THE ESCHATOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

THE ESCHATOLOGICAL IMAGINATION: MEDIATING DAVID FOSTER WALLACE'S INFINITE JEST

By

JOHN TIMOTHY JACOBS, B.A., B.A. (Hons), M.A.

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

McMaster University

Doctor of Philosophy (2003)
(English)

McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: The Eschatological Imagination: Mediating David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest

AUTHOR: John Timothy Jacobs, B.A. (University of Calgary), B.A. (Hons) (McMaster University), M.A. (McMaster University)

ADVISOR: Professor H. John Ferns

NUMBER OF PAGES: vii, 241

ABSTRACT

There is an inherent risk in studying contemporary fiction. Serious questions form around issues of an author's longevity and legacy, a work's merit and its endurance for later scholarship, and the varieties of current critical reception and methodology against the shifts to come. The attendant difficulty of assessing and analyzing a work before an industry of critical reception has formed also presents challenges. David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest (1996) represents these challenges, and much more; it is at once an encyclopedic novel of 1079 pages, full of both liberal arts and scientific erudition, and an encomium to an apocalyptic end of late millennial American culture. The novel is highly allegorical and operates with three crucial subtexts, in addition to the standard diegetic narrative. In this study, I present three different, though not mutually exclusive, interpretations of this novel, a novel that has presented interpretive difficulties to scholars of contemporary fiction. In Part One, I survey and compare Wallace's aesthetic with the radical, yet self-contained, aesthetic of the poet, G.M. Hopkins; Part Two examines the integral concept of mediation and explores the subtext of the return of the dead author–the novel operates, in part, as a rejoinder to the death-of-the-author critical impasse; Part Three is primarily comparative and analyzes Fyodor Dostoevsky's The Brothers Karamazov (1880). Wallace has rewritten (or reimagined) Dostoevsky's novel and translated it into a contemporary context and idiom as a remedy for postmodern American solipsism.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend thanks to my thesis committee: Dr. Alan Bishop (First Reader), Dr. Jeffery Donaldson (Second Reader), and Dr. John Ferns (Doctoral Advisor). All have made significant contributions to my graduate education. Especial thanks, however, are reserved for Dr. Ferns for his patience, receptivity to my seemingly incongruent studies, guidance, and, most importantly, for exhorting me to "be happy in my work" during the dark season.

For

Nikki,

The Only Love of My Only Life

—*'Again & Always'*

Contents

"Beware when the great God lets loose a thinker on this planet. Then all things are at risk"
—Ralph Waldo Emerson ("Circles" 172).

Introduction

In Parenthesis: Reading David Foster Wallace

"In all the arts, adhering to a school and issuing group manifestoes and statements of common aims is a sign of youthfulness, and to some degree of immaturity; as a painter or writer or other creative person grows older and acquires more authority, he tends to withdraw from all such organizations and become simply himself"–Northrop Frye (qtd. in Weber vii).

"'Schools' of fiction are for crank-turners. The founder of a movement is never part of the movement"–David Foster Wallace (McCaffery 144).

"Irony is an important genre for us because so much contemporary literature is ironic in its tone. What irony appeals to is a sense of normality . . . and it is that sense of normality in the audience that enables irony to make its point as irony. Without that sense of the normal, irony would cease to become ironic and become simply a description"–Northrop Frye ("Literature as Therapy" 29).

In his essay "Contemporary American Fiction Through University Press Filters," Sanford Pinsker recently reviewed three critical studies of contemporary American fiction.[1] In this review article Pinsker laments the path taken in recent scholarly literary studies, particularly within the context of current American fiction as his title suggests, noting that university presses now tend to produce "sausage-grinder stuff" that "contextualiz[es] with a vengeance" (375). All three works treated by Pinsker tend to

organize a random and ostensibly disparate selection of post-Second World War novels around the now-common literary-theoretical template of, in Pinsker's words, "identity politics" (375)–that is to say, race, class, gender, and queer theory. Although he makes many sensible points–points that are, perhaps, more applicable to the current state of academic publishing–Pinsker rather amusingly grinds his axe on these specific critical works, just as he supposes that these critics' adherence to and application of current literary theories to American fiction functions as "axes to grind with regard to their distinguished predecessors" (379). It is not my intention to join the debate over the 'culture wars,' or the merits of certain methods of literary analysis of current American fiction, nor to engage the perennial debate about just what constitutes significant contemporary fiction, which works merit academic inspection, or of questions of popular- and high-culture literature.

