

Narrative and Interpretation

**Ghent University LW
Research Day
27 November 2024**

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Institute of the Environment & Sustainability

A glowing lightbulb is the central focus, surrounded by several white, hand-drawn scribbles that resemble chalk or paint. The background is a solid, light grey color. The lightbulb is lit, with a bright yellow glow emanating from it. The scribbles are of various shapes, including circles and wavy lines, and are scattered around the lightbulb.

Roadmap:

- 1. Close Reading and the Interpretation of Individual Texts**
- 2. Distant Reading and the Interpretation of Large Text Corporuses**

A glowing lightbulb is the central focus, surrounded by several white, hand-drawn scribbles that resemble thought bubbles or abstract shapes. The background is a dark, textured grey. The lightbulb is lit, with a bright yellow glow emanating from its filament.

1. Close Reading and the Interpretation of Individual Texts

NATIONAL BESTSELLER

"Think Chinatown meets Mad Max." –NPR, All Things Considered

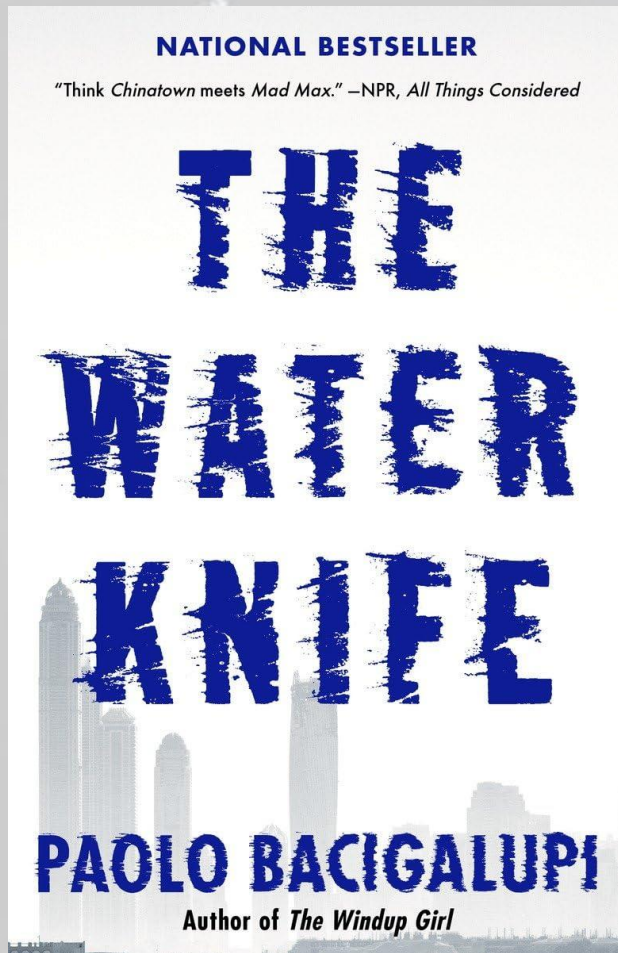
THE WATER KNIFE

PAOLO BACIGALUPI

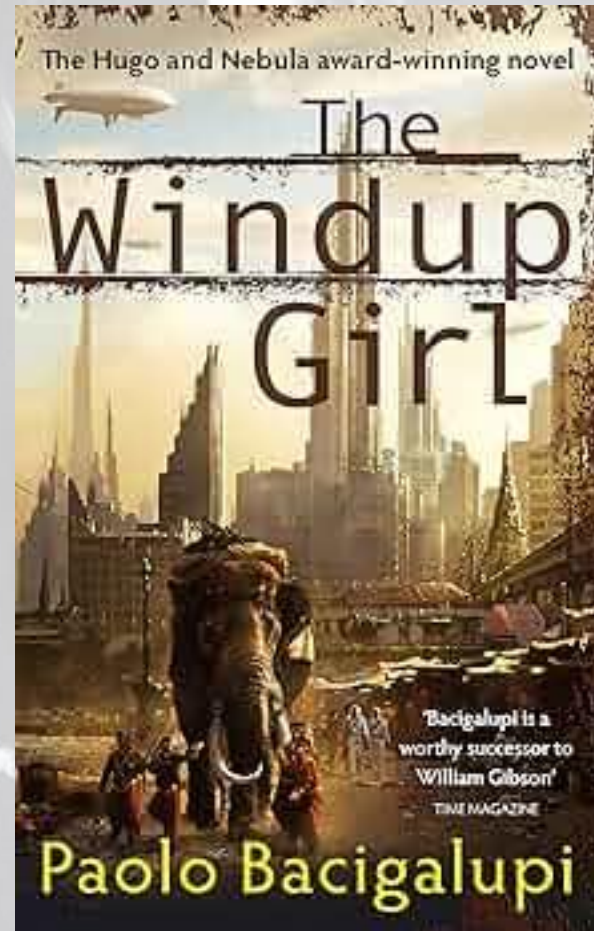
*Author of **The Windup Girl***

2015

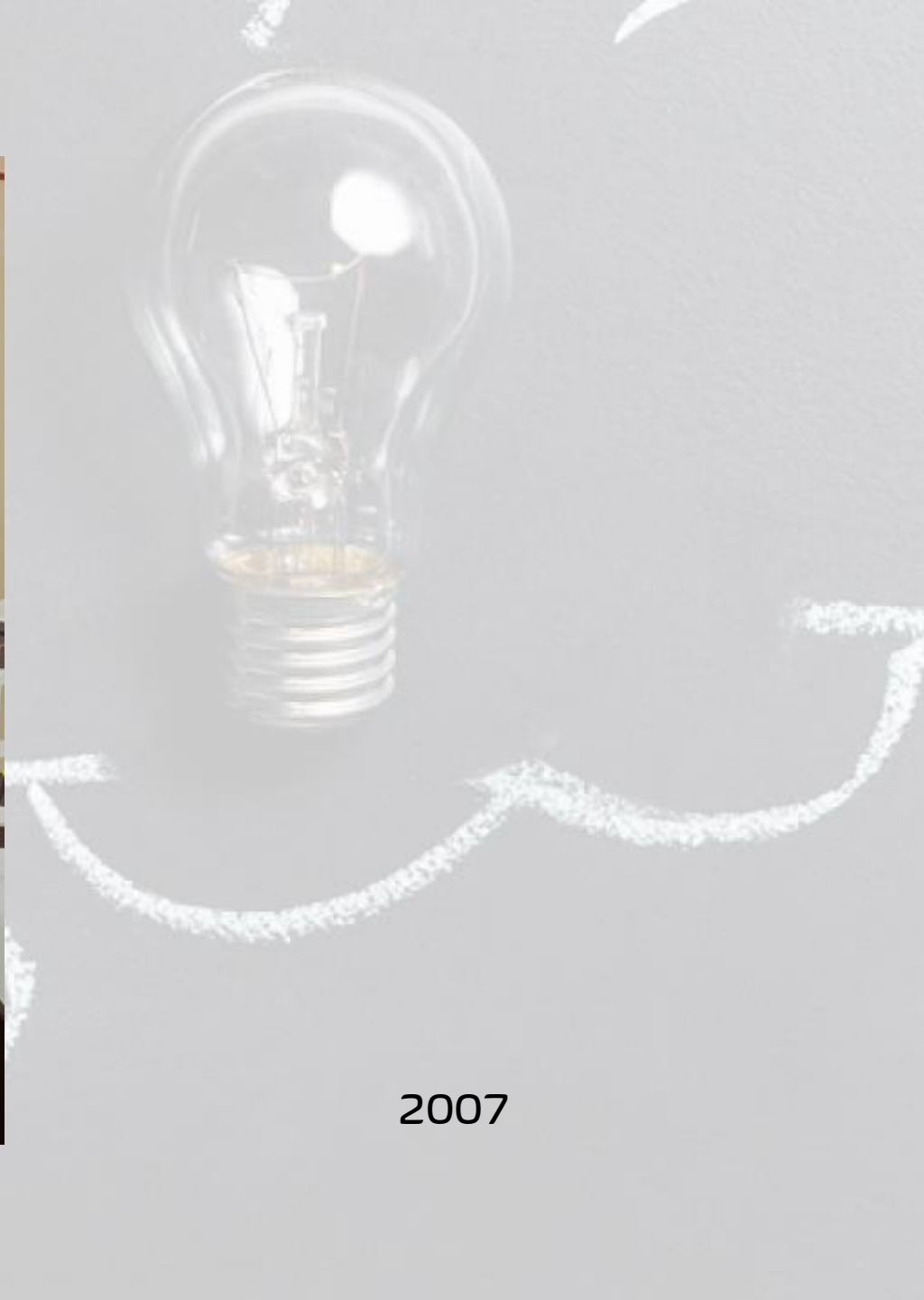




2015



2009



2007

NATIONAL BESTSELLER

"Think *Chinatown* meets *Mad Max*." –NPR, *All Things Considered*

THE WATER KNIFE

PAOLO BACIGALUPI

Author of *The Windup Girl*

2015

MATTHEW SCHNEIDER-MAYERSON

"Just as in the Book"? The Influence of Literature on Readers' Awareness of Climate Injustice and Perception of Climate Migrants

