



Unsettling Dreams:
Investigating Crisis in Earthquake
Fiction from Japan and
the Pacific Northwest

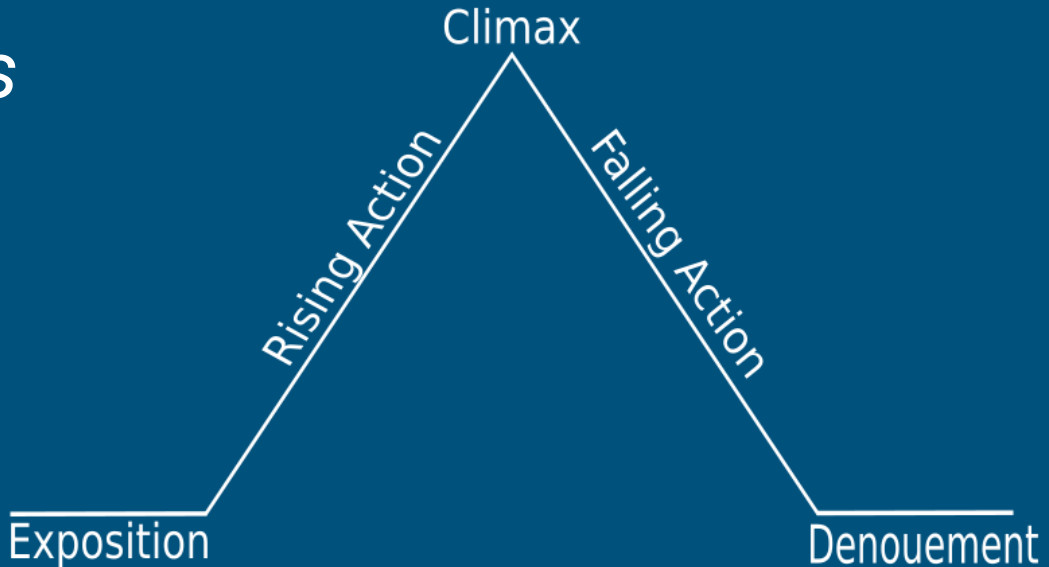
Hannah Smay
Environmental Studies Honors Thesis
April 2017



Theory: Investigating Crisis in Stories

Aristotle's *Poetics*

- Crisis
- Catharsis
- Representation



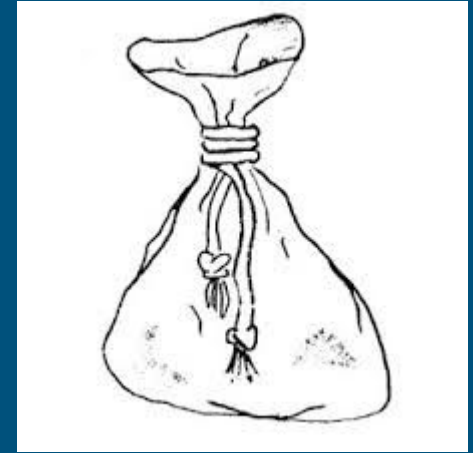
Freytag's Pyramid

Theory: Investigating Crisis in Stories

The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction

Ursula Le Guin (1986)

I would go so far as to say that the natural, proper, fitting shape of the novel might be that of a sack, a bag. A book holds words. Words hold things. They bear meanings. A novel is a medicine bundle, holding things in a particular, powerful relation to one another and to us (Le Guin 1986, 151).



