


Strangeness and World Literature

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**Mads Rosendahl Thomsen,**

**"Strangeness and World Literature"**

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**Abstract:** In his article "Strangeness and World Literature" Mads Rosendahl Thomsen argues that world literature has emerged as a supplement to the two dominant paradigms for studies of literature beyond the nation: comparative literature and postcolonialism. Key questions for all three paradigms are first, what kinds of otherness or strangeness are desirable in literature, and second, how literary circulation is dependent on the representation of otherness. Through a variety of literary examples, Thomsen discusses how strangeness is mediated through genres, bicultural references, and (im)migrant experiences, and how making the local enchanted makes the world stranger to everyone.

## Mads Rosendahl THOMSEN

### Strangeness and World Literature

The ongoing process of globalization is one obvious and almost trivial explanation for the renewed interest in the concept of world literature(s) since the 1990s especially in the U.S., but also elsewhere (see, e.g., Damrosch; D'haen, Damrosch, Kadir; D'haen, Domínguez, Thomsen; Đurišin; Lawall; Pizer; Thomsen; Tötösy de Zepetnek and Mukherjee). Still, the banality of influence does not change the fact that a shift in the critical vocabulary took place rapidly and that world literature has been influential over the last decade in a process of reorientation of international literary studies. When looking back, the previous lack of interest in world literature is easy to observe. The ACLA: American Comparative Literature Association's decennial report from 1995, *Comparative Literature in an Age of Multiculturalism* (Bernheimer) barely mentions "world literature" at all. A decade later almost all articles in the ACLA report, *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization* (Saussy) touch upon world literature in one way or another. "World literature" was indeed a term in need of redefinition as it had become so vague that it could hardly be called a paradigm, but rather a shorthand for two very different corpuses of texts: either all literature beyond one's own nation or the best of the world's literatures. To understand why it made sense to dust off this old concept and redefine it, one must look at the two other dominant paradigms which shaped studies in literature across national borders: comparative literature and postcolonialism. Both paradigms, or approaches, to literary studies beyond the nation have a complicated history. They also carry with them tacit, as well as explicit ideas and values with regard to canonization, contextualization, and methods for research and teaching. In addition, both paradigms have grown so large that their inner complexity and contradictions make it difficult to refer to them in the singular. Nevertheless, I argue that both paradigms have faced challenges which have paved the way for a redefinition of world literature, which in turn has influenced both older approaches.

Comparative literature should ideally deal with world literatures, but for many reasons there has been a need to reintroduce the ambition of world literature into the discipline. First, comparative literature has been marked by a lack of curiosity, which has led to curricula dominated by European and North American Anglophone literature, often with the excuse that researching and teaching the rest of the world's literatures was being carried out by specialists in language departments. The noble ambition of demanding that literature should be read in the original also provided a justification for concentrating on fewer literatures ignoring the fact that the demands on reading in the original have always been flexible and illogical. Avoiding East Asian literature could be excused with a lack of knowledge of the language, whereas thousands and thousands of classrooms have been filled with discussions on Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky without any access to the texts in Russian.

Second, comparative literature was simultaneously over-theorized and under-theorized. The excess of interest in theory in the 1980s and 1990s is a well-known part of the history of the discipline and the rise of the field of world literatures can in part be seen as a reaction to this and a return to putting texts at the center. Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* — which tellingly is not represented in the first edition of *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (Leitch), but was a major reference for among others Edward W. Said — gained more interest with its insistence on both close reading and an engagement in world literature (although *Mimesis* is Eurocentric). Auerbach also addresses the problem of complexity, which is under-theorized in comparative literature. His own suggestion was to pay close attention to fragments and rely on their ability to contain a micro-cosmos of the larger literary, much akin to anthropologist Clifford Geertz' later use of "thick description" as a means to study cultures (Auerbach, "Philology" 72). With a concern for complexity similar to Auerbach's, but a very different response to it, Franco Moretti pointed out how the study of even just a few literatures is already too much for a single person to handle, let alone the ambition of doing world literature studies through close reading ("Conjectures" 57). His often criticized solution to this situation was not close reading, but "distant reading" — also the title of Moretti's 2013 volume, a collection of his articles on the subject — which would seek patterns across literatures, not least in the spread of the novel in a combination of imported formal features and local content and narrative voices. No matter what direction one would opt for as a solution to the complexity of world literature, the insistence on a

methodological problem was welcome. With the current rise of digital humanities, access to larger corpora of scanned works, and better tools for searching for patterns in the global circulation of texts, one could expect new ways of addressing problems of complexity to gain more traction without sacrificing the discipline's core values of interpretation, contextualization and historicization.

