

# Pharmacological fictions. The limits of bibliotherapy

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JÜRGEN PIETERS  
(GHENT  
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[www.charm.ugent.be](http://www.charm.ugent.be)

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- Consortium for Health Humanities, Arts, Reading and Medicine
  - Network of 25+ global academic partners
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# Olga Tokarczuk

‘Every time we open a book, between the eye and the surface of the paper a kind of miracle happens, something special. We see rows of letters, and when we glance over them, our brains turn them into images, thoughts, smells, voices.’



‘Of all animal species,  
only man has acquired  
this uncanny ability, to  
read, and thereby leave  
his own reality -  
mentally and for some  
time.’



OLGA  
TOKARCZUK



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'In moments of agitation and stress, we do not read.'

'Reading is the privilege of a healthy, balanced mind.'

'Good reading involves actually understanding and living through what you read.'



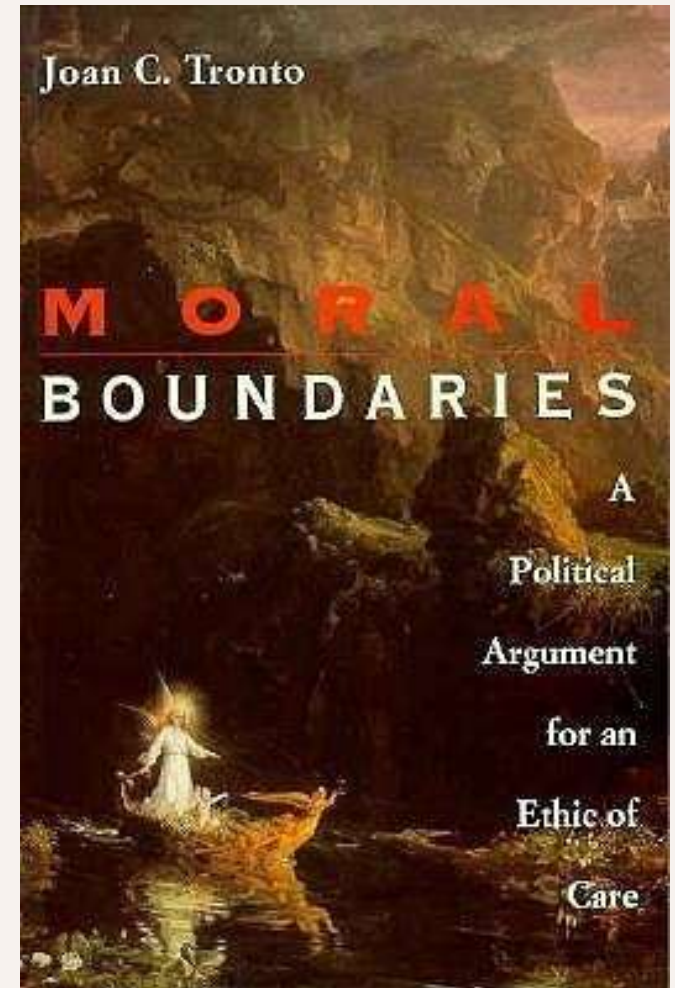
OLGA  
TOKARCZUK

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Joan Tronto





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## Tronto: 4 phases and 4 requirements of care