Theory: Investigating Crisis in Stories

Love Your Monsters

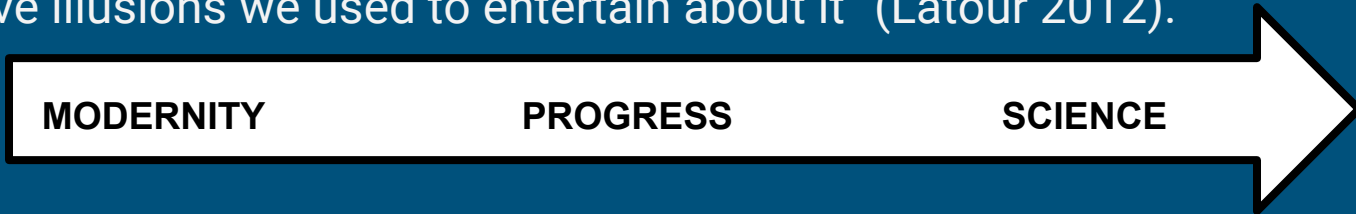
Bruno Latour (2012)

Modernity is the thrusting-forward arrow of time – Progress – characterized by its juvenile enthusiasm, risk taking, frontier spirit, optimism, and indifference to the past. The spirit can be summarized in a single sentence: “Tomorrow, we will be able to separate more accurately what the world is really like from the subjective illusions we used to entertain about it” (Latour 2012).

MODERNITY

PROGRESS

SCIENCE



Theory: Investigating Crisis in Stories

1. Stories hold and define relationships in networks that yield meaning.
2. Stories are pieces of technology that function as non-human actors in networks. The contents of stories are also actors in that network.
3. Stories foster connection both within and without their borders, thus becoming places readers can go and be.

Theory: Ecocriticism

PILLARS

Investigate connections between humans and nature through the study of literature

Address environmental crises

(Glotfelty 1995)

NEEDS

Consider literature outside United States & England

Incorporate literary and environmental theory

(Buell 2011; Heise 2008; Oppermann 2011)

Case Study: Earthquake Literature

Natural Disasters & Earthquakes

Earthquake culture

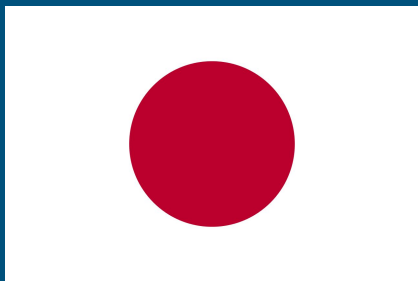


Pacific Northwest & Japan

JAPAN

Frequent earthquakes

Long cultural/geologic history
of disasters



PACIFIC OCEAN

Shared border

Transmits
tsunamis

Orphan Tsunami
of 1700
(Atwater et al. 2015)