And third, comparative literature has deep roots in a time when nations and national identity were dominant. Although national identity is nowhere nearly as zombie-like as some sociologists such as Ulrich Beck suggest, it is hard to ignore how national identity has trouble presenting itself as a given, whereas complex identity formation drawing on all kinds of influences from arts, media, and cultural encounters is considered to be a more fruitful and representative approach. In literature, the significant presence of (im)migrant writers, a group that has received more Nobel prizes in literature than any single nation, places a wedge between what from another point of view would have been a seamless division of the world's literatures among nations. Other groupings, such as literature with reference to the Holocaust, also make the idea of comparing national literatures problematic, as the writers are more strongly identified with a common experience that produced a literature that was transnational from the outset.

Postcolonialism gained momentum in the late 1970s as a reaction to the Eurocentric curricula of departments of English and by the late 1980s and early 1990s, any department of English with respect for itself had postcolonial literature as part of its curriculum. The movement has been successful in establishing a counter-canon to the dominant curriculum in English and US-American literature, in introducing new approaches to the study of cultural identity, and giving voice to large parts of the world that otherwise would have been discussed with the combination of concrete stories and abstract problems literature facilitates. Yet, things are changing again and there is a tendency for English departments to merge their curricula into one, teaching world literatures in English instead of three separate strands of literature. This is in many ways a logical development of the integration of literatures, but not without consequences as the structural change also alters in particular the political framing of literature towards a less critical attitude toward the West.

Postcolonial literary studies has from the beginning been marked by an internal debate about what values and perspectives its literature should carry with it. One side, to put it roughly, argues that literature should embrace the building of new national identities and be true to the local and authentic life. This would in many cases also mean abolishing the English language. Another perspective would stress the hybrid construction of identities as a fundamental condition, which is emphasized by the vast number of (im)migrant writers that have contributed to the postcolonial canon, writing in the language of the colonizers. Gradually, the reading of postcolonial literature in the West has become dominated by the latter type of author, although it begs the question of whether it is the right representation of other nations through literature or whether it serves to express the cosmopolitan spirit of its authors to a Western middleclass audience as Elleke Boehmer suggests. In a broader perspective, the dominance of the hybrid rather than the authentic representation of otherness demonstrates a desire in world literature for a certain kind of limited strangeness in the texts that circulate (see, e.g., Sturm-Trigonakis).

The move away from national identities in comparative literature and postcolonialism alike, as well as the broad embracement of translatability, linguistic as well as cultural, is also the space where world literature as an emerging paradigm rather than a corpus of texts has made its mark. However, the question of strangeness and otherness as values, as well as problems continues to form a part of the challenge of world literature. Obviously, an inherent desire for reading outside of one's local cultural environment is to experience something different, a certain kind of otherness, or strangeness. These are qualities of literature which are not dependent on cultural difference, but can be achieved in many ways. Harold Bloom argues that strangeness is a central canonical trait, making works impenetrable for interpreters and wiser than their readers (5). But what is the right kind of strangeness or the kind of strangeness that keeps works in the canon or allows them to have an impact across cultures?

In *What Is World Literature?* David Damrosch argues that anthologies of world literature have "oscillated between extremes of assimilation and discontinuity: either the earlier and distant works reflect a consciousness just like ours, or they are unutterably alien, curiosities whose foreignness finally tells us nothing and can only reinforce our sense of separate identity" (133). Damrosch goes on

to question whether there is not a better middle way that does not submit to the either-or logic of cultural belonging. This perspective on how cultural meetings in texts and in reading can take place is also visible in the way literature circulates. The conflict sketched above between (im)migrant and non-(im)migrant postcolonial literature is important and the dominance of (im)migrant postcolonial writing is most likely by the cultural meeting within the text that builds on the tension between different perspectives on the world. This is in many ways not a new characteristic: if there were a quintessential character in the nineteenth-century realist fiction, it would be a French youngster from the country who comes to Paris to conquer the world or at least the city. The difference between capitals and regions is minimized in most of Europe, but the difference between an African, Middle Eastern, or Asian identity and European societies provides the background for numerous works.