Increasingly, Americans and people around the world are alarmed about climate change (Goldberg et al.; Fagan and Huang), which is now widely recognized as an anthropogenic and catastrophic process that is already having pervasive negative consequences. Artists and cultural producers, including novelists, have mirrored the general trend of growing awareness and concern. Starting in the 1990s, authors began featuring climate change as a major element of their fictional worlds—first in science and speculative fiction and then, by the 2010s, in nearly every genre of literature (Johns-Putra). Many authors of climate fiction wrote with an activist bent, hoping to alert their audiences to the gravity of the threat and the need to take immediate action (Schneider-Mayerson, "Climate Change Fiction"). In turn, by the mid-2010s, identifying, analyzing, and discussing climate fiction became a common way for ecocritics and environmental humanists to apply their knowledge and abilities to the climate crisis. Climate change, they argued, is ultimately caused not by personal lifestyle choices or specific policies but by the worldviews, values, and priorities that are instilled and legitimized by dominant cultural narratives. Therefore, climate fiction can play a critical role in helping us recognize, understand, and feel the catastrophic trajectory on which we find ourselves and chart a different path forward (e.g., Ghosh; Ramuglia).

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Two Ways of Reading Narrative: Intentional or Symptomatic

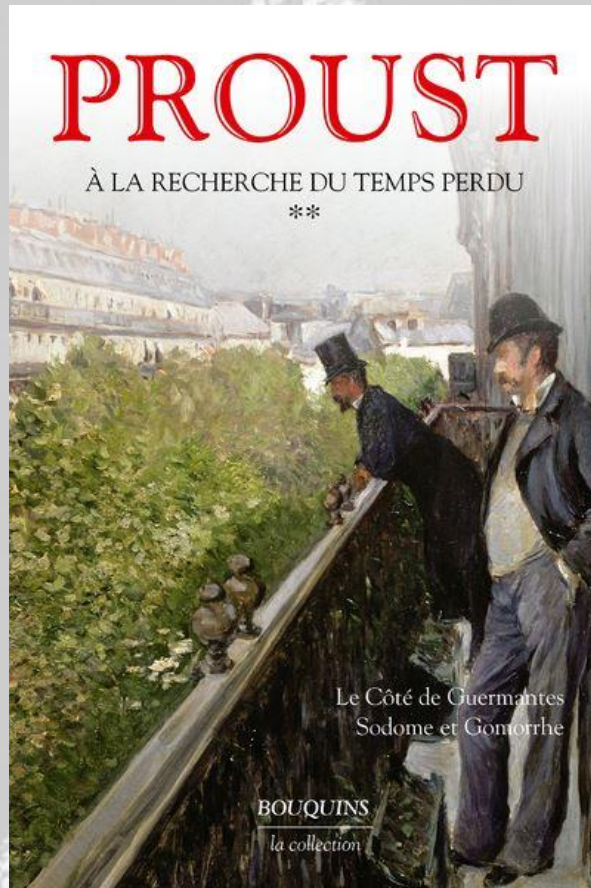
- Assumption of **wholeness/coherence** in narrative



Two Ways of Interpreting Narrative: Intentional or Symptomatic

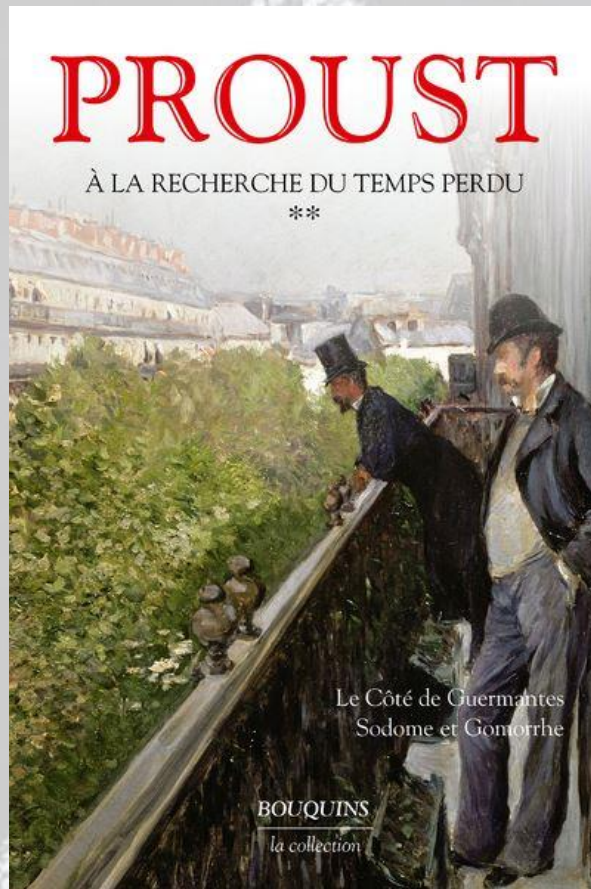
- Assumption of **wholeness/coherence** in narrative
- **Intentional reading:** the implied author is the source of the coherence.
"One assumes that a single creative sensibility lies behind the narrative . . . the ideas and judgments that we infer from the narrative are understood to be in keeping with a sensibility that intended these effects" (Abbott 102).

