

david foster wallace the broom of the system

David Foster Wallace and **The Broom of the System**: A Deep Dive into His Debut Novel

david foster wallace the broom of the system is a phrase that often invites readers into the intriguing world of one of the most innovative American writers of the late 20th century. Known primarily for his magnum opus **Infinite Jest**, Wallace's debut novel, **The Broom of the System**, offers a fascinating glimpse into his early literary style and thematic explorations. While it may not have reached the same iconic status as his later works, this novel is a crucial piece for anyone interested in understanding the evolution of Wallace's voice and his unique approach to fiction.

Understanding **The Broom of the System** in the Context of David Foster Wallace's Career

When **The Broom of the System** was published in 1987, David Foster Wallace was a young writer fresh out of graduate school. The novel reflects his keen interest in language, identity, and the absurdities of modern life, themes that would come to define much of his later work. It's an experimental narrative that blends metafiction, linguistic playfulness, and philosophical inquiry, making it a compelling read for fans of postmodern literature.

Plot Overview and Narrative Style

At its core, **The Broom of the System** follows the story of Lenore Beadsman, a young woman navigating her existence in a chaotic and hyper-mediated world. Set in Cleveland, Ohio, the novel delves into Lenore's complex relationships with her grandmother, her boyfriend Rick Vigorous, and a host of eccentric characters. The narrative is fragmented and often self-referential, reflecting Wallace's fascination with how language shapes reality.

The style is dense and witty, filled with footnotes, digressions, and experimental prose. This approach not only showcases Wallace's intellectual agility but also challenges readers to engage actively with the text. His use of language mirrors the novel's thematic concerns with communication breakdowns and the instability of identity.

The Role of Language and Identity

One of the most compelling aspects of **The Broom of the System** is its exploration of how language constructs and constrains human experience. Wallace uses Lenore's voice to examine the fluidity of identity, suggesting that who we are might be less fixed than we assume. The novel toys with the idea that reality itself is mediated through linguistic systems—hence the title's metaphorical broom sweeping through these “systems” of meaning.

This theme resonates with readers interested in semiotics, philosophy of language, and poststructuralist thought. Wallace's playful yet profound treatment of these topics sets the stage for

his later, more mature works, where these ideas become even more central.

Why **The Broom of the System** Remains Relevant to Readers Today

Despite being Wallace's earliest novel, **The Broom of the System** still holds significant appeal for contemporary audiences. Its concerns about communication, media saturation, and identity in a fragmented world feel prescient, especially in the digital age where information overload and social media complicate how we perceive ourselves and others.

Exploring Postmodernism Through Wallace's Lens

Wallace's novel is often discussed within the framework of postmodern literature. It embraces uncertainty, challenges traditional narrative structures, and blurs the boundaries between fiction and reality. Yet, unlike some postmodern works that can feel cold or overly cynical, Wallace injects warmth and empathy into his characters, making their struggles relatable.

For readers looking to understand postmodernism beyond abstract theory, **The Broom of the System** offers a vivid, entertaining example. Its meta-commentary on storytelling and selfhood encourages reflection on how narratives shape our lives.

Impact on Literary Scholarship and Pop Culture

While **The Broom of the System** may not have achieved widespread popular acclaim, it has been the subject of extensive literary analysis. Scholars often highlight how the novel prefigures themes Wallace would expand in **Infinite Jest**, such as addiction, entertainment, and the search for meaning.

Moreover, fans of David Foster Wallace appreciate the novel as a window into his early creative mind. It's a reminder that even the most celebrated authors start somewhere and that their debut works can contain seeds of genius waiting to be fully realized.

Tips for Reading **The Broom of the System**

If you're new to David Foster Wallace or postmodern literature, diving into **The Broom of the System** might seem daunting. Here are some tips to enhance your reading experience:

- **Embrace the complexity:** Don't worry if the narrative feels disjointed or the prose dense. This is part of Wallace's style, inviting you to engage deeply rather than passively consume.
- **Pay attention to footnotes:** Wallace frequently uses footnotes to add layers of meaning, humor, or contextual information. They are integral to understanding the full scope of the novel.