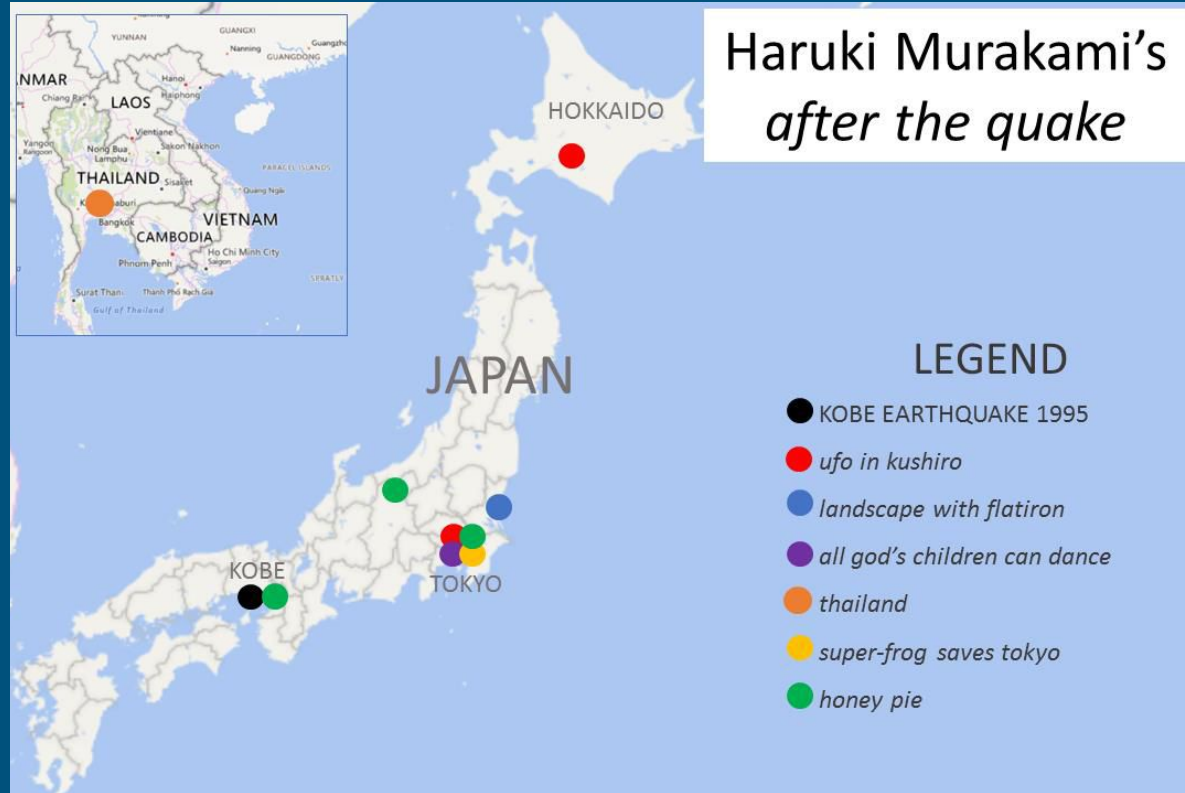
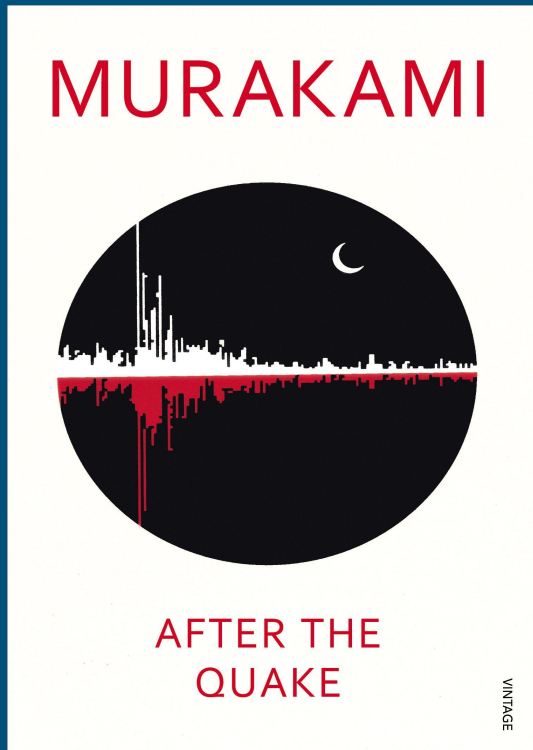
PACIFIC NORTHWEST