I have instead selected one contemporary American novel for critical examination, David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest (1996). Instead of privileging a theoretical discourse in this study of American fiction, I have privileged the literary artifact first and then made selective use of literary-philosophical theories and perspectives, as warranted and appropriate. It should be noted, then, that the employment of secondary, theoretical texts in this study often emerges from Wallace's own references to these texts and not from a preconceived theoretical model to apply to Wallace's fiction. This is particularly significant as these points of embarkation lead to a

more fertile and significant understanding of one of America's most disturbing, erudite, and imaginative literary voices. In terms of density and encyclopedic content, Infinite Jest stands out against the broad relief-map of American fiction and has already been compared with similar-styled, notable precursors, William Gaddis's The Recognitions (1955) and Thomas Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow (1973), both of which have received substantial critical treatment in both article and book-length studies. Because Wallace actively publishes essays in popular forums (though an 'academic'), and comments in interviews on the art of fiction, I have, naturally, harmonized his ideas and theories with his second novel. Because there is still no full-length critical study of Infinite Jest, and because of its core complexity and the failure of scholars and general readers to come to even a general consensus on how the novel's plot resolves itself, the primary aim of the study is explicative. Fragmented chronology is a major feature of this novel, as Stephen Burn has meticulously elaborated in his recent reader's guide to Infinite Jest (2003), and a year of narrative events is missing from the diegetic narrative ("Year of Glad," the narrative present in which the novel opens). Many reviewers, most notably The New York Times's Michiko Kakutani, have claimed the novel to be poorly edited and, borrowing from Henry James, have called it a "'loose baggy monster'" (Kakutani n.p.); Wallace has countered by asserting that "it may be a mess, but it's a very careful mess. A lot of work went into making it look like that. That might sound like a pathetic lie, but it's not" (Donahue n.p.), something that Burn supports in his detailed reading of Infinite

Jest's chronological sequence. Because of this chronological lacuna, however, there can be no definitive consensus on the resolution of Infinite Jest's plot. So, Wallace has carefully composed a novel that is both a reader-response theorist's worst nightmare or textual cornucopia; each individual reader extends the diegetic narrative after the reading and extrapolates from the few slender yet crucial clues how the narrative concludes. The result is a powerful textual resonance, like none other in recent American fiction, and one of which such a scrupulous artist as Wallace must surely have been aware of. In what follows, I provide three distinct, though not mutually exclusive, interpretations or readings of Infinite Jest.

Part One, "American Touchstone: The Idea of Order," outlines Wallace's aesthetic, linking it to one of his greatest though seemingly unlikely influences, the Victorian poet Gerard Manley Hopkins. In the course of this chapter, I further comment on Wallace's views toward contemporary art, particularly contemporary American fiction, and highlight the ways in which Wallace has appropriated Hopkins's aesthetic and transformed it into a contemporary visionary model of his own. In this opening chapter, I discuss the ways in which Infinite Jest is multi-layered with various levels of subtext. One of its more significant subtexts is that it operates as an aesthetic allegory in which the narrator obliquely comments on contemporary art and the current proclivity of current artists, particularly fiction writers, to make their works primarily ironic without grounding their irony in what Frye calls "a sense of normality" ("Literature" 29). In an interview,

Wallace calls this an ironic ground-clearing:

> irony and cynicism were just what the U.S. hypocrisy of the fifties and sixties called for. That's what made the early postmodernists great artists. The great thing about irony is that it splits things apart, gets us up above them so we can see the flaws and hypocrisies, and duplicities . . . . Sarcasm, parody, absurdism and irony are great ways to strip off stuff's mask and show the unpleasant reality behind it. The problem is that once the rules for art are debunked, and once the unpleasant realities the irony diagnoses are revealed and diagnosed, *then* what do we do? Irony's useful for debunking illusions, but most of the illusion debunking in the U.S. has now been done and redone. (McCaffery 147, interviewer's emphasis)

The ends of irony concern Wallace. In his aesthetic formulation, irony is now unmoored from any aesthetic constraints (Frye's "normality"), and it is instructive to note the parallels he defines between the affected forms of cultural ennui and "postmodern irony," a "hatred that winks and nudges you and pretends it's just kidding" (147), and the artistic production and consumption of this cultural attitude. That is to say, for Wallace, there is no division between artistic production/consumption and contemporary living; the millennial arts have, because of commercial art's co-opting of serious fiction's strategies, increasingly become "our guide to inclusion. A how-to" (Jest 694). Wallace works to remedy what he diagnoses as an extreme millennial American "Romantic glorification of Weltschmerz" with its affected "world-weariness" and "hip ennui" (694). In this sense, Wallace proclaims G.M. Hopkins a contemporary American aesthetic "touchstone," and uses him as a star to steer by. In doing so, Wallace inevitably commences the very thing he shuns, a literary school or movement, by providing a radically self-contained and controlled aesthetic for other contemporary writers to observe:

> The next real literary 'rebels' in this country might well emerge as some weird bunch of *anti*-rebels, born oglers who dare somehow to back away from ironic watching, who have the childish gall actually to endorse and instantiate single-entendre principles. Who treat of plain old untrendy human troubles and emotions in U.S. life with reverence and conviction. Who eschew self-consciousness and hip fatigue. These anti-rebels would be outdated, of course, before they even started. Dead on the page. Too sincere. Clearly repressed. Backward, quaint, naïve, anachronistic. Maybe that'll be the point. Maybe that's why they'll be the next real rebels. Real rebels, as far as I can see, risk disapproval. The old postmodern insurgents risked the gasp and squeal: shock, disgust, outrage, censorship, accusations of socialism, anarchism, nihilism. Today's risks are different. The new rebels might be artists willing to risk the yawn, the rolled eyes, the cool smile, the nudged ribs, the parody of gifted ironists. ("E Unibus Pluram" 81)[2]

This chapter operates as an essential grounding in Wallace's aesthetic views, and serves as an introductory basis to embark upon a more detailed commentary on and understanding of Infinite Jest in the analyses to come in the succeeding chapters.

