

Shifting Worlds of Literature

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Introduction

The literary historian David Damrosch defines “world literature” as a mode in which works circulate beyond their original cultural context, acquiring new meanings and functions. Texts become world literature through processes of translation, reception, and circulation rather than through membership in a fixed canon. According to this view, translation is transformative, literary value shifts with patterns of global circulation, and reading requires a double perspective combining the work’s original context with its later interpretations. In the first part of this article I will suggest that Damrosch’s concept of world literature can be read as implying two theses: (1) that literary texts articulate particular visions of the world, organizing and rendering intelligible human experience, and (2) that these visions are continually reshaped as texts circulate across different historical and cultural contexts, generating new meanings and functions. I will then situate these theses within broader debates in literary theory, showing how certain approaches both support Damrosch’s position and mark his divergence from them. This discussion will raise a broader philosophical question, which I will address in the final part of this article: How should we understand the idea that literary works articulate visions of the world? And how do new contexts of reception reshape these visions?

Damrosch’s Threefold Definition of World Literature

In the final years of his life, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) famously told his younger companion Johann Peter Eckermann (1792-1854) that «national literature has more or less had its day, now that the age of world literature is at hand».¹ Reported by Eckermann in *Conversations with Goethe* (1836), this statement reflects Goethe’s conviction that literature should no longer remain confined within

¹ Eckermann 2025 [1836], p. 49.

national boundaries, but should instead be understood through the circulation of works across cultures and languages. Goethe warned against remaining trapped within «our own little world»² and encouraged readers to look outward toward other literary traditions, appreciating «the best that every literature has to offer».³ As the literary critic Ben Hutchinson observed, this declaration later became one of the intellectual starting points for the modern development of comparative literature.⁴ Building on Goethe’s intuition, David Damrosch argues that world literature should not be understood as a fixed canon of universally recognized masterpieces, but as a mode of circulation and reading through which texts acquire new meanings as they move across different historical and cultural settings. Literary works become “world literature” when they enter new interpretive environments through translation, reception, and recontextualization. Although texts retain traces of their culture of origin, their meanings are transformed in the process, since each receiving culture interprets them according to its own historical concerns and intellectual frameworks.

Damrosch’s conception of world literature can be understood through a threefold definition.⁵ First, world literature is an «elliptical refraction»⁶ of national literatures. Borrowing the term “refraction” from optics, Damrosch compares the circulation of literary works across cultures to the refraction of light passing through a different medium: as light changes direction and appearance through refraction, literary works are transformed in meaning through translation and reception. The process is described as “elliptical” because, like an ellipse defined by two focal points, a literary work is always grasped between its point of origin and its point of arrival in a new cultural context, neither of which alone fully determines its meaning. Second, world literature is «writing that gains in translation», since texts often develop new interpretive possibilities and broader resonance as they circulate across languages and traditions. Third, world literature is not a fixed canon but a mode of reading, a way of approaching works from distant cultures while remaining aware of their historical and cultural difference.

² Eckermann 2025 [1836], p. 235.

³ Eckermann 2025 [1836], p. 43.

⁴ Hutchinson 2018.

⁵ This definition is presented in the concluding pages of *What Is World Literature?* (2003).

⁶ Damrosch 2003, 281.

Kafka's *The Castle* in a World Literature Perspective

The changing reception of *The Castle* (2015 [1926]) by Franz Kafka (1883-1924), discussed in Chapter 6 of *What Is World Literature?* (2003), illustrates how literary meaning shifts across different historical and cultural contexts. There is no “view from nowhere” capable of fixing a single, definitive meaning of the text. For instance, the literary critic Frederick Karl (1927-2004) interpreted K., the protagonist of *The Castle*, as an innocent individual trapped within an irrational bureaucracy, turning the novel into an allegory of modern alienation and existential exclusion shaped by mid-twentieth-century existentialist concerns. In other historical and critical contexts, however, Kafka's work has been interpreted quite differently. More recent readings emphasize irony, narrative ambiguity, and historical embeddedness, suggesting that K. may not be entirely reliable and may instead improvise or construct his identity as a land surveyor upon arrival. From this perspective, the novel becomes less a universal existential parable than a socially and historically embedded drama of misrecognition, performance, and struggle for institutional recognition. *The Castle*, I believe, could also be read as a meditation on the impossibility of reaching a final or complete form of knowledge within modern systems of authority, where meaning and legitimacy are continuously deferred through opaque and self-referential institutional structures. From this perspective, the narrative no longer concerns simply an individual confronting an absurd bureaucracy, but the conditions under which understanding is possible, in which access to truth is always mediated, and never fully secured.