High risk of earthquakes

No contemporary
earthquake culture

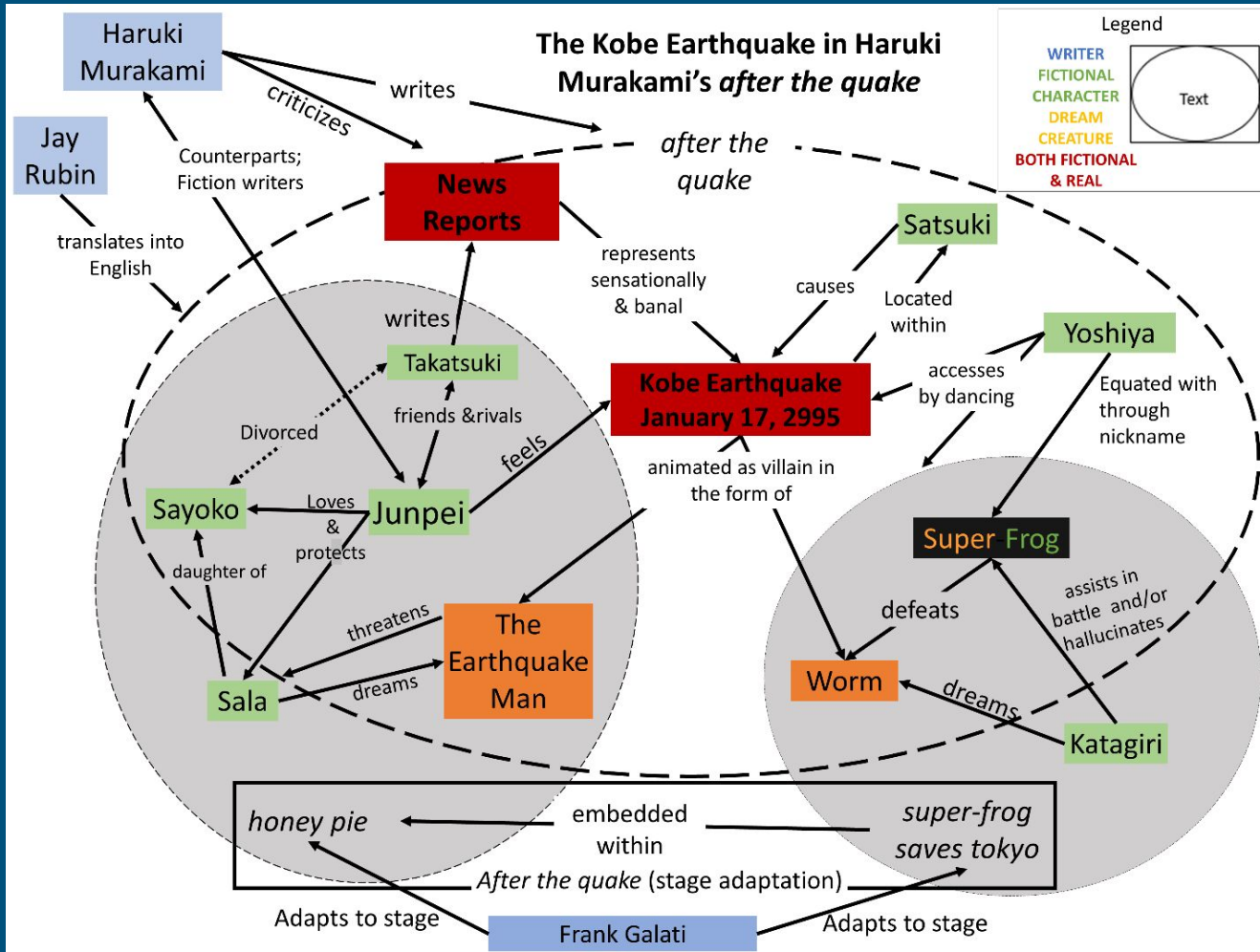


Haruki Murakami & the Kobe Earthquake



Haruki Murakami's
after the quake

Case Study: Earthquake Literature

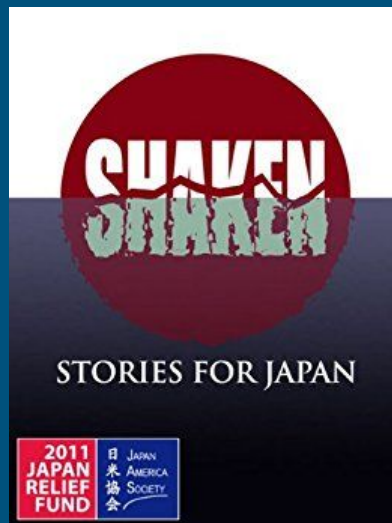


Responses to Tohōku 2011

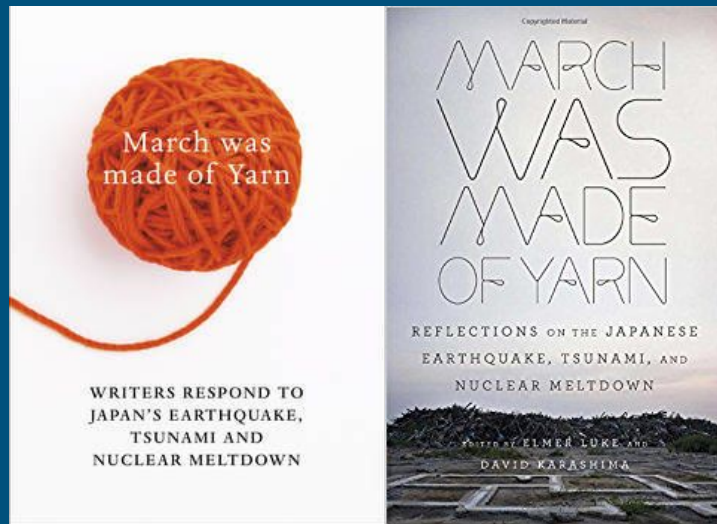