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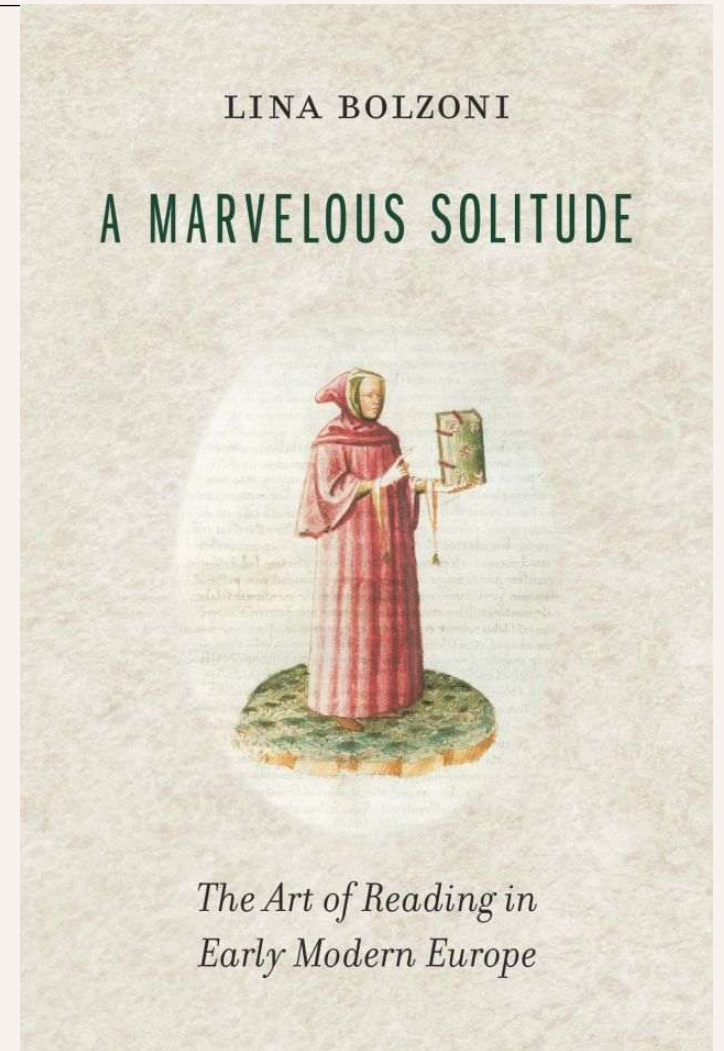
- ‘caring about’
- ‘taking care of’
- ‘care-giving’
- ‘receiving care’

- ‘attentiveness’
  - ‘responsibility’
  - ‘competence’
  - ‘responsiveness’
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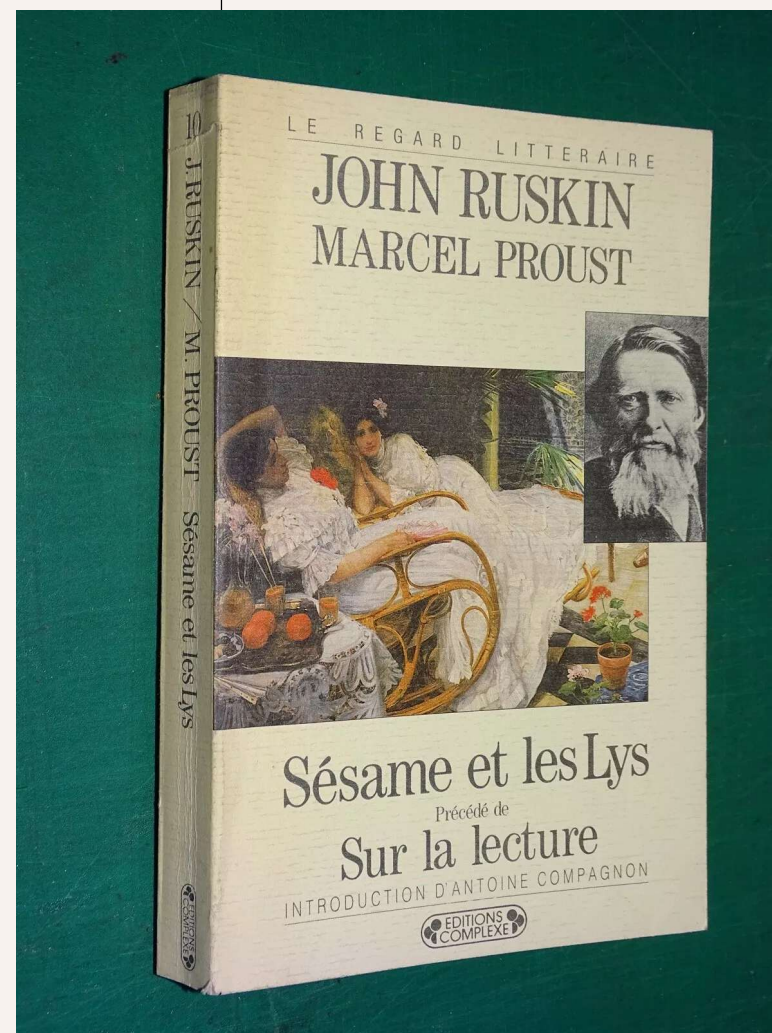
Lina Bolzoni



'[to] have a profound impact on the individual using them (or being used by them), to the extent that they transform expectations, abilities, and emotions and consequently affect the brain itself.'