- **Consider the philosophical themes:** Reflect on the questions the novel raises about language, identity, and reality. These themes are not just intellectual exercises but central to the characters' experiences.
- **Read with patience:** The novel's experimental nature means it might take time to acclimate to its rhythm. Allow yourself to be immersed in the language and the world Wallace creates.

Connecting **The Broom of the System** with David Foster Wallace's Later Works

For those familiar with Wallace's later novels, especially **Infinite Jest**, reading **The Broom of the System** enriches the understanding of his literary trajectory. Many critics see it as a foundation for his exploration of complex themes like addiction, entertainment, and the search for authenticity.

From Experimental Beginnings to Masterful Storytelling

While **The Broom of the System** is more overtly playful and experimental, **Infinite Jest** presents a more polished and expansive narrative. However, both novels share a deep concern with how individuals navigate systems—be they linguistic, social, or psychological—that shape their lives.

Wallace's early work's linguistic experimentation foreshadows the intricate narrative techniques he would employ later, combining humor, tragedy, and philosophical depth.

Thematic Continuities and Evolutions

Themes such as the nature of consciousness, the role of media, and the struggle for meaning are present in both novels. However, **The Broom of the System** approaches these through a more surreal and fragmented lens, while **Infinite Jest** offers a broader social critique.

Understanding these continuities helps readers appreciate Wallace's growth as a writer and thinker, as well as the enduring relevance of his insights into American culture.

Exploring **The Broom of the System** is like stepping into the mind of a young David Foster Wallace grappling with big questions through language and narrative. It's a novel that challenges and rewards readers willing to engage with its complexity, offering a unique perspective on identity and reality that continues to resonate. Whether you are a longtime fan or a newcomer, this debut work remains a vital piece of the Wallace literary puzzle, inviting us to reconsider how stories shape our understanding of the world.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the central theme of David Foster Wallace's 'The Broom of the System'?

'The Broom of the System' explores themes of identity, language, and reality, focusing on how individuals construct meaning in a complex, often confusing world.

Who is the protagonist of 'The Broom of the System' and what challenges do they face?

The protagonist is Lenore Beadsman, a young woman struggling with the disappearance of her great-grandmother and her own search for personal identity amidst the chaos of modern life.

How does David Foster Wallace use language in 'The Broom of the System' to enhance the novel's themes?

Wallace employs playful, intricate language and metafictional techniques to highlight the instability of meaning and the complexities of communication and perception.

In what way is 'The Broom of the System' influenced by postmodern literature?

The novel incorporates postmodern elements such as self-referentiality, fragmented narrative, and an emphasis on the fluidity of reality and identity.

What role does the concept of mental illness play in 'The Broom of the System'?

Mental illness is a significant motif, exemplified by characters experiencing psychological distress, which reflects the novel's exploration of consciousness and reality.

How does 'The Broom of the System' reflect David Foster Wallace's style and literary philosophy?

The novel showcases Wallace's characteristic blending of high and low culture, intellectual rigor, humor, and deep philosophical inquiry into language and existence.

What is the significance of the title 'The Broom of the System'?

The title refers metaphorically to cleansing or disrupting established systems of meaning and understanding, aligning with the novel's themes of questioning reality and language.

How was 'The Broom of the System' received by critics upon its release?

The novel was generally well-received for its originality and intellectual depth, though some critics found its complexity challenging; it established Wallace as a major new voice in American literature.

Additional Resources

David Foster Wallace and **The Broom of the System**: An Early Glimpse into a Singular Literary Mind

david foster wallace the broom of the system represents a significant landmark in understanding the early literary trajectory of one of America's most influential writers. Published in 1987 as Wallace's debut novel, **The Broom of the System** offers readers a complex mosaic of postmodern narrative techniques, linguistic playfulness, and existential inquiry that prefigures many themes he would explore more deeply in his later works. This novel, often overshadowed by his magnum opus **Infinite Jest**, demands a thorough examination for its unique contributions to contemporary American literature and its role in shaping Wallace's literary identity.