There may be different reasons for the two-fold success of (im)migrant writing, in particular some formal aspects of which it can take advantage. First, (im)migrant and bicultural writers relate well to the phenomenon of globalization, which is changing the way we think about the world and how people experience their own worlds, whether by means of the increased spectrum of globalized media or the ever more diversified food culture influenced by local traditions from around the world. Further, the literature of (im)migrants presents a certain double perspective on things by someone who is both at home and away at the same time. This is not just a quality of the content of this literature, but also a formal quality that provides the opportunity to create a particular narrative voice. This becomes clear when trying to apply Moretti's model of foreign form, local form, and local content to the literature of (im)migrant and bicultural writers ("Conjectures" 66). What is foreign and what is local in Salman Rushdie's work? Where does his voice belong to or come from? Once again, (im)migrant writers deliver a particular twin outlook on things as they write from a place where they are strangers and at home at one and the same time. The double perspective is not only interesting with respect to the themes these writers address and the way their observations are colored by not taking circumstances and norms for granted, as a non-(im)migrant would: the double perspective also opens up a space for experimenting with the form of the novel following the idea of tacit knowledge of positions that can be transferred as the author moves to a new literary field in the vein of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of a sociology of art as formulated in his *The Rules of Art*.

The Western canon is de facto relatively closed and it is characteristic that its openness to literature from other continents and cultures seems to continue to be dominated by writing that has some affiliation with the Western tradition, both when it comes to critical appreciation and to market-wise success. The importance of (im)migrant and cosmopolitan literature already has some empirical support in the form of circulation and recognition and there are also many indications of an on-going contribution. There are also many good reasons for this from a theoretical point of view, as I discuss above. In an age of cultural transformation, bicultural writers have important experiences of culture, which can make their works valuable. They serve as agents of transformation and proponents of a changing view on culture and identity. Although Bourdieu's theory reevaluates the importance of the nation as a field with a relative autonomy, it is also apparent that the importance of generating new positions within the field is a crucial element in the evolution of literature, and it is historically evident that these writers have been able to create new positions both through the substance of their hybrid cultures and through the renewal of genres and techniques within an already established field.

There are a number of seminal contemporary writers without a migrant background who explore cultural differences and whose international success is far beyond that of their compatriot colleagues whose works take a different direction. In "The Argentinean Writer and Tradition" Jorge Luis Borges wrote about two strategies for expressing Argentinean identity in writing: he opposed the idea that writers should stick to local issues and build on a local canon by arguing that the local canon is built on foreign influences and is not an expression of a pure national identity, just as it seems absurd that small literatures should not deal with big and worldly issues. Borges's approach has certainly proved successful in his own work, which since the 1960s has had a significant place in the twentieth-century history of world literatures. Orhan Pamuk is another example of a writer who navigates between his national culture and foreign influences drawing on both formal inspirations from Western writers, as well as reflecting upon the cultural divide between East and West that has shaped so much of Turkish history in particular since the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Pamuk is also by far the most translated Turkish author and is effectively the face of Turkish literature to the rest of the world (although there

have been minor breakthroughs by for example Elif Shafak who was born in France, lived in Madrid and elsewhere before returning to Turkey, and writes in Turkish). Again, the cultural meeting and its reflection in the novels themselves are significant traits of Pamuk's and Shafak's works and this appears to be important for the success of their work outside of Turkey. By describing Istanbul as a bearer of melancholy and loss in a process that has changed down through the centuries, Pamuk is nevertheless able to connect to the past, which is both tragic — because the mental distance to those who used to live in the same spaces cannot be overcome — and inevitable, because change is a fundamental condition. The central role of the Bosphorus underlines this point, bearing in mind Heraclitus's dictum that one cannot step twice in the same river. It is significant that the Bosphorus has a certain attraction as the location that binds the city together and gives it an identity of being in constant motion, while the river is also something out of time, a guarantee of something constant that others must also have experienced in the same way even if that is also an illusion as the traffic on the river of which Pamuk was an ardent observer is not the same anymore (220). The strangeness of one's own habitat is presented as specific, local, and personal, but with an obvious potential for universal identification. A third example of a writer who has become internationally successful and whose work is more than averagely involved with a meeting of local and Western cultures is Haruki Murakami, whose interest in Western literature, film, and jazz colors his stories which are otherwise set in Japan. His titles more than suggest this with references to The Beatles (*Norwegian Wood*) and Western literature (*Kafka on the Shore*, 1984). Additionally, he draws on the tradition of magical realism and fantastic literature, which puts the cultural codes of Japan in a different perspective where everyone struggles to determine what is real and what is not.

