

Consider the following passage taken from Eric Hayot's *On Literary Worlds* (2012). Using the passage as a starting point, write an essay in which you make an argument about the relation between the two uses of "world" in literature. Support your argument with specific examples from authors and texts of your choice.

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of a work: the world of the work of art. The world of a Balzac novel, for instance, is located in a time (the early nineteenth century) and a place (mostly Paris); includes certain kinds of people (the bourgeoisie; the aristocracy, their servants) and largely excludes others (the noncriminal working class); is organized around certain types of plots and social units (the family, particularly the extended family); and so on. You could easily compare, on these grounds, Balzac's world with, say, Raymond Chandler's, and not simply by making the banal observation that one of them wrote novels set in Paris and the other novels set in California. You could start by noting that in Balzac's world the novels and novellas operate, in general, as part of one continuous fabric, in which characters in one novel can appear in another whereas in Chandler the accumulation of character types, settings, plot lines, and even modes of speech across a number of otherwise diegetically self-contained novels constitutes their emotional and literary force quite differently.³ This is true despite the reappearances of the detective Marlowe: one feels, reading a series of Chandler novels, that the total stylistic effect of the *noir* world, with its particular modes of speech, characters, and events, operates primarily as an *approach* to the actual world, a heightened awareness of certain of its features, none of which requires the trans-formation of its protagonist, or a sense of the passage of historical (as opposed to personal) time. This awareness is embodied in the narratorial position and proleptic importance of a single character who lives permanently in, and has been entirely shaped as a person-ality by, his awareness of the world as *noir*.⁴

Chapter 3

Literary Worlds

Start simply: *there already exists* a fairly common use of the term "world" in literary studies that speaks to the relation between literature and worlds, and has nothing to do with world-systems or world literature. We speak of "Balzac's world," or "Hawthorne's world," or "Rushdie's world" in ways that rely on two fairly conventional understandings of the word, neither of which is captured by the current world literature debates.¹

In one use the word names the general social and historical space within which an author lived and worked: Hawthorne in the Salem Custom House of the 1840s, Rushdie in the contemporary cosmopolitan literary economy, and so on. This authorial "world" refers unproblematically to a set of historical conditions whose outlines determine possibilities of literary interpretation, what the OED describes as "the sphere within which one's interests are bound up or one's activities find scope; (one's) sphere of action or thought; the 'realm' within which one moves or lives," all of which comes down, once again, to a "part" of the universe and a "period" of human time: a frame for literary criticism that is not itself, technically, an act of literary criticism.²

In its other use, however, the phrase means something like the unity of form, diegesis, and feeling composed by the rough totality