Contextualizing **The Broom of the System** within David Foster Wallace's Career

Before delving into the novel's thematic and stylistic characteristics, it is essential to place **The Broom of the System** within the broader context of David Foster Wallace's career. Written while Wallace was a graduate student at the University of Arizona, this novel emerged during a period when postmodern literature was undergoing critical scrutiny and transformation. The 1980s saw a surge in experimental fiction, with authors pushing the boundaries of narrative form and linguistic experimentation. Wallace's debut was part of this wave but already hinted at a distinct voice that would later blend postmodern complexity with emotional depth and ethical concern.

Unlike the sprawling and encyclopedic nature of **Infinite Jest**, **The Broom of the System** is comparatively concise, clocking in at just over 200 pages. Yet, its brevity belies the density of ideas and innovative narrative strategies embedded within. The novel's publication by Viking Press marked the arrival of a fresh literary talent willing to challenge conventional storytelling through a mix of philosophical inquiry and playful language.

In-Depth Analysis of **The Broom of the System**

At its core, **The Broom of the System** is a metafictional exploration of identity, language, and reality. The protagonist, Lenore Beadsman, navigates a surreal, fragmented version of Cleveland, Ohio, where boundaries between the real and the constructed blur. The novel's plot revolves around Lenore's sudden disappearance and the ensuing chaos among her friends and family, which serves as a vehicle for exploring deeper questions about selfhood and communication.

Metafiction and Narrative Structure

One of the most striking features of **The Broom of the System** is its self-referential narrative style. Wallace employs metafiction to interrogate the nature of storytelling itself. The novel frequently breaks the fourth wall, drawing attention to its own artifice and challenging readers to question the reliability of narrative voices. This technique aligns with the postmodern penchant for destabilizing traditional literary forms but is executed with a distinctive precision that foreshadows Wallace's later stylistic innovations.

The novel's fragmented structure mirrors the chaos within the story's world and the characters' psyches. Scenes shift abruptly, and multiple narrative threads intersect, creating a complex web that demands active engagement from the reader. This layering of perspectives mirrors the novel's thematic concern with the multiplicity of realities and the elusiveness of absolute truth.

Language, Semiotics, and Philosophical Undertones

David Foster Wallace's fascination with language and its limitations is central to **The Broom of the System**. The novel is laden with philosophical references, particularly to Ludwig Wittgenstein and the philosophy of language. The title itself, borrowed from a Wittgenstein quote, hints at the novel's preoccupation with the interplay between language and reality: "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world."

Throughout the narrative, Wallace explores how language shapes perception and identity. Lenore's struggle can be interpreted as a metaphor for the difficulty of defining the self within the constraints of linguistic and societal systems. The novel's playful use of neologisms, puns, and linguistic experimentation illustrates the instability of meaning and the challenges inherent in communication.

Characterization and Thematic Exploration

Lenore Beadsman, as the central figure, embodies the tension between individuality and systemic determinism. Her interactions with other characters reveal the pervasive influence of societal and familial structures on personal identity. The novel also critiques contemporary American culture, particularly the commodification of human relationships and the mechanization of life.

The supporting characters—ranging from Lenore's grandfather to her therapist—serve as archetypes representing various philosophical and cultural ideas. Their dialogues often veer into abstract discussions, lending the novel an intellectual depth that invites multiple interpretations.

Comparisons and Literary Significance

When comparing **The Broom of the System** to Wallace's later works, especially **Infinite Jest**, several contrasts and continuities emerge. While **Infinite Jest** is known for its encyclopedic scale and intricate plotting, **The Broom of the System** offers a more contained but equally complex exploration of similar themes such as addiction, communication breakdown, and the search for meaning.

Moreover, the novel's early engagement with metafiction and linguistic theory places it within the tradition of postmodern authors like Thomas Pynchon and Don DeLillo. However, Wallace's approach diverges in its underlying earnestness and ethical concern, traits that would become more pronounced in his subsequent works.

From an SEO perspective, the inclusion of terms such as "David Foster Wallace literary debut," "postmodern metafiction," "philosophy of language in literature," and "Lenore Beadsman character analysis" can enhance the article's visibility among readers interested in literary criticism and contemporary American fiction.

Pros and Cons of *The Broom of the System*

- **Pros:** Innovative narrative structure; rich philosophical inquiry; early display of Wallace's unique voice; engaging exploration of language and identity.
- **Cons:** Dense and sometimes opaque prose; abstract dialogue that may challenge casual readers; less emotionally resonant compared to later works.