Intentional Reading and the Implied (vs. Empirical) Author

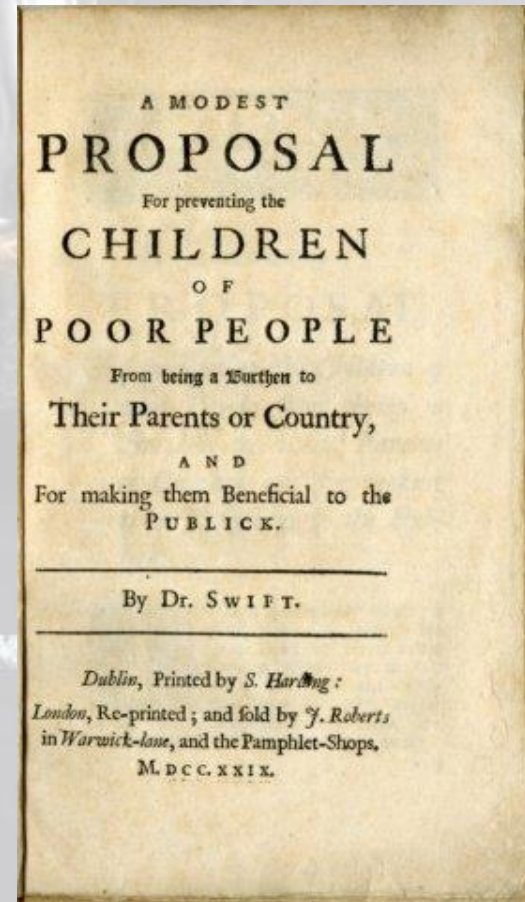


1913-1927

Intentional Reading and the Implied (vs. Empirical) Author



1913-1927

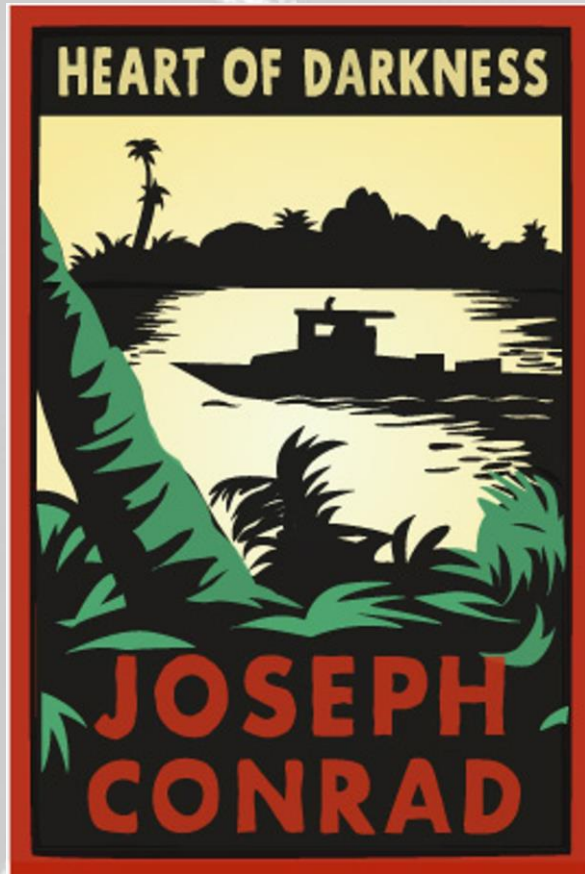


1729

Two Ways of Interpreting Narrative: Intentional or Symptomatic

- Assumption of **wholeness/coherence** in narrative
- **Intentional reading:** the implied author is the source of the coherence.
"One assumes that a single creative sensibility lies behind the narrative . . . the ideas and judgments that we infer from the narrative are understood to be in keeping with a sensibility that intended these effects" (Abbott 102).
- **Symptomatic reading:** the historical, economic, social, and cultural conditions give the narrative coherence, regardless of authorial or implied-authorial intention