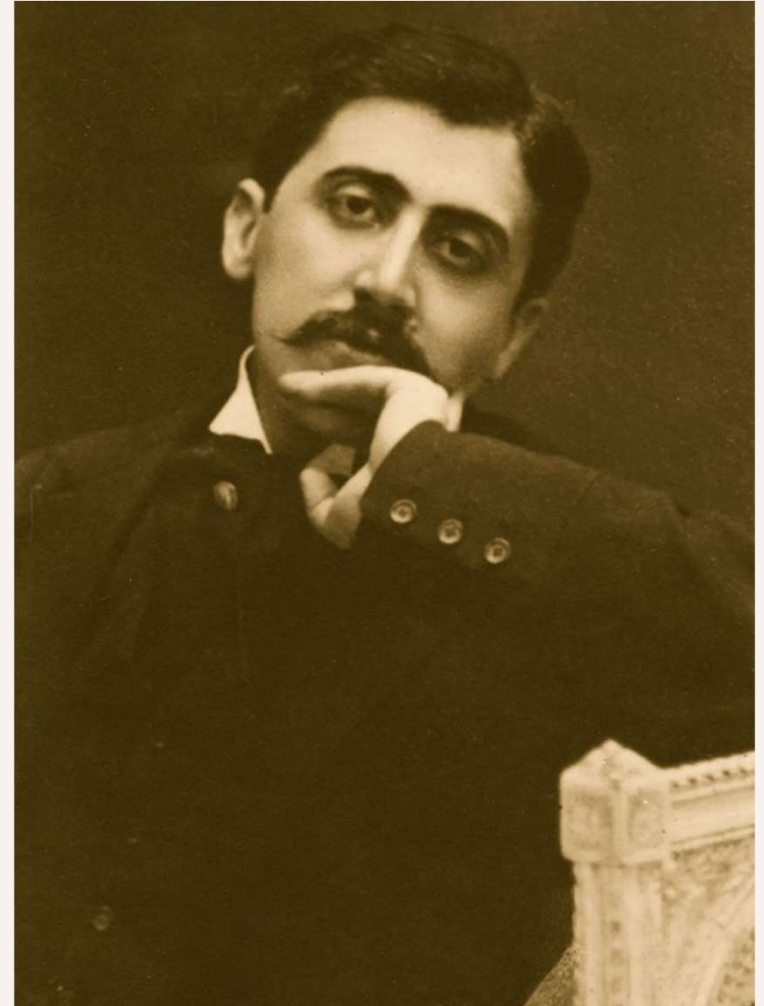
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Proust on reading:

‘a kind of curative precept’,

‘an intervention which, though originating from another, takes place deep within ourselves, that is, therefore, the stimulus of another spirit, but received in the midst of solitude’.

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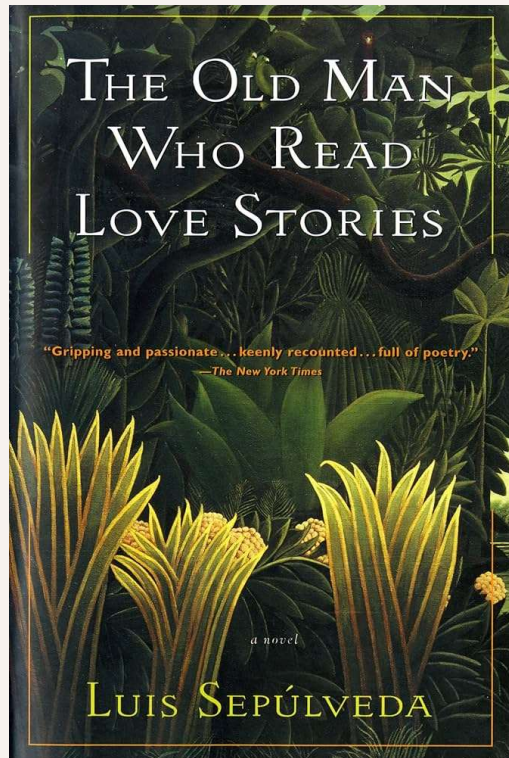