The above three writers are more than usually involved with international cultural references and it is unlikely that they would have had global breakthroughs if this element of cultural diversity had not been a part of their works. The problem is perhaps that these writers — in particular Pamuk and Murakami — to a wide audience are the only representatives of respectively Turkish and Japanese literature. A negative reaction to this could with some right suggest that writers are not the most representative of their cultures and literatures and that it is a problem if these writers are the only faces of their literature. A counterargument would be that their literatures did not have strong representations in the first place and that the alternative would be a weak presence on the international literary scene. Even if they do not make perfect portraits of their societies, the foreign reader will pick up something and will become more intimately aware of life in other cultures. Of course, many nations have more writers with a significant presence giving diversity to their representation through literature, but the de facto presence of large nations like Turkey and Japan through one strong author is startling. However, many cultures would probably like to have just one significant author with a broad impact in both critical acknowledgement and popular circulation. Achieving both is not necessarily easy: Scandinavian crime fiction or Brazil's best-selling Paulo Coelho primarily have achieved the latter. In the end, the self-validation of literature, which Rushdie promoted in *Imaginary Homelands*, is an important criterion when going into a discussion of whether people read the right kinds of literature.

Small distances can be important in some respects. The social universes of cultures which are close and may seem almost alike can be construed differently as the nation-centric work of Bourdieu demonstrates. The sense of finer distinctions and cultural references in a social universe can put readers off if they do not have other ways of getting into the literary universe, for example by being concerned with problems that override local concerns, e.g. traumatic events. This may be one reason why much contemporary European fiction does not travel well between different nations. While all Scandinavians may look alike seen from a distance, the societies, nature, cultural references, habits, and so on often make a considerable difference among the nations and the idea of a unified literary space is further from being realized than it was a century ago. At the same time area studies is imposing itself as a model for making literary history which in turn is complicated by lack of integration between literatures of the area (see, e.g., Spivak or the series of the International Comparative Literature Association / Association Internationale de Littérature Comparée's Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages / Histoire comparée des littératures de langues européennes [for the list of volumes in the series see Gimber <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/20>>]). The routes and impact of translated literature

cannot be described as an incrementally decreasing interest in foreign literatures as a function of geographical distance, but as having glaring omissions when it comes to nearby cultures contrasted by large imports from not least the U.S. An element of the enormous success of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* supports this idea. Andrew Blake argues that the Harry Potter series was in part dependent on the pre-established notions of British boarding schools which television and films had successfully created. There was thus already an idea of this in many ways strange world of gowns and rules which otherwise could have been a barrier to the reception of the work. In a similar way US-American film and cinema sets the scene for outsiders. Blake elaborates on this effect and other sources which provide the ground for the global success of Harry Potter:

This typical response (from someone with no direct connection with the private school or the class structure that supports it) goes some way to explaining why Harry Potter has become truly globalized. But it is hard to imagine a Polish story, however well written, affecting the world in the same way. This is partly to do with the general fit of English — including literature as well as language — into the world's culture. Some people would assume that English literature can't be global in the same sense as Hollywood film. Though, certainly, the intensity of global marketing of all things Harry has increased since the deal with Warner was signed, they'd be wrong. Thanks to the cultural connections established through the British empire (including the establishment of English in the American colonies in the seventeenth century), English is a globally important language. (90)