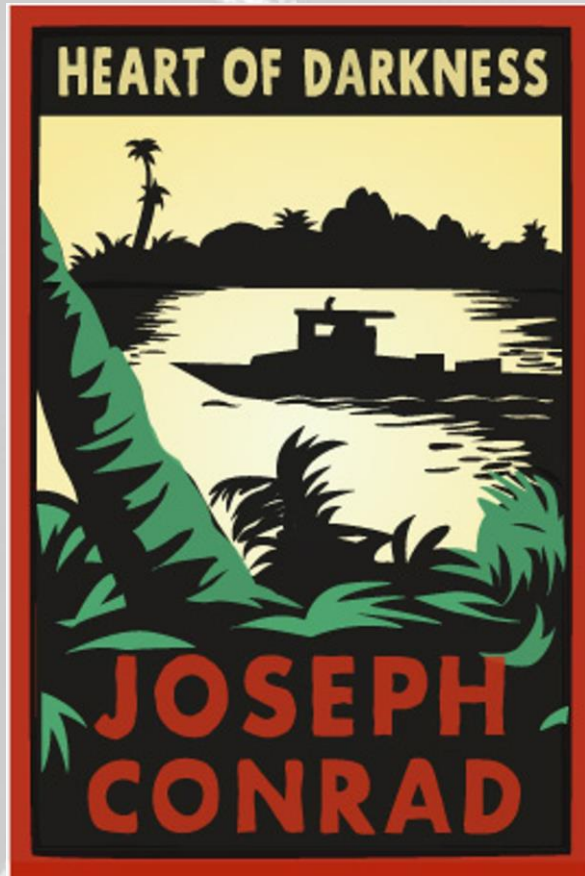
Symptomatic Reading



1899



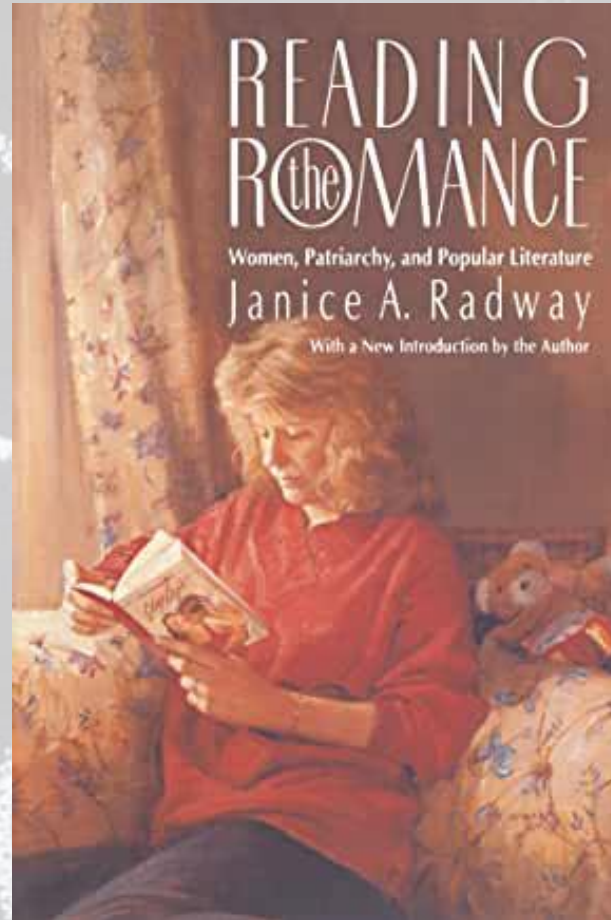
Symptomatic Reading



1899

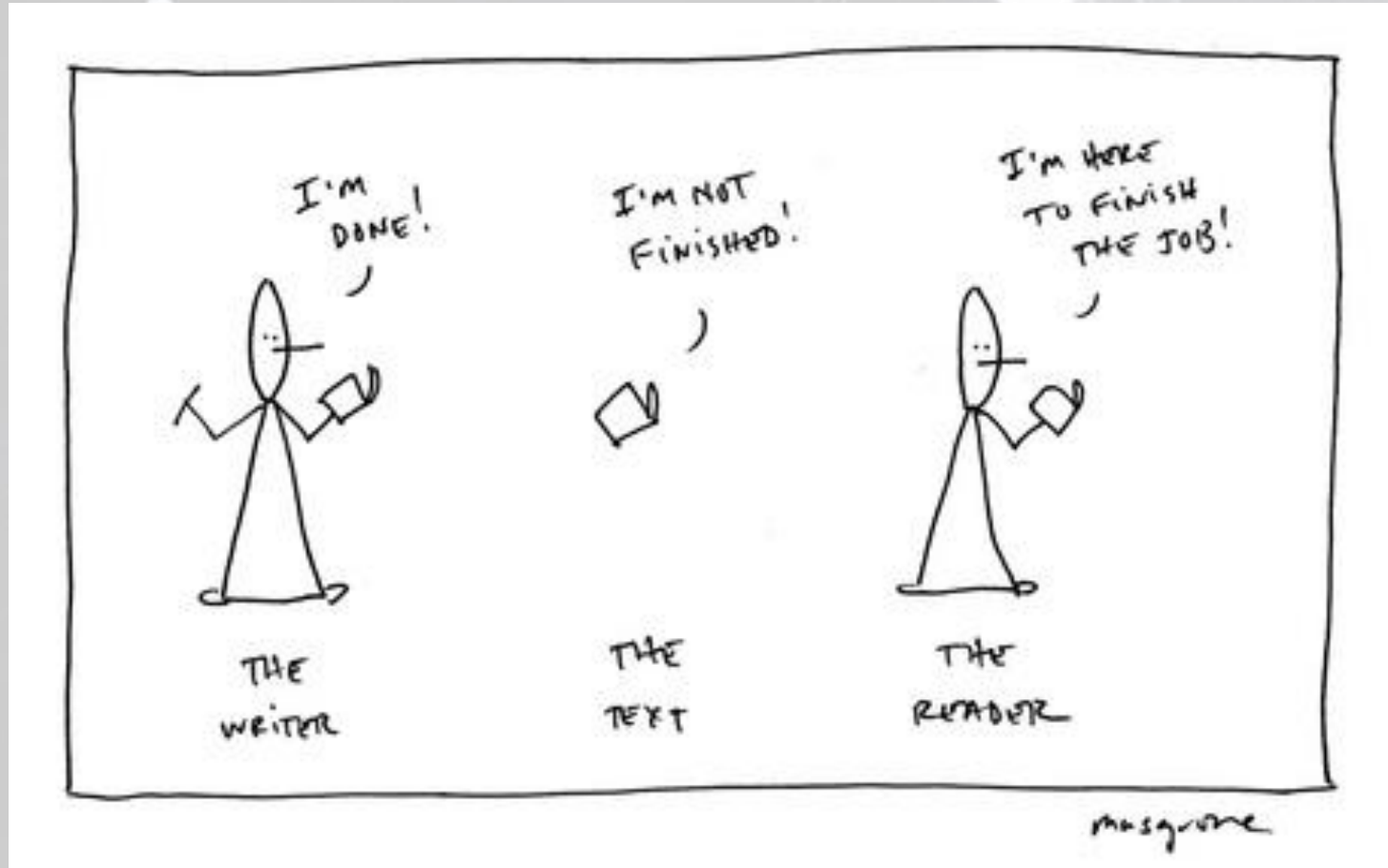


Chinua Achebe



1984

Reader-Response Theory



Wolfgang Iser, Hans-Robert Jauss, Stanley Fish, Norman Holland, David Bleich



1983

Overreading and Underreading

- Assumption of **wholeness/coherence** in narrative
- "We do not simply absorb the information in the narrative discourse but, almost invariably, we overlook things that are there and put in things that are not there. We *underread* and we *overread*" (Abbott 92).
- **Overreading:** Finding in narratives qualities, motives, moods, ideas, judgments, even events without direct evidence in the text
- **Underreading:** Leaving out or ignoring parts or details of a narrative in our interpretation.