The Castle's reception sketched above exemplifies Damrosch's threefold model of world literature. First, the reinterpretations of *The Castle* demonstrate “elliptical refraction”: as the novel circulates across languages, cultures, and even different readers, its meanings are refracted. Second, Kafka clearly “gains in translation”, since translation and critical mediation expand the novel's interpretive possibilities rather than merely reproducing an original meaning. Third, Kafka's case shows that world literature is fundamentally a mode of reading: *The Castle* is continuously reinterpreted from a plurality of perspectives, including existential, historical, and epistemological ones. Kafka's fiction therefore illustrates how literary works acquire new meanings through their circulation across changing cultural and historical contexts.

Two Theses on Literary Meaning and Circulation

Damrosch's theory of world literature implicitly presupposes that a literary text (e.g., novels, short stories, plays) represents a *vision of the world* and not merely an aesthetic object or a form of entertainment. By "vision of the world", I mean a mode of structuring, shaping, and interpreting human experience, including the full range of reality as it becomes meaningful to human beings: social relations, institutions, forms of authority, material objects, cultural practices, and the lived environments in which individuals are situated. A vision of the world may thus be understood as a historically and culturally situated way of organizing and interpreting experience.

This assumption is evident in Damrosch's reading of literary works. For instance, whether *The Castle* is interpreted existentially as a representation of modern estrangement or epistemologically as a problem of access to, and construction of, knowledge within opaque systems of authority, it organizes and interprets human experience through narrative form. This experience might be the lived experience of Kafka himself, of an individual Kafka may have known, or of a character imagined on the basis of observed social and institutional realities. Literature therefore becomes a way of making sense of experience, of selecting what counts as significant in the lived environments in which individuals are situated, and of framing individuals' understanding of their place within institutions, authority, and society.

A second, openly foregrounded, point of Damrosch's theory of world literature is that a literary text does not possess a single, fixed meaning. Rather, as texts are read across different historical periods and cultural contexts, they are reinterpreted in new ways, so that their meaning shifts depending on where and when they are received. For example, the vision of the world articulated in *The Castle* is not fixed, but shifts according to the interpretive frameworks through which readers in different historical and cultural contexts engage with the text. An initially existential vision of the world – as a representation of modern estrangement – has, after the work's circulation, been progressively transformed through later readings into historical reinterpretations. A similar dynamic can be further illustrated by reference to Damrosch's discussion of *Invisible Cities* (2012 [1972]) by Italo Calvino (1923-1985): the vision of the world articulated in the novel changes significantly depending on the historical moment in which it is read, because the conceptual frameworks through which readers understand

cities, language, and reality also change over time.⁷ In the 1970s, the novel was primarily interpreted as a fantastical and metafictional work, centered on imagination, language and narrative experimentation. In more recent readings shaped by environmental concerns, however, Calvino's vision of cities has increasingly been interpreted as a model for understanding contemporary urban and ecological problems rather than as a purely poetic invention. When *Invisible Cities* is reread today through an ecocritical perspective, the cities imagined by Calvino become symbolic models through which readers can reflect on contemporary issues such as urban overcrowding, the consumption of space, environmental fragility, and technological alienation. Thus, circulation across changing historical and cultural contexts produces transformations of previous ways of structuring, shaping, and interpreting a literary text. It may also be noted that these examples reveal a crucial theoretical implication, namely that literature produces knowledge insofar as it organizes experience and renders intelligible aspects of reality that might otherwise remain fragmented or invisible. In this sense, a literary work is not only a vision of the world but also a *form of knowledge*.

Ultimately, Damrosch's concept of world literature rests on two key theses: (1) that literary texts articulate particular visions of the world, organizing and rendering intelligible human experience, and (2) that these visions are continually reshaped as texts circulate across different historical and cultural contexts, generating new meanings and functions.