2:46: Aftershocks: Stories From Japan (2011)



Shaken: Stories for Japan (2011)

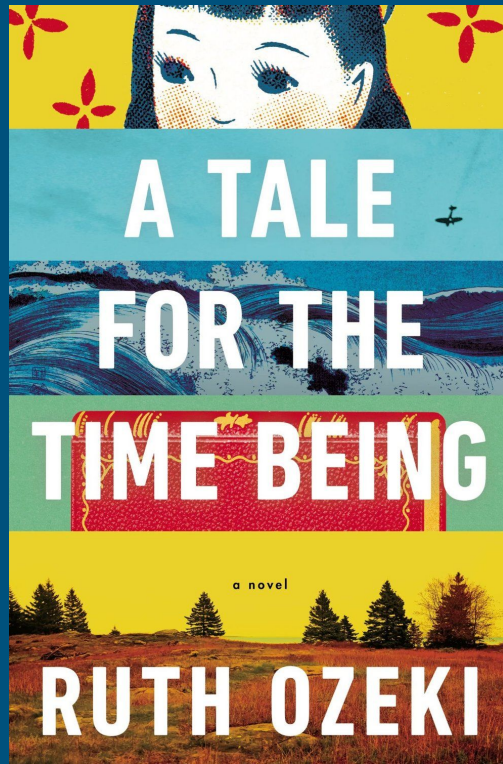


March Was Made of Yarn: Reflections on the Japanese Earthquake, Tsunami, and Nuclear Meltdown (2012)



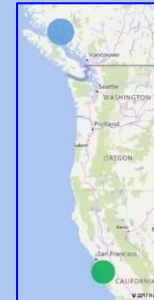
Responses to Tohōku 2011 (ct'd)

Ruth Ozeki's *A Tale for the Time Being*
(2013)