Part Two, "Infinite Geist: Lexical Investigation, Mediation, and the Ghost of the Author," reads Wallace's novel in terms of lexical analysis and narrative mediation, both of which are foundational to the work considered and to Wallace's conception of the art of fiction. Because Wallace–it seems more than any other contemporary American novelist–appropriates aesthetic methods and styles from a legion of sources, the study is also inevitably comparative at times. I have employed a tripartite methodology for this chapter that includes hermeneutics (Hans-Georg Gadamer), phenomenology (Maurice Merleau-Ponty), and reader-response theory (Wolfgang Iser). I further explore the relationship between isolated words that operate as densely coded leitmotifs in the novel

and demonstrate, as in Part One, that Infinite Jest is an elaborate critical-aesthetic allegory, and that it is structured as a subtle rejoinder to the 'death of the author' impasse in critical theory. Only one other critic has noted the possibility of such a reading, and that is to be found in Burn's reader's guide. Because Burn's ninety-six-page guide is primarily intended for an undergraduate audience, as part of Continuum Press's 'Continuum Contemporaries,' a series of uniform précis guides to recent fiction, he does not, however, explore this challenging and exciting area of critical inquiry into Infinite Jest in any detail but instead suggests it for a possible essay and/or discussion question:

> Wallace is clearly aware of developments in poststructuralist criticism over the last few decades. Can the stretches of the novel that detail an author returning from the grave to explain how his 'radical realism' (836) has been misunderstood, be read as an oblique commentary on Roland Barthes's 'The Death of the Author'? (79)

Part Three, "The Eschatological Imagination," argues that Infinite Jest is a subtle and elaborate rewriting (re-imagining or re-visioning) of Feodor Dostoevsky's last and greatest novel, The Brothers Karamazov (1879-1880); in this chapter, I contend that Wallace has figuratively translated Dostoevsky's novel into both a contemporary American idiom and context, while preserving the primary philosophical-thematic content of Dostoevsky's original novel, the issues of reason versus faith (or belief) and the significance of ideological engagement through fiction. Because Infinite Jest operates on several aesthetic levels, this chapter argues that Wallace subtly probes the question of whether millennial American art has, at long last, viewed the ends of postmodernist

literature; I contend not only that Wallace's novel is eschatological–instead of 'apocalyptic'–but that his own aesthetic is also richly informed with an eschatological sensibility partly inherited from Dostoevsky. As a 'critic' I have assumed the role of *mediator*, and hope that my discussion of Infinite Jest serves three purposes: to encourage further critical discourse on it; to aid others, like me, who have worked or continue to work on Wallace's fiction and essays; and to assist new readers of the novel to arrive at a fuller appreciation of Wallace's extraordinary achievement. As with all works of literature there can never be a single and terminal definitive interpretation of a literary artifact, and these three chapters are intended to be anything but definitive–they represent only the outcome of several years of close study of Wallace's works. Finally, the study is partly a cultural study of American art and its consequences on contemporary life and the isolated subject; the social roles of communication and the significance and active influence of fiction on American culture are tangentially discussed through the lens of Wallace's fiction.

* * *

Wallace's entry onto the American scene of contemporary-fiction writing began in 1987 with the publication of his first novel, The Broom of the System, originally written as a senior undergraduate thesis at Amherst College, Massachusetts. Two years later saw

the publication of his first collection of short fiction, The Girl with Curious Hair (1989), also the product of academic work, this time from the University of Arizona's creative-writing program where he took his M.F.A. (derisively referred to by Wallace as his "Master of Flatulent Arts" degree) (Bruni n.p.). In Summer 1993, with Infinite Jest still, in Wallace's own words, a "quite a bit longer thing in progress" ("Progress" 223), The Review of Contemporary Fiction featured Wallace (with fellow emerging fiction writers, William T. Vollmann and Susan Daitch) in its inaugural "Younger Writers Issue," an issue for those writers who, wrote editor Larry McCaffery, "despite a lifetime of literary achievement, have received little critical attention," yet are "promising enough to suggest they will eventually achieve historical importance" (7). McCaffery's words have proved prophetic, although, at the time, Wallace's literary output could have been said to be slight with only one novel and one collection of short fiction published.[3] It is fair to say, then, that Wallace's work remained largely unknown until the publication of his massive second novel, the 1079-page Infinite Jest, which immediately brought him a noteworthy, if not peculiar, blend of praise from American book critics in publications ranging from The Atlantic Monthly to The New York Times and an immediate 'cult following' on the Internet and comparisons to similar-style novelists like Thomas Pynchon, William Gass, William Burroughs, and William Gaddis, among others.[4] Wallace has since published a collection of "essays and arguments," A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again (1997), which consists of his contributions to various mainstream publications like

Harper's; a second collection of short fiction, Brief Interviews with Hideous Men (1999); with a third collection, Oblivion, forthcoming (2004), and has collaborated with Mark Costello on a critical work, the somewhat dated Signifying Rappers: Rap and Race in the Urban Present (1990). Testifying to his diverse interests and breadth of scholarly ability, Wallace has also written a critical biography of the mathematician, Georg Cantor (1845-1918), entitled Everything and More: Cantor & Zeno & Math & Abstraction & ∞ (October 2003).

