics to historical shifts in world-view ranging from Copernicus to Marx, Don Quijote to Battlestar Galactica, *On Literary Worlds* shows how the very notion of the modern is, at heart, a cosmographical social form, and opens vast new directions for the future analysis of the activity and force of literature.

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