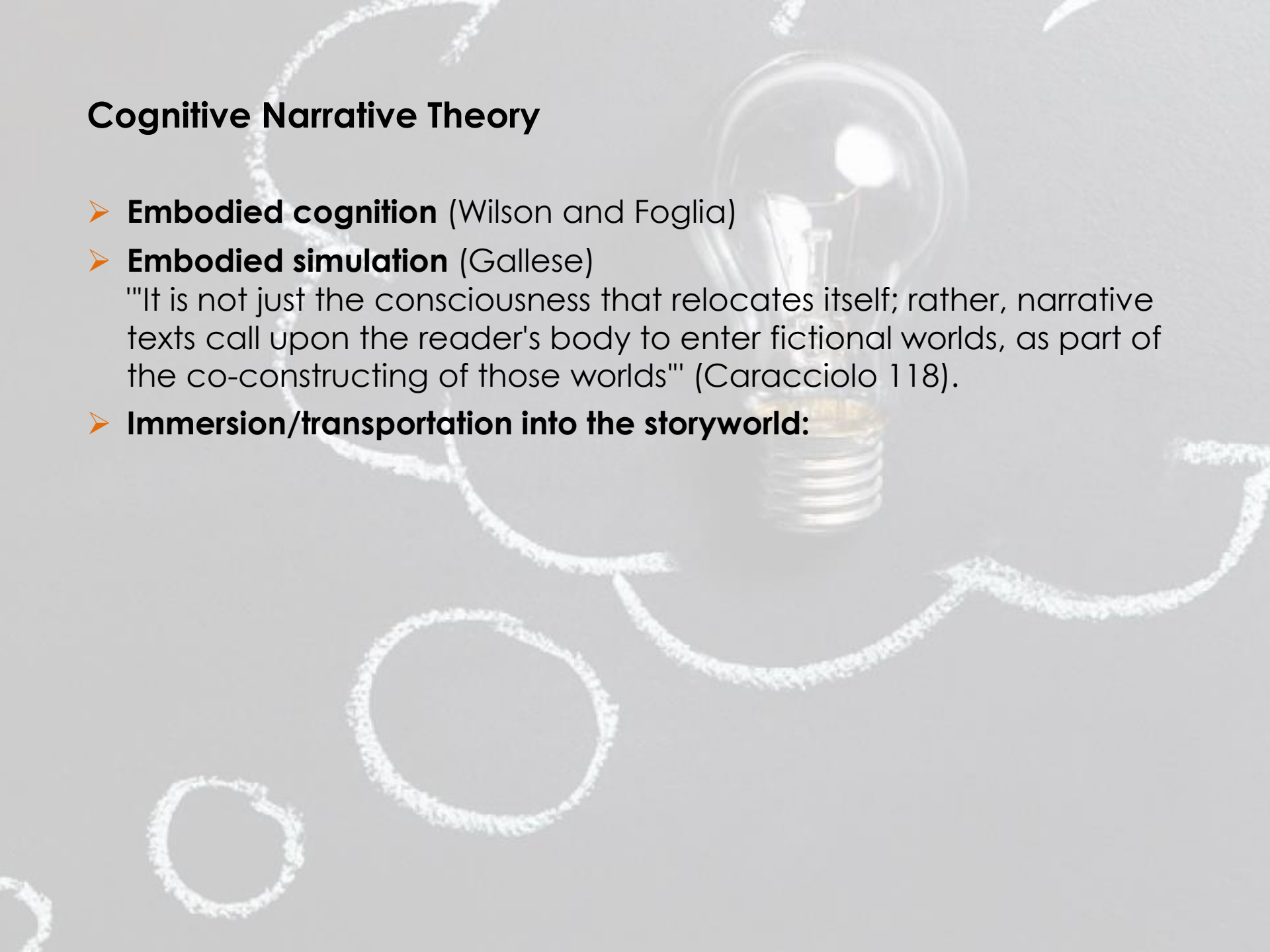
Cognitive Narrative Theory

➤ **Embodied cognition** (Wilson and Foglia)

➤ **Embodied simulation** (Gallese)

"It is not just the consciousness that relocates itself; rather, narrative texts call upon the reader's body to enter fictional worlds, as part of the co-constructing of those worlds" (Caracciolo 118).

➤ **Immersion/transportation into the storyworld:**



2. Distant Reading and Interpretation of Large Text Corporuses



Ed Ahearn
K. Anthony Appiah
Emily Apter
Charles Bernheimer

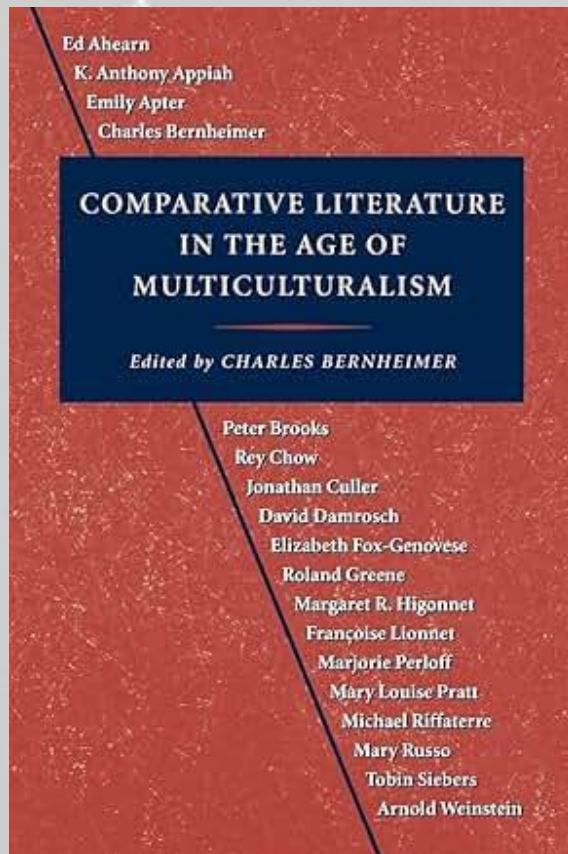
**COMPARATIVE LITERATURE
IN THE AGE OF
MULTICULTURALISM**