Literary Text as a Vision of the World

The idea that literary and poetic forms constitute a way of producing visions of the world and, therefore, a form of knowledge, does not originate as a single unified theory, but emerges from a long philosophical tradition. In Giambattista Vico (1668-1764), poetic thought represents the original form of human cognition: myth and imaginative language are not illusions, but ways in which early societies first shape and render the world intelligible.⁸ In German Romanticism and in George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), this insight is radicalized: literature becomes a mode through which a culture or a historical "spirit" understands and expresses itself, producing

⁷ Damrosch's discussion can be found in Damrosch 2026.

⁸ Vico 2003 [1725].

perceptual and symbolic configurations of experience.⁹ With Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), often regarded as a founding figure of the human sciences, the focus shifts to lived experience: literature becomes a privileged instrument of understanding (*Verstehen*), allowing access to historical and subjective life from within.¹⁰ In Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), this trajectory is further radicalized through the idea that language is not merely a tool for representing a pre-given world, but the very site in which *Being* is disclosed. Poetic language, in particular, is privileged insofar as it does not simply describe reality but lets a world emerge and take shape as meaningful. In this sense, literature can be understood as a process of world-disclosure (*Welterschließung*), through which a historically situated “world” becomes intelligible in its own terms.¹¹

Within this intellectual trajectory, Erich Auerbach (1892-1957) occupies a particularly important position for the present discussion, since his work provides a historically grounded account of literature as a variable mode of representing and organizing reality. Auerbach can therefore be situated within a broader intellectual constellation that includes Vico and Dilthey, insofar as they all conceive literature as a historically variable form of articulating a vision of the world. Although Auerbach does not directly engage with Heidegger’s ontology, his work nevertheless converges with the Heideggerian idea that language does not simply represent a pre-given reality, but participates in the disclosure of a world. In *Mimesis* (2013 [1946]), he develops a theory of Western literary history grounded in the idea that literature is a historically variable form of representing reality. A central axis of his argument is the contrast between Homeric and Biblical narrative, which he interprets not simply as stylistic differences, but as two distinct configurations of human experience. In Homer, reality is fully externalized and visible: actions, emotions, and motivations are presented in a continuous foreground without hidden depth. This produces a world that is stable and self-contained, where meaning coincides with what is immediately given in perception. By contrast, Biblical narrative – exemplified by the story of Abraham and Isaac – introduces opacity, silence, and psychological depth. Events are compressed, settings are minimal, and interiority remains largely

⁹ Hegel 1998 [1820-21].

¹⁰ Dilthey 2002 [1910].

¹¹ Heidegger 1998 [1947].

unexpressed, producing a form of reality that is not fully explicit but dense, with implied meanings that lie beneath what is directly stated, and therefore requires interpretive work beyond the textual surface. This opposition generates two different ways of structuring human experience. In Homeric epic, individuals are defined by clear and stable traits, whereas in Biblical narrative characters are internally divided and historically situated, shaped by memory, promise, and divine expectation. Auerbach extends this distinction historically, arguing that Christianity further transforms literary representation by abolishing the classical separation between “high” and “low” style. Through the figure of Christ, ordinary life acquires tragic and sublime significance, making everyday existence a legitimate object of literary representation. This development culminates in Dante, who integrates classical form, Christian transcendence, and concrete social reality, thereby producing a synthesis in which human individuality becomes central. In modern realism, finally, literature becomes fully historical. Figures such as Balzac and Flaubert represent individuals embedded in social structures, class relations, and temporal change, without recourse to divine order. Across these transformations, literature for Auerbach is never a neutral mirror of reality, but a historically situated mode of structuring what counts as real. Each epoch produces its own form of intelligibility, and each literary style encodes a specific vision of the world, understood as a historically conditioned configuration of perceptibility, expressibility, and lived experience.

Shifting Visions of the World

What makes a literary text susceptible to shifts of meaning across different historical and cultural contexts? In other words, why is it that a text, understood as a vision of the world, does not remain stable, but is instead continuously reinterpreted and transformed as it circulates? How can we account for this structural openness of literary meaning, and for the fact that a single vision of the world appears to generate multiple, historically variable visions of the world? I believe that some of Umberto Eco’s reflections are especially illuminating in this respect. Eco’s notion of the artwork as an “epistemological metaphor” can be understood as the idea that aesthetic forms do not simply represent reality, but simulate the very process through which knowledge is produced. In *Opera aperta* (2023 [1962]), Umberto Eco (1932-2016) explicitly draws on insights from information theory to describe the literary work as a structured field of probabilistic relations rather than a