If there is a curious dichotomy between the somewhat plodding critical and more popular interest in David Foster Wallace, then his work (including his journalistic contributions to publications like Harper's and Rolling Stone Magazine) is mediated by his academic standing. Prior to writing Infinite Jest, Wallace spent time pursuing a doctorate in Philosophy–or more precisely, "aesthetics" (Costello 235)–at Harvard University before leaving the program, presumably (although Wallace mentions this nowhere), to devote himself full-time to writing fiction.[5] In 1992, he accepted a position with the Department of English at Illinois State University (Normal) and, as of this year, commenced the position of Roy E. Disney Chair of Creative Writing at Pomona College (Claremont, California), a chair endowed through a $1.75 million gift by Roy Edward Disney, vice chairman of the Disney Corporation and nephew of the late Walt Disney, which endowment sparked a frenzy of media attention because of Wallace's satirical examination of corporations, advertising, and marketing in his fiction, most notably

Infinite Jest and the short story "Mr Squishy."[6] In terms of Wallace's fiction-writing ability and general erudition there is little doubt that he is of the first rank. He is the recipient of an O. Henry Award (1989), The Paris Review Prize (1988), a Whiting Writers' Award (1987), a Lannan Foundation award (1996) and, most recently, the prestigious John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Fellowship, popularly known as a 'genius grant' (1997). Perhaps one of the reasons for Wallace's appeal as a compelling literary figure for study in the early twenty-first century is his active engagement as a public intellectual, literary artist, and academic. For Wallace's works tend to center upon a small range of recurring themes, that are continually refined by him, and that he vigorously works at in the best interests of his readership. As I argue in Part Two, Wallace is a highly skilled manipulator of textual forms, variously using capital letters, footnotes and endnotes, interpolated editorial parentheses–"[,]" (Brief 150)–and punctuation–"'. . .'" (Jest 782)–for strategic effect that fragments the text and underscores the fact of a mediating presence within the text at all times for the reader. It can be said, then, that this unique author continually lives in parenthesis within his work, always endeavoring to converse with his readers.

Notes

1 See Sanford Pinsker, "Contemporary American Fiction Through University Press Filters," The Georgia Review 55.2 (2001): 374-381.

2 This passage is excerpted from Wallace's revised version of this essay reprinted in his collection of essays, A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again (Boston: Little, 1997): 21-82. For the original version see "E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction." The Review of Contemporary Fiction 13.2 (1993): 151-194.

3 See The Review of Contemporary Fiction 13.2 (1993): 127ff.

4 Academic-critical reception to Wallace was initially cool or distanced, as McCaffery observed as far back as 1993, until the publication of Tom LeClair's "The Prodigious Fiction of Richard Powers, William Vollmann and David Foster Wallace," Critique 38.1 (1996): 12-37. The popular reception to Infinite Jest, however, saw the creation of many 'fan'-based, Internet web sites as well as a chat-group and list-serv devoted to Wallace and his works; online indices and readers' guides also appeared. For some of the more prominent web pages, see: Tim Ware, "Infinite Jest Online Index," <http://www.ironhorse.com/~thamer/dfw.html>; Bob Wake, "Infinite Jest: Reviews, Articles, and Miscellany," <http://www.smallbytes.net/~bobkat/jesterlist.html>; Nick Mantias, "The Howling Fantods," <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/8175/dfw.htm>; No Author, "And But So What's This: A Character Guide to Infinite Jest," <http://www.ilstu.edu/~tffeene/ij/characterguide.html>.

It should also be noted that Wallace's fiction, especially Infinite Jest, has generated numerous undergraduate theses devoted to Wallace, some of which are posted on the Internet either in installments or entirely; see, for example, Toon Theuwis, "The Quest for Infinite Jest: An Enquiry into the Encyclopedic and Postmodernist Nature of David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest." More recently, two unpublished doctoral dissertations have appeared in which a chapter of each explores Infinite Jest: William Strecker, "Ecologies of Knowledge: Narrative Ecology in Contemporary American Fiction," diss., Ball State U, 2000., and Charles Gregory Ruberto, "Technologies of the Self: Richard Powers, Neal Stephenson, David Foster Wallace," diss., Harvard U, 2000.

5 See Mark Costello, "Fighting to Write: A Short Reminiscence of D.F. Wallace," The Review of Contemporary Fiction 13.2 (1993): 235-236. Mark Costello, a novelist himself, was Wallace's roommate during Wallace's time at Harvard, and it was also at this time that the two collaborated on their study of rap music.

In an email letter to Harvard's noted philosopher of language and aesthetics, Stanley Cavell, I inquired if in fact Cavell had supervised Wallace during the novelist's time at Harvard. Professor Cavell promptly responded (26 January 2002), writing, "though I am impressed by what I know of David Foster Wallace's work . . . I'm sorry to say that he did not work with me while he was at Harvard." Cavell goes on to convey a peculiar anecdote, however: "I was told several years ago by one of my close friends, a former student of mine, that Wallace came to a seminar of mine once and was offended by something I said or the way I said it, and never returned. Since I don't regard myself as careless of other people's feelings, I was pained to learn of my bad behavior, and can only hope that it was an aberration on my part. I do not recall the incident."