Edited by CHARLES BERNHEIMER

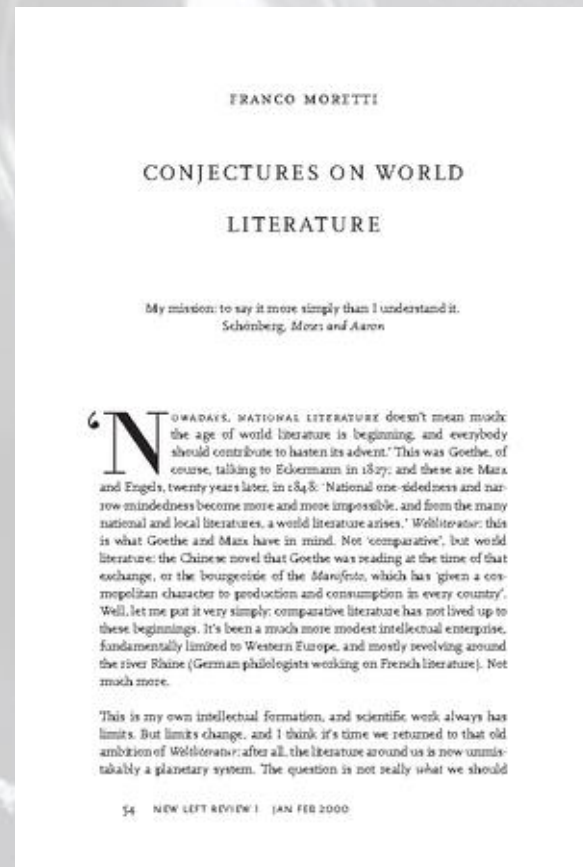
Peter Brooks
Rey Chow
Jonathan Culler
David Damrosch
Elizabeth Fox-Genovese
Roland Greene
Margaret R. Higonnet
Françoise Lionnet
Marjorie Perloff
Mary Louise Pratt
Michael Riffaterre
Mary Russo
Tobin Siebers
Arnold Weinstein



1993



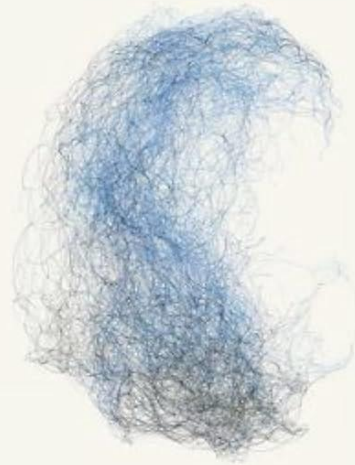
1993



2000

MACROANALYSIS

Digital Methods & Literary History



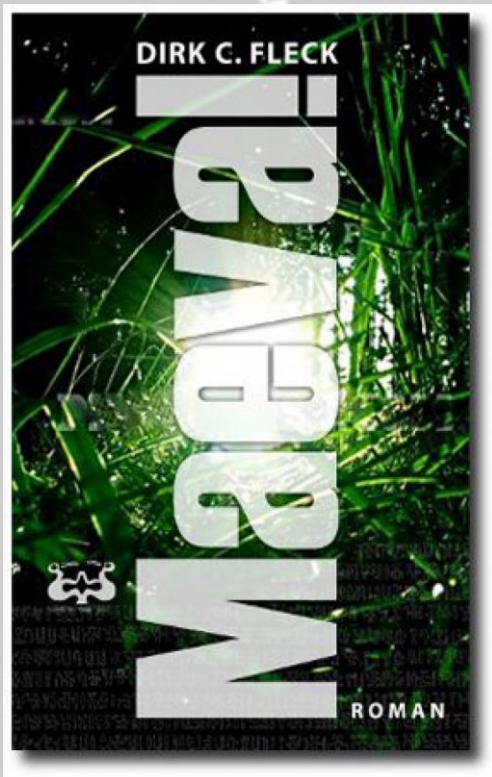
MATTHEW L. JOCKERS

2013

PEDRO MAIRAL
EL AÑO DEL
DESIERTO



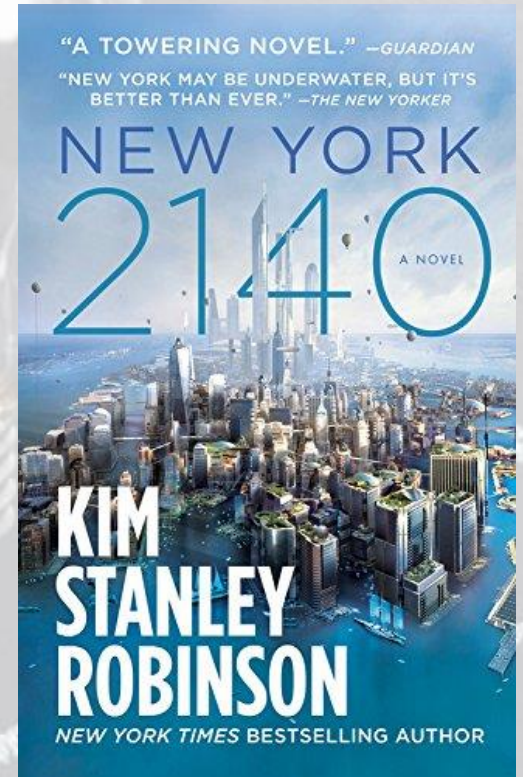
2005



2007



2010



2017



2005