A Tale for the Time Being

PACIFIC OCEAN



 Tohoku Earthquake 2011

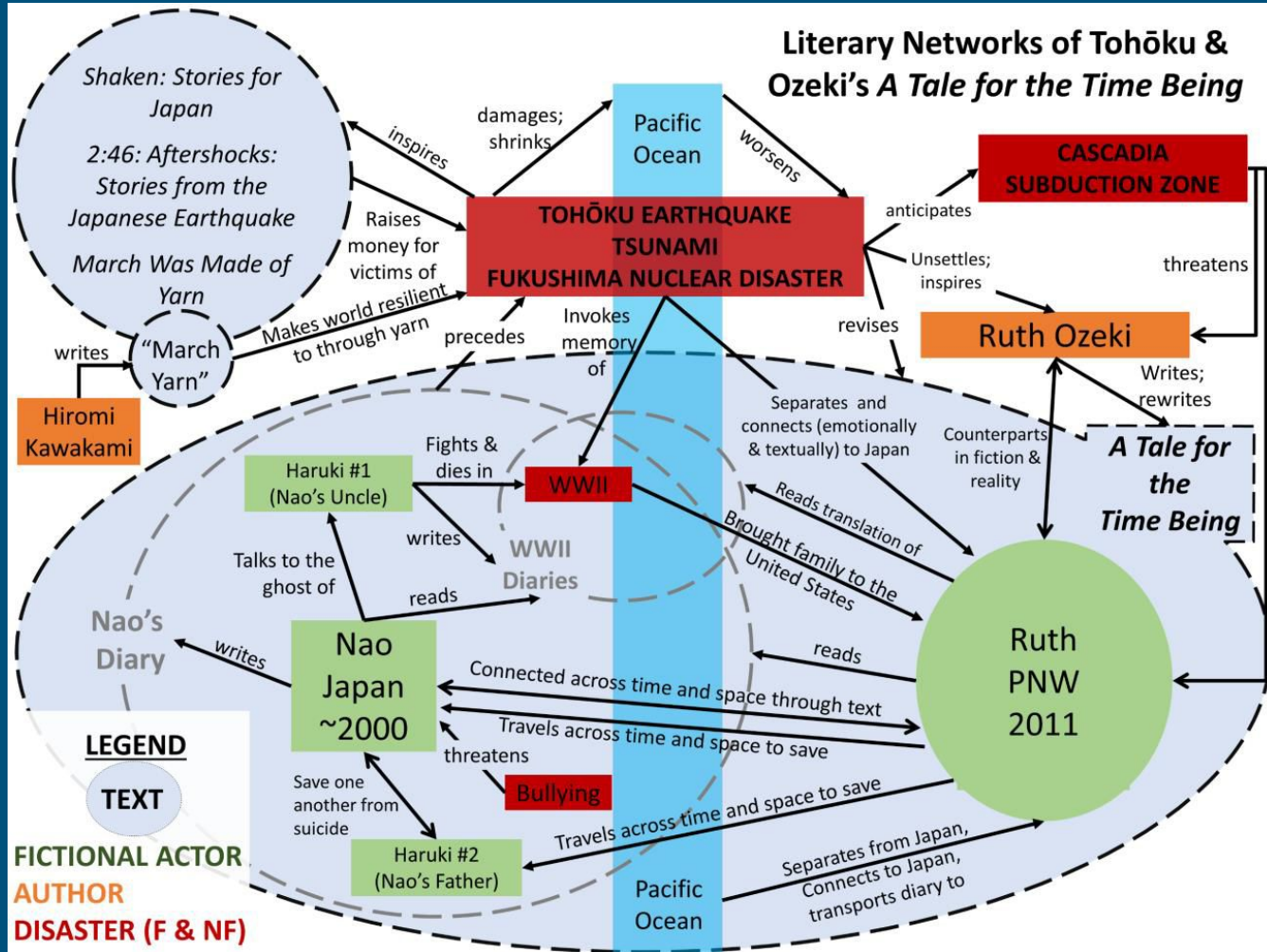
 Jiko's Temple, Sendai

 Akihabara Electricity Town, Tokyo

 Sunnyvale, California

 Whaletown, BC (Ruth)