The importance of intimate knowledge (or in the case above a perceived intimate knowledge) for readers of the culture described is strong. In his own attempts to make close readings, Bourdieu has taken an interest in Gustave Flaubert and William Faulkner, about both of whom Jean-Paul Sartre wrote extensively, and Bourdieu makes explicit references to Sartre's readings. Not surprisingly, Bourdieu tries to find further support for his analysis of literary works by projecting this into an analysis of the content of the works claiming that the key to understanding them is the portraits of social structure presented in the stories. Bourdieu claims that Flaubert's *Sentimental Education* is a mirror of the social structure at the time of its publication, whereas Faulkner's short story "A Rose for Emily" shows how human beings live within a social structure and take part in determining how to address this over time (322). There are several interesting differences in the way Bourdieu reads these two stories. The investigation of Flaubert's work is much more elaborate, because it sets out to show how the novel is realistic with regard to describing a social structure and although Bourdieu is over-enthusiastic in crediting Flaubert for creating an almost exact mirror of the social structure of nineteenth-century Paris — which Bourdieu cannot verify in detail — he provides many enlightening and concrete observations. Faulkner's story is read in a different way, focusing much more on the principal, philosophical dimensions of the tale, but without the ties to an actual social environment. Such an environment would also be more complicated to reconstruct for someone who lacked any extensive experience with the southern U.S. states and their rural side or who has not done anthropological field studies of this. The interesting thing is that Bourdieu does not reflect on the vast differences in the readings and their contextual foundations. One is highly dependent on an intimate historical and societal knowledge, while the other sees the protagonists in a more universal light. The analysis of Faulkner's story — which was supposed to demonstrate how the social dimension and the idea of what Bourdieu terms the *habitus* as the meeting place of agents and structure are relevant to literary analysis — ultimately undermines the claims Bourdieu makes in his reading of Flaubert.

Bourdieu thus ends up producing a double standard for the analysis of works, one for those with whose social space one is familiar and one for those with which one is less familiar. This is a condition faced by everyone interested in world literature, but the problems of contextual knowledge are highlighted when set against the demands of a theory like Bourdieu's where the finer details of a local field are put forward as the dominant source of understanding literary works. It would have been interesting if Bourdieu had taken this paradox, embodied by the analyses of Flaubert and Faulkner, seriously and had developed a theory of cultural interaction and understanding with regard to works of art. Auerbach claimed that in contradistinction to teaching contemporary literature students do need specific instruction in order "to understand the verbal conventions and the forms of life of the ancient world, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and also to learn to know the methods and means for exploring earlier periods" ("Philology" 70). Although it is debatable whether there is such a need, one could hold that the same logic would apply to world literature where both cultural codes and methods for understanding something foreign are needed. One has to acknowledge that there are things

readers will never be able to know as well as those who have a first-hand experience with the cultural environment and cultural history rather than to expect a transformation of the audience into model readers.

The cultural distance and the lack of cultural intimacy can be mediated by genres which help to guide expectations. Fairy tales, *Bildungsroman*-s, and crime fiction provide schemata each in its own way for the reader to hold on to. In a minimalist way, the haiku is interesting as an important genre that in practice is defined in two ways. There is a strict form, three lines arranged in 5-7-5 syllables, which makes it "easy" to separate haiku from non-haiku, just as the sonnet's fourteen lines form a historical base that writers keep building on. At the same time, the haiku is also defined by a certain attitude, a way of describing the world, which in turn has made it possible for Western writers to claim that their metrically non-haikus are in fact haikus. Further, the reliance on other genres than narrative fiction or poetry is a tendency in anthologies of world literature. Of course, anthologies have to choose from what has actually been written and cannot avoid the logics of canonization. Still, it is significant how for example Tzu Sun's *The Art of War* circulates and cuts through cultural differences through the overarching theme of war craft. Religious texts, such as the Hindu *Upanishads*, also have a significant presence justified through their enormous cultural importance, but also accessible as texts which relate to philosophy and religion as much as literature. Life, death, belief, and the nature of cosmos are at the heart of such works, which makes it possible to read them in a different context or to read them in spite of the loss of context. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is another example of a work that addresses timeless issues, while the accuracy and details of the cultural environment the work grew out of make cultural intimacy impossible.