These strengths and weaknesses reflect the novel's position as both a debut and a work deeply embedded in experimental literary traditions.

Legacy and Influence of *The Broom of the System*

Though not as widely read as *Infinite Jest*, *The Broom of the System* remains a vital text for scholars and enthusiasts seeking to trace the evolution of David Foster Wallace's literary philosophy. The novel's influence extends beyond its immediate reception, contributing to ongoing discussions about the role of language in shaping human experience and the potential of fiction to interrogate the self.

Wallace's early work also resonates with contemporary debates about the limits of narrative and the challenges of authenticity in a media-saturated culture. In this sense, *The Broom of the System* anticipates many of the concerns that dominate 21st-century literary and cultural studies.

By examining this novel in detail, readers gain not only a deeper appreciation for Wallace's craftsmanship but also insight into the broader currents of American literature during a pivotal era.

The novel's enduring appeal lies in its ability to challenge readers intellectually while offering a nuanced portrayal of the complexities of modern existence. Through Lenore Beadsman's journey, *The Broom of the System* invites reflection on the ways in which language, identity, and reality intersect—an invitation that remains compelling decades after its initial publication.

David Foster Wallace The Broom Of The System

david foster wallace the broom of the system: The Broom Of The System David Foster Wallace, 2023-12-07 A visionary, a craftsman, a comedian and as serious as it is possible to be without accidentally writing a religious text. He can do anything with a piece of prose, and it is a humbling experience to see him go to work on what has passed up till now as modern fiction. He's so modern he's in a different time-space continuum from the rest of us. Goddamn him! Zadie Smith The mysterious disappearance of her great-grandmother and twenty-five other elderly inmates from a Shaker Heights nursing home has left Lenore Stonecipher Beadsman emotionally stranded on the edge of the Great Ohio Desert. But that is simply one problem of many for the hapless switchboard operator, seriously compounded by her ongoing affair with boss Rick Vigorous; the TV stardom of her talking cockatiel, Vlad the Impaler; and other minor catastrophes that threaten to elevate Lenore's search for love and self-determination to new heights of spasmodic weirdness.

david foster wallace the broom of the system: Corporeal Narrative in David Foster Wallace's Fiction Xiaomeng Wan, 2025-07-13 This book serves as a critical examination of contemporary American literature by examining David Foster Wallace's incorporation of corporeal narrative techniques in his novels, with a particular focus on *The Broom of the System*, *Infinite Jest*, and *The Pale King*. By employing corporeal narratology as a conceptual framework, it sheds light on Wallace's profound exploration of the human body and its societal implications. Through detailed analysis, the book reveals how Wallace's narratives serve as a critique of contemporary issues such as self-alienation, consumerism, and the dehumanizing effects of modern society. Designed for scholars and students of literature, cultural studies, and narrative theory, this book provides a comprehensive understanding of Wallace's literary legacy and his keen observations on the complexities of human existence in the modern world.

david foster wallace the broom of the system: David Foster Wallace's Balancing Books Jeffrey Severs, 2017-01-03 What do we value? Why do we value it? And in a neoliberal age, can morality ever displace money as the primary means of defining value? These are the questions that drove David Foster Wallace, a writer widely credited with changing the face of contemporary fiction and moving it beyond an emotionless postmodern irony. Jeffrey Severs argues in *David Foster Wallace's Balancing Books* that Wallace was also deeply engaged with the social, political, and economic issues of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. A rebellious economic thinker, Wallace satirized the deforming effects of money, questioned the logic of the monetary system, and saw the world through the lens of value's many hidden and untapped meanings. In original readings of all of Wallace's fiction, from *The Broom of the System* and *Infinite Jest* to his story collections and *The Pale King*, Severs reveals Wallace to be a thoroughly political writer whose works provide an often surreal history of financial crises and economic policies. As Severs demonstrates, the concept of value occupied the intersection of Wallace's major interests: economics, work, metaphysics, mathematics, and morality. Severs ranges from the Great Depression and the New Deal to the realms of finance, insurance, and taxation to detail Wallace's quest for balance and grace in a world of excess and entropy. Wallace showed characters struggling to place two feet on the ground and restlessly sought to balance the books of a chaotic culture. Explaining why Wallace's work has galvanized a new phase in contemporary global literature, Severs draws connections to key Wallace forerunners Don DeLillo, Thomas Pynchon, and William Gaddis, as well as his successors—including Dave Eggers, Teddy Wayne, Jonathan Lethem, and Zadie Smith—interpreting Wallace's legacy in terms of finance, the gift, and office life.