fixed transmission of meaning. The literary work is conceived as an open communicative system in which meaning is never fully encoded in advance, but remains partially indeterminate, requiring the active intervention of the reader. The reader must select, connect, and actualize meaning from a plurality of possible semantic paths inscribed within the textual structure itself. In this sense, the literary work does not transmit a determinate message; rather, it organizes a range of possible interpretations and thereby “stages” cognition as an operative process. Meaning is not pre-given but emerges as an effect of the interaction between the internal organization of the text and the interpretive activity it solicits. Eco thus adds a further explanatory dimension to the question of why visions of the world shift across time. Variation is not only the result of historically different interpretive frameworks but is also grounded in the internal structure of the literary text itself, which is designed as an open and underdetermined system of meaning-production that allows for multiple possible actualisations.

From this perspective, Eco reinforces the broader theoretical tradition I have outlined (from Vico to Auerbach) in which literature is not a passive representation of reality but a form of knowledge-producing activity. Compared with Auerbach, Eco shifts attention from historically embedded “visions of reality” to the structural openness of textual meaning-production; compared with Damrosch, Eco provides a formal model for understanding why literary works are inherently transformable across contexts, since variability is inscribed in the very informational structure of the artwork. In this sense, the theory of the open work corroborates Damrosch’s claim that meaning is not fixed but emerges through interpretive circulation, while also radicalizing Auerbach’s insight that literary form encodes historically situated modes of perceiving reality.

At this point, however, Eco’s model still leaves open a further dimension concerning the nature of interpretation itself, that is, the question of how meaning actually comes into being in the encounter between text and reader. It is precisely here that Hans-Georg Gadamer’s hermeneutics becomes relevant. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer conceives understanding as a “fusion of horizons”, by which he means the productive interaction between the historically situated horizon of the interpreter and the historically sedimented horizon of the text. Interpretation is therefore not the recovery of an original meaning, but a dialogical event in which both horizons are transformed through their encounter. From this perspective, literary works do not simply contain

a pre-existing vision of the world; rather, they participate in its continuous reconfiguration through historically situated acts of understanding.

This hermeneutic account differs significantly from David Damrosch's model of world literature. Damrosch does not conceptualise interpretation primarily as a fusion of horizons within a single act of reading, but rather as a process of transformation that occurs through the circulation of texts across different cultural, historical, and linguistic contexts. In his view, meaning is reshaped not primarily through an ontological structure of understanding, but through the changing conditions of reception that accompany a work's movement across the world. While Gadamer conceives understanding as a "fusion of horizons", in which the interpreter's and the text's historical perspectives merge within a single interpretive event, Damrosch does not primarily theorise interpretation as such a fusion. Rather, he conceptualises world literature as a mode of reading in which a literary work is approached as a vision of the world that remains distinct from the reader's own perspective, even as it is reinterpreted across different cultural and historical contexts. In this sense, for Damrosch reading world literature requires a sustained awareness of both proximity and distance: the reader does not dissolve their own horizon into that of the text, but maintains their situated perspective while engaging with a foreign and historically different world-vision that shifts as it circulates.

Visions of the World or Constructions of Worlds?

We are now in a position to address a more fundamental philosophical question: how should we understand the claim that literary works articulate visions of the world? Is there a pre-given reality, identical for all, of which different literary works offer alternative perspectives? Or should we instead argue that literary works are processes of *worldmaking*, which construct distinct *world-versions* shaped by symbolic systems, interpretive frameworks, and modes of description? Such world-versions are to be understood as internally coherent configurations of experience produced through symbolic selection, organization, and interpretation, and not as representations of a reality that could be accessed independently of linguistic, conceptual, or interpretive frameworks.

First of all, it should be noted that what I have called a "shift of visions of the world" is not, strictly speaking, a movement from one vision of an independently given world to another vision of that same world.

Rather, it is a shift of “visions of visions”, that is, we move from already articulated visions of the world to further reinterpretations of those visions. In other words, interpretation does not operate directly on reality itself, nor on the author’s lived experience as such, but on a vision of the world already embodied in a literary text and, frequently, on previous interpretations of that vision. Each new reading reworks and transforms an earlier interpretive configuration through a renewed engagement with the text, rather than by gaining neutral access to an external reality. What is at stake, therefore, is not the interpretation of a world *simpliciter*, but the reinterpretation of previously articulated visions of the world.