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# Luis Sepúlveda (1949–2020)

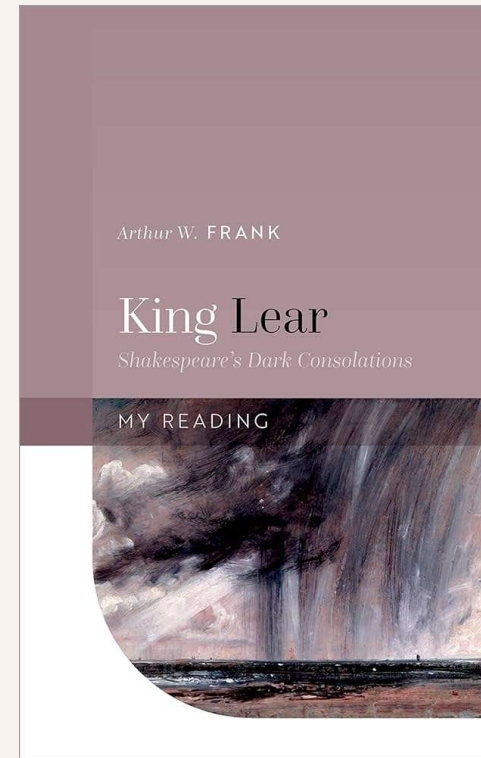
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# Arthur Frank – ‘vulnerable reading’

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# ‘vulnerable reading’

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- ‘seeks help in literature’
  - ‘In vulnerable reading, we seek a companion that can steady us, make our footing more firm, and then continue to be with us to turn to, confident it will offer assistance.’
  - ‘Vulnerable reading is how we read when some *it* threatens who we are committed to believing we are; it threatens the life we want to be able to continue to live. The threat may be immediate or in the future; obvious or vaguely sensed.’
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# Three functions of literature

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- Mirroring
  - Mentorship
  - Pedagogy of being in dialogue
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## Joan Tronto quotes Simone Weil (1909–1943)

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'Attention consists in suspending thought, leaving it available, empty and ready to be entered by its object ... thought must be empty, waiting, seeking nothing, but ready to receive in its naked truth the object that is about to penetrate it.'

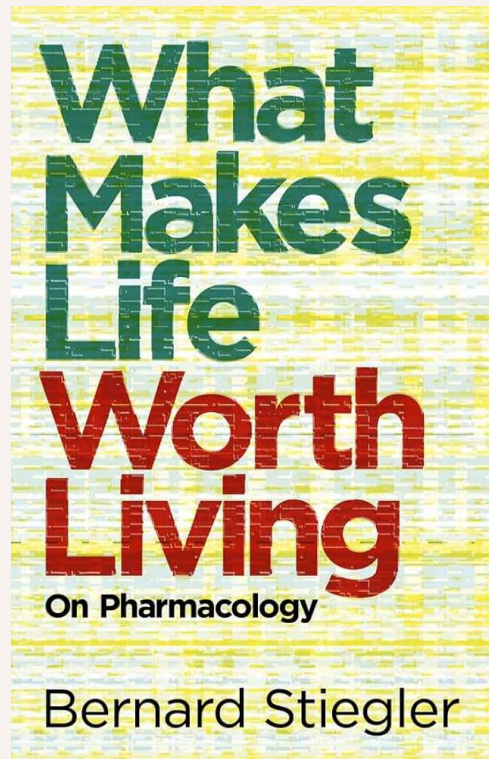




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# Bernard Stiegler (1952–2020)

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# pharmacology

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- 'a discourse on the pharmakon understood in the same gesture in its curative and toxic dimensions'
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