david foster wallace the broom of the system: Systemtheoretische Literaturwissenschaft Niels Werber, 2011-03-29 Begriffe und Probleme der systemtheoretischen Soziologie sind längst in den Literatur-, Kultur- und Medienwissenschaften heimisch geworden. Unterscheidungen wie System und Umwelt oder Medium und Form sowie Begriffe wie Autopoiesis oder Ausdifferenzierung haben Forschungen beflügelt und Diskussionen orientiert, ohne dass immer das gesamte Arsenal der

Systemtheorie in Anschlag gebracht werden musste. Gleichwohl bilden die systemtheoretischen Problemstellungen ein Netzwerk, dessen Komplexität oft nur um den Preis der Simplifizierung zu reduzieren oder mit großer Mühe in Analysen aufrechtzuerhalten ist. Das Handbuch verfolgt drei Ziele: Es gibt einen Überblick über die Theorie, indem es den Verknüpfungen der Begriffe folgt. Es führt als Nachschlagewerk in die zentralen Begriffe und Probleme so ein, dass ihr heuristischer Mehrwert deutlich wird, ohne dass zu diesem Zweck die gesamte Theoriearchitektur Luhmanns überblickt werden müsste. Es erprobt diese Begriffe und Probleme in exemplarischen Anwendungen und macht deutlich, wie sich literarische Texte aus einer systemtheoretischen Perspektive beobachten lassen – auf diese Weise kann es Literatur-, Kultur- und Medienwissenschaftlern als ‚Gebrauchsanleitung‘ für konkrete Gegenstandsanalysen dienen.

david foster wallace the broom of the system: *The Self and Its Shadows* Stephen Mulhall, 2013-04-18 Stephen Mulhall presents a series of multiply interrelated essays which explore the idea of selfhood as a matter of non-self-identity: for example, as becoming or self-overcoming, or as being doubled or divided. He draws on Nietzsche, Sartre, and Wittgenstein, but also on works of opera, cinema, and fiction.

david foster wallace the broom of the system: *Fictions of Proximity* Tim Personn, 2023-11-02 *Fictions of Proximity: Skepticism, Romanticism, and the Wallace Nexus* tells the story of a nexus of contemporary novelists around David Foster Wallace who took up the legacy of logical positivism and reworked it between the 1980s and the 2000s in a way that has affinities with romanticism. The book shows how the writers of this ‘Wallace nexus’ use fiction’s complexities to challenge the idea that in human interactions, only complete fusion and transparency may count as instances of knowing. In place of this positivistic ideal of absorption, the book offers the freshly defined concept of ‘proximity,’ a closeness with separateness. It reads key novels of contemporary Anglo-American literature as ‘fictions of proximity,’ i.e., as texts that dramatize, problematize, and enact the movement into this position of proximity. To tell this story, the book draws on unpublished archival materials and understudied connections, advancing new interpretations of four novelists: David Foster Wallace, David Markson, Bret Easton Ellis, and Zadie Smith. *Fictions of Proximity* provides new readings of these writers, both of their canonical texts and of lesser-known works, and situates them with respect to prominent figures in contemporary post-positivist philosophy.

david foster wallace the broom of the system: *The Symphonic Repertoire, Volume V* Brian Hart, A. Peter Brown, 2024-01-30 Central to the repertoire of Western art music since the 1700s, the symphony has come to be regarded as one of the ultimate compositional challenges. In his series *The Symphonic Repertoire*, the late A. Peter Brown explored the symphony in Europe from its origins into the 20th century. In Volume V, Brown's former students and colleagues continue his vision by turning to the symphony in the Western Hemisphere. It examines the work of numerous symphonists active from the early 1800s to the present day and the unique challenges they faced in contributing to the European symphonic tradition. The research adds to an unmatched compendium of knowledge for the student, teacher, performer, and sophisticated amateur. This much-anticipated fifth volume of *The Symphonic Repertoire: The Symphony in the Americas* offers a user-friendly, comprehensive history of the symphony genre in the United States and Latin America.