At this point, however, a deeper philosophical problem emerges. If interpretation operates upon prior interpretations, what should we say about the status of the original literary vision itself? Should a literary work be understood as offering a particular vision of a world that precedes it, or does it participate in the very constitution of the world it presents? The question becomes particularly pressing once we shift our attention from the circulation and reinterpretation of literary works to the conditions under which literary worlds are constituted in the first place. What is ultimately at stake is whether literature should be conceived primarily as a way of seeing the world or, more radically, as a mode of worldmaking, that is, as the activity through which symbolic systems such as language, narrative, and classification do not merely represent a pre-given reality but actively generate structured world-versions by selecting, organizing, and relating elements of experience into coherent forms, where experience is already shaped by symbolic and conceptual frameworks. This would not entail the denial of reality, but rather the rejection of the idea that reality is ever given independently of a symbolic framework of articulation. There would be, in other words, no access to a pre-structured world independently of symbolic and interpretive frameworks, since any articulation of what counts as a world already presupposes a mode of description.

A significant step toward answering this question can be found in Ernst Cassirer’s philosophy of symbolic forms.¹² For Cassirer, language, myth, art, religion, and science are not secondary representations of an independently given reality. Rather, they are symbolic forms through which reality becomes intelligible and experience acquires structure. Human beings do not first encounter a raw world and subsequently

¹² Cassirer 1946.

represent it; they inhabit symbolic universes that organize and mediate their relation to reality from the outset. Literature, in this sense, is not simply a reflection of the world but one of the symbolic practices through which worlds of meaning are constituted.

Nelson Goodman radicalizes this insight.¹³ Whereas Cassirer continues to speak of different symbolic forms through which human beings organize experience, Goodman places the emphasis on the worlds generated by those symbolic activities themselves. He thus radicalizes Cassirer by shifting from symbolic mediation of a shared reality to the plurality of world-versions produced through symbolic systems. Literature, science, painting, music, maps, legal systems, and everyday classificatory practices are all, in different ways, forms of worldmaking. They do not merely offer competing perspectives on a single ready-made world; they actively construct world-versions by selecting, organizing, emphasizing, and relating features of experience according to particular symbolic schemes. What readers encounter as a vision of the world is thus, from a Goodmanian perspective, a world-version generated through processes of symbolic worldmaking. What we call “world” is therefore always already a world-version – a structured product of symbolic practices rather than a reality apprehended independently of them. Knowledge is thus better understood not as the mirroring of a pre-existing world but as an ongoing process of worldmaking. Goodman does not reject Cassirer’s account of symbolic mediation so much as extend it, shifting attention from symbolic forms themselves to the plurality of world-versions generated by them. This does not entail that there is no reality or that symbolic systems operate in a vacuum; rather, it means that whatever counts as “reality for us” is always already disclosed within a framework of description, even though such frameworks remain open to revision, correction, and constraint through their interaction with other practices and forms of experience.

Seen in this light, reading a literary work does not consist in recovering a fixed meaning hidden within the text. Rather, it involves reconstructing the world-version that the text organizes through particular selections of relevance, emphasis, categorization, and symbolic articulation. Interpretation is not secondary to meaning but constitutive of it. Every act of reading is simultaneously an act of world-reconstruction. Reading therefore mediates between worldmaking and

¹³ Goodman 1978.

vision. It reconstructs the world-version through which the literary work becomes intelligible as a particular vision of the world.

At first sight, such a position may appear to dissolve reality entirely into symbolic construction. This concern has been particularly influential in debates within the philosophy of science. Scientific theories undoubtedly organize and describe reality through conceptual frameworks, models, classifications, and symbolic systems. Yet many philosophers have argued that scientific knowledge cannot be reduced to worldmaking alone. Scientific representations are constrained by a reality capable of resisting our descriptions. The fact that scientists can successfully intervene in the world, manipulate entities, and produce reproducible effects suggests that scientific objects cannot be understood merely as products of symbolic schemes. The point is not that reality is directly accessible in a pure and uninterpreted form, but that our descriptions remain answerable to a world that can confirm, frustrate, or falsify them.