6 For more on the Disney endowment see Elisabeth Franck, "Disney Foster Wallace," The New York Observer 3 December 2001: 3, or The New York Observer Online, 24 January 2002, <http://www.observer.com/pages/story.asp?ID=3938#top>. Elizabeth Klemm (pseudonym, David Foster Wallace), "Mr Squishy," Timothy McSweeney's Quarterly Concern 5 (2000): 199-248.

Part One *

American Touchstone: The Idea of Order

"Nothing is bad in itself except disorder"–T.E. Hulme ("A Tory Philosophy," The Collected Writings of T.E. Hulme 235).

"Is there no order here?"–Bertolt Brecht (The Trial of Lucullus, 5).

"Custom hath made it in him a property of / Easiness"–William Shakespeare (Hamlet, 5.1.67-68).

In the first critical article on David Foster Wallace's second novel, Infinite Jest (1996), Tom Le Clair calls the work an "allegory of aesthetic orphanhood" (33). Wallace's novel is at once a dense compendium of American neuroses and addictions, an astute examination of the insatiable American proclivity to the pursuit of happiness–"happification" (Jest 42)–in an age of infinite stimulative choice, and a latent aesthetic allegory. For Wallace, the typically American rush toward attaining (and sustaining) pleasure is a self-destructive habit of mind that has its root in the arts, particularly the literary arts of millennial America. The postmodern bequest of heavily ironic and self-conscious fiction has corrupted literature, according to Wallace,

diminishing it from its previous status as a "living transaction between humans," leaving literary orphans in its wake (McCaffery 142, 150). The consequence, for Wallace, is that current fiction regresses into a game that celebrates the author and privileges the artifact over the reader, terminating any potential transcendent communicative power. Wallace attributes the aporia between writer and reader to a state of aesthetic rulelessness in which writers are no longer "using formal innovation in the service of an original vision" (145). In Infinite Jest, Wallace revives the mimetic tradition of realism–"little-r" for Wallace as he negotiates "canonical distinctions" (140)–by defamiliarizing current literary perceptions and expectations *within* his artifact. Infinite Jest creates a new space for American fiction by recalling past practitioners of mimesis and through adherence to aesthetic rules that recall Gerard Manley Hopkins's exacting yet prescient aesthetic. In doing so, Wallace establishes an aesthetic that combines order with originality, and one that conveys a singular message in an unself-conscious manner. The correspondence between these two artists surpasses their artistic production; their art symbolically transforms the mythos of their literature into what Northrop Frye has called a "myth to live by" (17), in which literature bridges existential loneliness and, in Wallace's case, American "lostness" (Miller 2).

Wallace attributes current fiction's malaise to a culture of irony founded by American postmodernists like Nabokov, Pynchon, Coover, Barth, and other innovative writers who "weathered real shock" (McCaffery 135) and inventively exercised irony to

destabilize their docile society. Their fictions defamiliarized the familiar by making standard things strange. In the aftermath there has followed a series of "crank turners" (135) weaned on the same ironic formulae, but operating when the strange is now normal, the defamiliar all-too familiar: "we need fiction writers to restore strange things' ineluctable *strangeness*" (McCaffery 140, interviewer's emphasis). Fiction's function is now "reversed" (140). Irony as a cultural currency has sent us retreating further into the mind; authorial posturing replaces conviction as "all U.S. irony is based on an implicit 'I don't really mean what I say'" premise that "serves an exclusively negative function" (Wallace, "E Unibus" 183). Wallace contends that purposeless irony (for irony's sake) paralyzes when it "becomes in and of itself just a mode of social discourse. That is, it's not really about causing any sort of change anymore, it's just sort of a hip, cool way to do it–to speak and act, to sort of make fun of everything and yourself and being really afraid of being made fun of" (Wiley 1). In her somewhat prophetic essay, "Spoofing and Schtik [sic] " (1965), Pauline Kael cautions that "unlike satire, spoofing has no serious objectives . . . it has no cleansing power. It's just a technique of ingratiation: the spoof apologizes for its existence, assures us that . . . it isn't aiming for beauty or expressiveness or meaning or relevance" (85). The result is a fiction that aims only for the 'wow' factor, a relentless reminder that the "author is smart and funny" ("E Unibus" 191). The author becomes the novel's ostensible subject, and readers are forced to read such works as flattering their "erudite postmodern Weltschmerz" for 'getting' an author's references and tricks (191).