david foster wallace the broom of the system: *Classic Penguin: Cover to Cover* Paul Buckley, 2016-08-02 From Drop Caps to Deluxes, Penguin Creative Director Paul Buckley presents a visual overview of the innovative covers that have put Penguin Classics at the forefront of the book design world Winner of the 2016 AIGA + Design Observer 50 Books | 50 Covers competition Since the launch of Penguin Classics in 1946, innovative cover design has been one of its defining aspects. Today, Penguin Classics remains at the leading edge of the book-design world. In this curated tour featuring illuminating commentary by artists and writers, including Malika Favre, Mike Mignola, James Franco, Jessica Hische, Jillian Tamaki and many more, Penguin creative director Paul Buckley showcases more than a decade of stunning cover designs and the stories behind them. For lovers of classic literature, book design, and all things Penguin, *Classic Penguin* has you covered. Paul Buckley is creative director for Penguin Classics and oversees a large staff of exceptionally talented

designers and art directors working on the jackets and covers of sixteen imprints within the Penguin Random House publishing group. Over the past two decades, his iconic design and singular art direction have been showcased on thousands of covers and jackets, winning him many awards and frequent invitations to speak in the United States and abroad. In 2010, he edited and introduced Penguin 75. Matt Vee is a designer and illustrator who attended School of Visual Arts and Pratt Institute. He has received two Gold Scholastic Art Awards and created logos for worldwide brands. His work has appeared in The Washington Post, The Huffington Post, Slate, Print magazine, Paste magazine, and UnderConsideration's Brand New. Audrey Niffenegger is a visual artist and writer. In addition to the bestselling novels *The Time Traveler's Wife* and *Her Fearful Symmetry*, she is the author of three illustrated novels and the editor of *Ghostly*. Elda Rotor is vice president and publisher for Penguin Classics. She has created and edited several series, including Penguin Civic Classics, Penguin Threads, Couture Classics, Penguin Horror, and Penguin Drop Caps.

david foster wallace the broom of the system: The Novel Project Graeme Simsion, 2022-03-01 The no-drama novel writing method behind Graeme Simsion's global bestsellers

david foster wallace the broom of the system: The Routledge Companion to Literature and Science Bruce Clarke, Manuela Rossini, 2010-09-13 Pt. 1. Literatures and sciences -- pt. 2. Disciplinary and theoretical approaches -- pt. 3. Periods and cultures.

david foster wallace the broom of the system: Wolfgang Koeppen Walter Erhart, 2018-02-12 Das ungeschriebene Hauptwerk des Wolfgang Koeppen - eine exemplarische Studie über das literarische Scheitern. Er wurde zu einem berühmten ›Fall‹ der Literaturgeschichte: ein mutmaßlich nicht mehr schreibender Autor, der die literarische Moderne in Deutschland nach 1945 mit begründete, einen weiteren Roman über Jahrzehnte jedoch verweigerte. Immer noch ungeklärt ist, was sich hinter dem Fall Koeppen verbirgt. Walter Erhart sucht die Gründe weder im Privaten noch beteiligt er sich an der Heroisierung eines notwendig nur noch Fragmente produzierenden modernen Dichters. Er liest die Werkgeschichte dieses Autors vielmehr exemplarisch: als Teil einer noch ungeschriebenen Literaturgeschichte des Scheiterns, als Schreibversuch und Erzählexperiment, mit dem Koeppen zugleich an die Grenzen der ästhetisch-literarischen Moderne geriet und deren unfreiwilliges Ende er beschreibt. Erstmals wird Koeppens Werk aus dem Nachlass und dem Archiv rekonstruiert: die Genese eines Schriftstellers aus dem Geist des Fin de Siècle und der Weimarer Republik, das lebenslange und doch vergebliche Bemühen um die Fertigstellung des großen Romans, der Konflikt widerstreitender Schreib- und Erzählweisen, die Versuche, den Schauplatz der erzählenden Literatur zu verlagern - mit Reiseliteratur, Drehbüchern und Filmen. Wolfgang Koeppen. Das Scheitern moderner Literatur enthüllt ein bislang verborgen gebliebenes Kapitel der deutschen Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert. Es ist auch die Geschichte einer an ihrem eigenen ästhetischen Programm scheiternden Moderne, im Gegenzug aber eröffnet dieses Scheitern den Blick auf die Zukunft des Erzählens in einer nachmodernen Welt.