One might be tempted to extend this objection to literature. Literary works, after all, appear ultimately to originate in the author's experience of reality. Even the most imaginative fiction seems to presuppose some prior contact with a world that exists independently of the text. The novelist Mario Vargas Llosa, for instance, repeatedly insists that the ultimate source of fiction lies in lived experience.¹⁴ «The root of all stories», he writes, «is the experience of the person who invents them».¹⁵ Every fictional work, even one in which imagination appears most unconstrained, contains an initial nucleus intimately connected to the author's own life. «The novelist feeds on himself, like the catoblepas, the mythical animal that appears to Saint Anthony in Flaubert's novel (*The Temptation of Saint Anthony*) and which was later recreated by Borges in the *Manual of Fantastic Zoology*. The catoblepas is an impossible creature that devours itself, starting from its feet. In a less literal sense, of course, the novelist likewise rummages through his own experience in search of footholds for inventing stories».¹⁶ Literary creation, on this view, begins from reality as experienced.

Yet this appeal to experience does not restore access to a pre-interpreted world. Experience, even in the sense used by Vargas Llosa, is never pre-

¹⁴ Vargas Llosa 1998.

¹⁵ Vargas Llosa 1998, pp. 14-16.

¹⁶ Vargas Llosa 1998, pp. 15-16.

symbolic, but already structured within linguistic and cultural frameworks. Goodman's critique of the myth of the "innocent eye" challenges precisely the assumption that perception first delivers a neutral reality which is only subsequently interpreted. Perception is already conceptually organized. To recognize an object as an object, to distinguish figure from background, or to perceive a tree as a tree rather than as an undifferentiated sensory manifold presupposes systems of classification, linguistic categories, and culturally inherited frameworks of understanding. Experience is therefore never raw; it is always already symbolically mediated before becoming available for literary transformation.

At the same time, all this does not mean that literary worldmaking is unconstrained or arbitrary. Once a literary world has been constructed, its internal organization imposes further constraints on interpretation: the network of relations established by the text – its metaphors, narrative structures, systems of relevance, and patterns of meaning – makes some readings more persuasive than others. Moreover, literary works are constrained by inherited languages, genres, cultural traditions, narrative conventions, and historically sedimented forms of experience. This also means that experience cannot be freely reshaped at will, since it is always mediated by these pre-existing structures. For example, a novelist cannot arbitrarily transform the social meaning of "justice" or "authority" without relying on the linguistic and cultural frameworks that already make those concepts intelligible to readers. Ultimately, literary texts are constrained constructions. For this reason, the opposition between "visions of the world" and "worldmaking" should not be understood as an exclusive alternative. Literary works are experienced as visions of the world insofar as they present structured forms of organizing experience through symbolic and narrative means. Through narrative structure, language, metaphors, points of view, and patterns of relevance, they configure human life, society, history, nature, authority, love, and suffering into coherent patterns of intelligibility. At the same time, they can be understood as constructions of worlds insofar as they do not merely represent but actively generate distinct world-versions. What literary works offer is not a direct access to reality in itself, but rather an organization of experience into structured forms of intelligibility. Literary history can thus be understood as a continuous process of world-remaking, in which each new interpretation reconfigures previously articulated visions,

generating further visions within an ongoing chain of symbolic transformation.

Conclusions

This article has argued that Damrosch's concept of world literature presupposes a dual movement: literary works articulate structured visions of the world while these visions are continually reconfigured through processes of circulation, translation, and interpretation. Across this framework, interpretation appears not as access to a pre-given reality, but as a recursive engagement with already constituted world-versions. Drawing on Cassirer and especially Goodman, I have suggested that literature is better understood not merely as a representation of a world, but as a form of worldmaking grounded in symbolic organization. At the same time, this constructivist perspective does not entail arbitrariness or relativism, since literary world-versions remain constrained by inherited symbolic materials, textual structures, and historically sedimented forms of experience. Reading therefore emerges as a constitutive act of world-reconstruction, operating within symbolic and interpretive frameworks, in which meaning is produced rather than retrieved. The opposition between "vision" and "construction" is therefore misleading. Literary works can be understood as visions of the world insofar as they organize experience into meaningful forms, while at the same time functioning as constructions of worlds through the symbolic and narrative structures that make such visions possible. Literary history, in this sense, can be understood as an ongoing process of world-remaking through successive acts of reading and rewriting, in which no vision is final but each becomes the condition for further transformations and reinterpretations across shifting interpretive frameworks.

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