The muddling consequence of this irony vogue is twofold.[1] First, fiction is increasingly unconcerned about communicating (not didactically, but penetrating another's consciousness) with the reader; and, second, because "irony's singularly unuseful when it comes to constructing anything to replace the hypocrisies it debunks" (183), a vacuum remains that fiction writers use as a forum of expression of the "look-at-me-please-love-me-I-hate-you" type that spurns the reader and celebrates the artifact instead of attending to its recipient (McCaffery 136). Fiction slips into a state of ruleless solipsism. In Infinite Jest, halfway house resident Nell Gunther "amuses herself" by wearing her glass eye "so the pupil and the iris face in and the dead white and tiny manufacturer's specifications on the back . . . face out" (363). Gunther's glass eye (solipsism) is the novel's primary metaphor for involuted art that terminates with the artificer. Art in her time fails to engage her and leaves her, like the novel's other characters, "chained in a cage of the self" (777). An example of literary posturing that Wallace uses in his essay, "E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction," is image-fiction writer Mark Leyner's My Cousin, My Gastroenterologist (1990). Leyner's work is less a novel than it is a collage of familiar popular culture imagery warmed-up in ironic fashion:

> I'm stirring a pitcher of Tanqueray martinis with one hand and sliding a tray of frozen clams *oreganata* into the oven with my foot. I've got a dozen cigarettes going simultaneously in ashtrays all over the apartment. God, these Methedrine suppositories that Yogi Vithaldas gave me are good! As I iron a pair of tennis shorts I dictate a haiku into a tape recorder and then dash off to snake a clogged drain in the bathroom sink and then do three

> minutes on the speedbag before making an origami praying mantis and then reading an article in High Fidelity magazine as I stir the *coq au vin*. (Leyner 49, "E Unibus" 191)

Leyner's fiction mimes American materialist culture in a world-weary fashion–something that television now does, Wallace notes ("E Unibus" 174ff)–but offers nothing in the intervening gap, and provides readers nothing with which they are not already familiar. Wallace calls this affliction "cleveritis" (McCaffery 134), and insists that a constant search for artistic cleverness ultimately ends in an aesthetic stalemate in which the reader is inundated with the familiar.

Wallace contends that serious fiction needs to counter television's implicit denial "that we're lonely" and that its images (and the Internet's as well) contribute to loneliness by providing only the "facsimile of a relationship without the work of a relationship" (136). Fiction's job, then, is to "aggravate"–even antagonize–a "sense of entrapment and loneliness and death in people, to move people to countenance it, since any possible human redemption requires us first to face what's dreadful, what we want to deny" (136). In its fullest realization, the novel is more than a verbal joust, and should be a "deep, significant conversation with another consciousness" in which a "relationship" is forged that enables the reader to feel "unalone–intellectually, emotionally, [and] spiritually" (Miller 5). Without confronting our own sense of mortality we cannot begin to live abundantly, but will instead slip into further solipsism and what Wallace calls "anhedonia" (Jest 695), an alienating form of analgesia that numbs us from a meaningful

knowledge of ourselves. For the driven kids of Infinite Jest's Enfield Tennis Academy, the "idea that achievement doesn't automatically confer interior worth is, to them, still, at this age, an abstraction, rather like the prospect of their own death–'Caius Is Mortal' and so on" (693).[2] Wallace here echoes the syllogism from Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilych": "Caius is a man, men are mortal, therefore Caius is mortal" (Tolstoy 1723). For Ilych, Caius is a pure abstraction–the 'other' faceless persons of the world that die, not him. Ilych lives a status quo existence, and his only goal is the thoughtless acquisition of material goods and a decorous life. When sudden disease and his impending death overtake him, he is shocked into a recognition of his own mortality, one that comes too late. His wife and daughters dishonestly console him and fail themselves to acknowledge his deathbed situation. Tolstoy's novella does precisely what Wallace calls for in American fiction: it forces readers to face their own mortality. In Infinite Jest, the "lively arts of the millennial U.S.A." fail to awaken its characters from their withdrawn state. Instead, they treat

> anhedonia and internal emptiness as hip and cool. It's maybe the vestiges of the Romantic glorification of Weltschmerz, which means world-weariness or hip ennui. Maybe it's the fact that most of the arts here are produced by world-weary and sophisticated older people and then consumed by younger people who not only consume art but study it for clues on how to be cool, hip–and keep in mind that, for kids and younger people, to be hip and cool is the same as to be admired and accepted and included and so Unalone . . . . The U.S. arts are our guide to inclusion. A how-to. We are shown how to fashion masks of ennui and jaded irony at a young age . . . And then it's stuck there, the weary cynicism that saves us from gooey sentiment and unsophisticated naïveté. Sentiment equals naïveté on this continent. (Jest 694)

Television, the Internet, and Passaro's renaissance in American fiction have produced an "anaesthesia of *form*" that dulls the senses as a temporary and unfulfilling "anesthetic against loneliness" by failing to engage people (McCaffery 136, interviewer's emphasis). Wallace notes that "our dread of being trapped inside a self (a psychic self, not just a physical self) has to do with angst about death, the recognition that I'm going to die, and die very much alone, and the rest of the world is going to go merrily on without me" (136). Successful fiction forces a recognition of our mortality by communicating with the reader. Only then can we begin to live, not through the simulacra of television and the Internet which purport to take us out of ourselves, but only provide the image of reality, not the experience, whether an exotic locale or a relationship. Wallace's aesthetic requires that fiction disturb our staid existence and propel us into the common experiences of human life.