david foster wallace the broom of the system: Magie und Metapher bei Clemens J. Setz Gesa Steinbrink, 2022-04-19 Das Werk des österreichischen Schriftstellers Clemens J. Setz stellt einen vor Herausforderungen: In der literarischen Öffentlichkeit gelten seine Texte trotz zahlreicher Belobigungen als rätselhaft, irritierend oder sperrig. Einfache oder zumindest eindeutige Erklärungen für die darin geschilderten, oft unwirklich oder sogar magisch erscheinenden Ereignisse gibt es größtenteils nicht, was im eigentümlichen Kontrast zu den ebenso großräumig wie detailreich geschilderten, nicht selten idiosynkratischen Wahrnehmungen und Reflexionen der Figuren steht. Eingebunden in eine reichhaltige Verweisstruktur auf verschiedenen Ebenen, die sich insbesondere in einer Vielzahl von Metaphern niederschlägt, müssen sich Leser:innen im Bemühen um eine kohärente Erzählung immer wieder mit Erkenntnislücken und komplexen Assoziationen, Verunsicherungen von Realitätskonventionen und semantischen Ambivalenzen befassen. Damit ist, so die These des Bandes, ein poetologisch auszuwertendes Verfahren indiziert: Magische Vorstellungen werden im Verbund mit metaphorischen Konzeptionen in Setz' Romanen literarisch verarbeitet und nehmen in ihrem gemeinsamen Auftreten eine bedeutsame ästhetische und epistemische Funktion ein. Die ihnen zugrundeliegenden kognitiven Prozesse stehen dabei in

elementarer Verwandtschaft, denn ihr gemeinsamer Wahrnehmungs- und Darstellungsmodus beruht auf analogischer Beziehungshaftigkeit, die sinnstiftend und in ihrer Wirkung besonders nachhaltig ist. Nach einem einführenden Teil in das noch kaum erforschte Werk von Clemens J. Setz entwickelt der Band zunächst eine eigenständige kognitionsästhetische Theorie zu Magie und Metapher unter Rückgriff auf verschiedene interdisziplinäre Ansätze, die dann im Rahmen einer detaillierten Analyse des Textkorpus geprüft und schließlich in kritischer Diskussion der Ergebnisse begründet wird.

david foster wallace the broom of the system: Maximalism in Contemporary American Literature Nick Levey, 2016-11-18 This book begins a new and foundational discussion of maximalism by investigating how the treatment of detail in contemporary literature impels readers to navigate, tolerate, and enrich the cultural landscape of postindustrial America. It studies the maximalist novels of David Foster Wallace, Nicholson Baker, Thomas Pynchon, and others, considering how overly-detailed writing serves the institutional, emotional, and intellectual needs of contemporary readers and writers. The book argues that maximalist novels not only exceed perceived limits of style, subject matter, and scope, but strive to remake the usefulness of books in contemporary culture, refreshing the act of reading. Levey shows that while these novels are preoccupied with detail and description, they are relatively unconcerned with the traditional goals of representation. Instead, they use detail to communicate particular values and fantasies of intelligence, enthusiasm, and ability attached to the management of complex and excessive information. Whether reinvigorating the banal and trivial in mainstream culture, or soothing anxieties of human insufficiency in the age of automation and the internet, these texts model significant abilities, rather than just objects of significance, and encourage readers to develop habits of reading that complement the demands of an increasingly detailed culture. Drawing upon a diverse range of theoretical schools and cultural texts, including Thing Theory, Marxism, New Formalism, playlists, blogs, and archival manuscripts, the book proposes a new understanding of maximalist writing and a new way of approaching the usefulness of literary objects in contemporary culture.