Case Study: Earthquake Literature



The Future Cascadia Earthquake

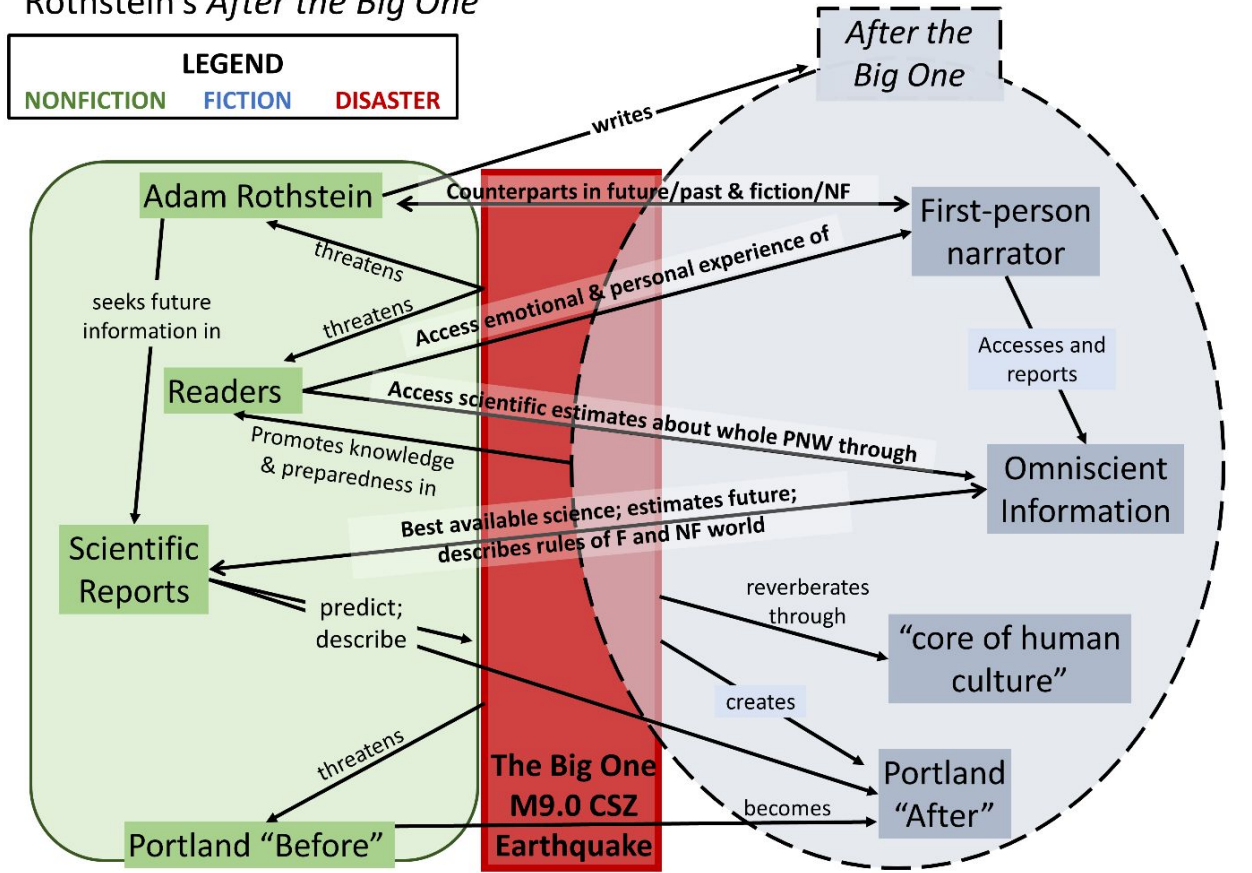
After the Big One
Adam Rothstein
(2016)



“By the time that the five minutes have elapsed, Portlanders find themselves transported to an entirely different city”

Case Study: Earthquake Literature

Actor-Network of Adam Rothstein's *After the Big One*






Discussion: Patterns Across Texts

- Represented aftermath
- Dreams
- Represented authors and texts

Instrumental Potential?

In a way, each of these authors uses fiction to gain leverage over something inaccessible: the workings of the earth, the past, the future, an author on the other side of a story.



Discussion: Ecocriticism & the Humanities

ECOCRITICISM

PILLARS

- ✓ Investigate connections between humans and nature through the study of literature
- ✓ Address environmental crises

NEEDS

- ✓ Consider literature outside United States & England
- ✓ Incorporate literary and environmental theory

Texts and events can pierce through the boundaries that attempt to maintain distinction.

This enriches the literary endeavor of understanding fiction, the environmentalist endeavor of understanding modernity and its disasters, and the ability of the humanities to participate in the human endeavor of survival.



Special thanks to Elizabeth Safran, Jim Proctor, Kristin Fujie

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