Like Wallace, Kenneth Burke argues in his The Philosophy of Literary Form (1941) that enriched human experience–the "ultimate philosophic vision"–is obtained only through the "'dialectical' approach" of "dramas of conflict" (157), in which we personally grapple with the troubling aspects of being human and transmit that heritage. Living, Burke stresses, cannot be accomplished by "going *around* drama," but only by "going *through* drama" (157, author's emphasis). Burke argues that as the best of human thought is distilled there arises the risk of "attenuation" (157). Art is successively diminished when younger artists, impressed with aesthetic innovations, "attempt to

'begin'" where the innovator left off, "as though there could be handed to them, on a platter, the imaginative grasp of this ultimate period" which the founding artist "earned by all that had gone before it" (158). Wallace's conception of the 'crank turner' echoes Burke as today's literary artists attempt to "'project'" the "last style" of the innovator "with efficiency into a mannerism" (158). The difference between the two types of artist is that today's writers no longer participate in an aesthetic conflict of their own and, instead, convey an inherited and diminished aesthetic that benefits neither writer nor reader: "the only stuff a writer can get from an artistic ancestor is a certain set of aesthetic values and beliefs, and maybe a set of formal techniques that might–just might–help the writer chase his own click" (McCaffery 147). The innovator attains a mode of aesthetic representation forged in the foundry of conflict, of testing thought with (symbolic) action: "there is a crucial difference between the peace of a warrior who lays down his arms . . . and the peace of those who are innocent of war (innocence untried being like snow fallen in the night; let us not praise it for not melting until the sun has been full upon it)" (Burke 158). Wallace and Burke both contend that emerging artists must make their own art out of the fragments of the inherited past, adapting it to the conflicts of their culture. Visionary artists,

> out of conflict, evolve projects for atonement, Versöhnung, assuagement. They hand these on to others. And the heirs must either make these structures of atonement the basis of a new conflict, or be emptied. Much of the best in thought is evolved to teach us how to die well; whereupon it is studied and built upon by those who have never lived well. Either anesthesia is earned by aesthesia, or it is empty. (158)

Untried image-conscious fiction becomes a game without rules because it lacks a guiding ethos; it remains perpetually static as it repeatedly depicts the same cultural phenomena. It "depict[s] the way a culture's bound and defined by mediated gratification and image" (McCaffery 136) but offers nothing as an antidote to redeem cultural deadening. Form is privileged over function as works are made "involuted in the right ways," with the "appropriate intertextual references" that make them "look smart" at the expense of any meaningful exchange (142). For Wallace, the impasse arises from a disregard of aesthetic restraints "since everybody can do pretty much whatever they want, without boundaries to define them or constraints to struggle against, you get this continual avant-garde rush forward without anyone bothering to speculate on the destination, the *goal* of the forward rush" (132). Literature that seeks only to shock ceases after a time to be "progress and becomes an end in itself" (132). On this aesthetic aimlessness, Wallace remarks:

> We've seen that you can break any or all of the rules without getting laughed out of town, but we've also seen the toxicity that anarchy for its own sake can yield. It's often useful to dispense with standard formulas, of course, but it's just as often valuable and brave to see what can be done within a set of rules–which is why formal poetry's so much more interesting to me than free verse. *Maybe our touchstone now should be G. M. Hopkins*, who made up his *own* set of formal constraints and then blew everyone's footwear off from inside them. There's something about free play within an ordered and disciplined structure that resonates for readers. And there's something about complete caprice and flux that's deadening. (149-50, first emphasis added)

Wallace's reference to Hopkins is significant as he looks back to the Victorian poet's then-radical aesthetics for his own raison d'être; the directionless aesthetic of

contemporary fiction invites a look at past aesthetic precedents.

The primary moment of conjunction between the two aesthetics is Wallace's admiration for Hopkins's self-imposed aesthetic boundaries that result in vibrant poetry.[3] Hopkins attains his own version of Burke's "ultimate philosophic vision" by effacing himself and adhering to rules, thereby writing himself out of depression and alienation–from God–through the rigors of aesthetic conflict. Hopkins demonstrates the conflict *through* his artifact, instead of using it as a method of involution and psychic withdrawal. In a letter to Robert Bridges on 21 August 1877, Hopkins writes that his aesthetic–perceived as chaotic in his time–was steeped in moderation to achieve specific ends:

> Only remark, as you say that there is no conceivable licence I should not be able to justify, that with all my licences, or rather laws, I am stricter than you and I might say than anybody I know . . . . I may say my apparent licences are counterbalanced, and more, by my strictness. In fact all English verse, except Milton's, almost, offends me as 'licentious.' Remember this. (Letters to RB 44-45)