In a different way, questions of life and death put the finer details of cultures in the background as is the case with the traumatic literature that arose from the Holocaust. Again, the universal difference between life and death alters the perspective and shows how fragile cultures are and how they can succumb to the use of power. Such narratives are of course still specific cultural documents which chronicle how worlds have been shaken, but they are so in a way that is much different from the portrait of culture at ease with itself and reliant on a finer web of details which can be difficult to decode. From the perceived absoluteness of the evil, the adjoining metaphysical properties also attain an aura of being absolute. The incomprehensible and cumulative horror of the killings becomes absolute horror, but so does the compassion that can be shown under such circumstances. In an otherwise secular and relativistic world, there are few things which give access to metaphysical absolutes in the way that these historical events permit a gaze into incomprehensible evil. Paradoxically, there are also elements of strangeness which depend to some degree on a distance to the culture in question, rather than being the expression of a better understanding. I have written elsewhere in more detail on how the perception of other cultures having a more straightforward relationship with irrational or supernatural phenomena or simply having a more authentic and complex relationship to for example nature can be a vital part of a work's further circulation in world literature ("Moving Authenticity"). The magical realism of Latin America would be one example of giving the benefit of doubt to whether people elsewhere could have a more enchanted relationship with the world. Judging from the sales, the longing for magic, enchantment, and wonder is rife. It is an old debate whether literature should enchant or capture the world as precisely as possible and fortunately, the literary universe is big enough for both ambitions, as well as what lies in between. Nevertheless, the idea of world literature is in many ways connected with an ethos of understanding other cultures better through literary representations. Literature that invites the reader to project a different relation with reality onto the people of the other culture goes against this to a certain degree.

One recent example would be Junot Díaz' *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, a novel that has been both a commercial and a critical success. A story of the Trujillo regime in the Dominican Republic and its consequences for a immigrant family, Díaz's story balances between educating about the historical facts of the terror of the regime and playing on the idea of a spell, the *fukú*, that reaches into life many years after in the United States (see, e.g., Balkan <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2159>>). Whereas Vargas Llosa's earlier novel dealing with the same events is at times painfully meticulous in describing the horrors of torture and does not venture to bring any supernatural powers into the story, Díaz pictures the traumatic events with great economy and images that stick with the reader, such as the cruel practice of letting a wet rope tied around the head of the fixed prisoner dry



in the sun and slowly fasten its grip of the skull. Yet, the element of the supernatural could seem awkward, and in any case, it suggests to the reader that such voodoo-like spells may have a peculiar, self-fulfilling nature of their own. To complement this element, Díaz makes his novel revolve around a descendant of victims of Trujillo's regime, the overweight and introvert, but smart Oscar who takes refuge from the trauma in a world of comic books. While the universes of superheroes are so vivid that they have a certain kind of reality as far as Oscar is concerned, the *fukú* is more difficult to figure out. The central place of the *fukú* in the novel is however beyond question. The concept is introduced on the first pages, and the ending of the novel also belongs to the *fukú*, as Oscar is killed after a heroic return to the Dominican Republic, leaving readers to wonder what kind of influence from the spell they should read into that. Thus Díaz both lets an element of irrational enchantment, however negative, be part of his universe and demonstrates how the longing for enchanted figures and universes is not something that the Western cultures have left behind them, but something they still produce, even if the epistemological value of fantasy is on a different level. At the end of the day, both Llosa's and Díaz' novels are strong, conscientious works which take history upon them. Still, they are also different and it would be easy to choose the sobriety of Llosa's novel over Díaz's imaginative mixing of levels and elements if one were told that there could only be one novel about Trujillo's regime. But the success of the novel is also a testimony to the fascination with inexplicable elements whose credence to a large degree hinges on the distance to another culture.

In conclusion, the circulation of literature across cultures is influenced by many interests and desires and pushes and pulls of all kinds. We may not always have "the" text of world literature in the sense of literature that has an impact across cultures we could dream of in terms of its range, diversity, and quality. It may also be all too obvious how certain nations and genres have come to dominate international circulation of literature. Yet it seems vital to consider the element of strangeness and its negotiations and expressions as a central point for the dynamics of world literature. Just as the lure of authenticity can work against the ideal of furthering understanding, it can also open new doors to other cultures. It is both the desire to experience something different and opaque, as well as universal questions and recognizable genres which give shape to the unknown and transform it into a kind of strangeness readers desire. Not an unlimited "strangeness," but a subtle engagement with the universal and the particular.

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