david foster wallace the broom of the system: *Pop Goes the Decade* Kevin L. Ferguson, 2019-09-03 Popular culture in the 1990s often primarily reflected millennial catastrophic anxieties. The world was tightening, speeding up, and becoming more dangerous and dangerously connected. Surely it was only a matter of time before it all came crashing down. *Pop Goes the Decade: The Nineties* explains the American 1990s for all readers. The book strives to be widely representative of 1990s culture, including the more obvious nostalgic versions of the decade as well as focused discussions of representations of minority populations during the decade that are often overlooked. This book covers a wide variety of topics to show the decade in its richness: music, television, film, literature, sports, technology, and more. It includes an introductory timeline and background section, followed by a lengthy Exploring Popular Culture section, and concludes with a brief series of essays further contextualizing the controversial and influential aspects of the decade. This organization allows readers both a wide exposure to the variety of experiences from the decade as well as a more focused approach to aspects of the 1990s that are still resonant today.

david foster wallace the broom of the system: Encyclopedia of Contemporary Writers and Their Work Geoff Hamilton, Brian Jones, 2015-04-22 Presents an alphabetical reference guide detailing the lives and works of authors associated with the English-language fiction of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

david foster wallace the broom of the system: *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern American Fiction* Paula Geyh, 2017-04-24 This Companion is an authoritative, comprehensive, and accessible guide to the key works, genres, and movements of postmodern American fiction.

david foster wallace the broom of the system: **The Matter of High Words** Robert Chodat, 2017-08-18 In a world of matter, how can we express what matters? When the explanations of the natural sciences become powerfully precise and authoritative, what is the status of our highest words, the languages that articulate our norms and orient our lives? *The Matter of High Words* examines a constellation of American writers who in the decades since World War II have posed these questions in distinctive ways. Walker Percy, Marilynne Robinson, Ralph Ellison, Stanley Cavell,

and David Foster Wallace are all self-consciously post-WWII authors, attuned to the fragmentation and skepticism that have defined so much of the literary and critical culture of the last century and more. Yet they also attempt to reach back to older forms of thought and writing that are often thought to have dried up—the traditions of prophecy, of wisdom literature, of the sage. Working within this dual inheritance, these authors are drawn equally to both art and argument, showing and telling, shifting continually between narrative and discursive genres. In their essays they act as moralists, promoting the broad, abstract concepts that might inspire action in the face of naturalistic reduction: community, family, courage, fraternity, marriage, friendship, temperance, judgment. In their narratives, they offer particular lives in particular settings, thick descriptions that give flesh to such high words. Rarely do these movements between genres generate a tidy equilibrium; where their essays speak of cooperation and redemption, their narratives display alienation, loss, and failure. But in pursuing such risky, unorthodox strategies, these postwar sages are not only able to challenge some of the dominant naturalistic theories of the last several decades: cognitive science, neo-Darwinian theory, social science, the fact-value divide in analytic philosophy. Through five chapters of detailed analysis and close reading, Chodat explores the question of whether vocabularies of ought and ought-not can still emerge today, and how these concepts might be embodied, and whether such ideas might be found in things.

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literary fame. My introduction outlines methodological tools I developed and situates them in the critical traditions of literary reception, cultural sociology and media theory before describing the digital ecologies that have emerged around literature online and their value. Chapter 1 explores the nature of literary fame through a case study of Thomas Pynchon, whose carefully guarded anonymity and ironic distance from capitalism are reflected in the networks his readers construct around his long, challenging books. In stark contrast, Toni Morrison, the subject of Chapter 2, has succeeded critically and commercially, tirelessly seeking out readers to form literary communities around her writing, most prominently through her collaboration with Oprah's Book Club. Chapter 3 considers David Foster Wallace and Junot Díaz and sets out a model for contemporary literary culture: a reading society that demands new forms of authorial reflexivity to mirror the collaborative, iterative nature of digital literary conversations. I conclude with a brief consideration of the exciting prospects and challenges for fiction in a world that reads more than ever but is growing disaffected with the material realities of literary production.

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