Wallace similarly imposes on himself an aesthetic restraint in Infinite Jest that diminishes his presence as author and concomitantly 'speaks' to the reader's consciousness. Wallace's artifact demonstrates his artistic ideal even as it comments on its own aesthetic limits. Enfield Tennis Academy's kids play an annual game of "Eschaton" (Jest 321), a nuclear-war type of game, played on a netless court–a "rectangular projection of the planet earth" (333)–with tennis balls and distributed athletic gear for missiles and nations; players' parabolic lobs simulate nuclear assault, and damage ratios are tabulated

by a "gamemaster" (322).[4] Snow falls during play and a dispute arises over whether it affects the missiles' (tennis balls') trajectories (334). The gamemaster explains that the snow is "only real-world snow if it's already in the *scenario,*" but the children cannot distinguish between their mediating actions and their self-conscious presence within the game (334, author's emphasis). Ultimately, the game reverts into a "worst-case-&-utterly-decontrolled-Armageddon-type situation" (340) as they launch at each other instead of the fictional territories. Eschaton is a metaphor for art's "Armageddon" (McCaffery 134), the inevitable end of continually involuted self-conscious art. Within Infinite Jest, Wallace comments on his perception of current fiction through the allegory of Eschaton and the gamemaster's reasoning:

> Players themselves can't be valid targets. Players aren't inside the goddamn game. Players are part of the *apparatus* of the game. They're part of the map. It's snowing on the players but not on the territory. They're part of the *map*, not the cluster-fucking *territory*. You can only launch against the *territory*. Not against the *map*. It's like the one ground-rule boundary that keeps Eschaton from degenerating into chaos. Eschaton gentlemen is about logic and axiom and mathematical probity and discipline and verity and *order*. You do not get points for hitting anybody real. Only the gear that *maps* what's real. (Jest 338, author's emphasis)

Players (fiction writers) cannot be targets because they have no place *in* the game itself; they are its mediators (conversationalists) and cannot be the game's (or novel's) subject.

The not-too-distant American society that Infinite Jest envisions is one in which its agents are paralytically self-absorbed primarily because of art's failure. Wallace's most telling critique of American art occurs at Molly Notkin's graduation party–held by herself

for herself–at which the participants are inhibited by self-consciousness and the involuted artistic expression that surrounds them. A group dances the latest "East Coast anticraze," the "Minimal Mambo" (229). Like minimalist fiction that tends to "substitute lists of external environmental details for the creation of character from within" (Aldridge 145), the "better dancers" make their "movements" so exaggeratedly

> tiny they are evocative and compel watching, their near-static mass curdled and bent somehow subtly around one beautiful young woman, quite beautiful, her back undulating minimally in a thin tight blue-and-white-striped sailorish top as she alludes to a cha-cha with maracas empty of anything to rattle, watching herself almost dance in the full-length mirror. (Jest 229)

The dance represents minimalism's premise that "pretend[s] [that] there *is* no narrative consciousness in [the] text"; the dancers movements are vainly affected as if to imply that there is no self-conscious impetus to their overstated-understated dancing (McCaffery, author's emphasis). Their quest to avoid the self-conscious apparatus of motion only calls attention to themselves as juxtaposed to the animated party that surrounds them. The central young woman becomes transfixed by her own near-static mirror image which hangs "between two *empty* ornate gilt frames [that] Notkin thinks she's been *retroironic* by having the frames themselves framed, in rather less ornate frames" (Jest 229, emphasis added). The image is an apt one as it describes the terminal destination of self-conscious art, the self (or writer) framed within frames, "making art out of the accessories of artistic presentation" (229). She watches herself with

> unselfconscious fascination in the only serviceable mirror . . . This absence

> of shame at the self-obsession . . . . But now, whispered to by a near-motionless man in an equestrian helmet, she turns abruptly falling away from her own reflection to explain, not to the man so much as no one in particular, the whole dancing mass: I was just looking at my *tits* she says looking down at herself aren't they *beautiful*, and it's moving, there's something so heartbreakingly sincere in what she says . . . . The girl raising her striped arms in triumph or artless thanks for being constructed this way, these 'tits,' built by whom and for whom never occurring, artlessly ecstatic. (230, author's emphasis)

What is disturbing is that the woman operates in an insular universe of one, and is incapable of perceiving anything outside herself as subject, resulting in vapid self-worship. She is trammeled in a cage of the self, and the art of her time only reinforces her detachment as she reverts into the "womb of solipsism, anhedonia, death in life" (Jest 839).

At the same cocktail party, a medley of voices and snippets of conversation are interpolated into the narrative's central action. In a series of unattributed dialogues, one unnamed character somewhat pretentiously remarks, "de gustibus non est disputandum" (Jest 232), meaning, 'there is no disputing about tastes; every person to their taste'–or more simply, there's no accounting for taste. In the context of Wallace's aesthetic allegory, this otherwise innocuous phrase is pivotal to the novel's theme that literature produced without boundaries results in chaotic and solipsistic expression. Although the phrase has since been adopted into colloquial English and predates Hopkins, it is interesting to observe that it is also located in his "On the Origin of Beauty: A Platonic Dialogue" (Journals and Papers 86). It is of little importance whether or not Wallace here

quotes Hopkins's dialogue–although as a former doctoral candidate in philosophy (in aesthetics) and Hopkins's admirer, it is likely that he would be familiar with it. What is essential, however, is that both artists articulate the same aesthetic ideal: that there must be a rationale or criteria for the evaluation of beauty, and without such, art slips into a ruleless and purposeless state. Wallace's contention throughout Infinite Jest is that taste and artistic judgement are no longer disputable because of a rejection of aesthetic guidelines to appeal which leads to an overindulgence in self-conscious expression in the arts for that sake only. Any form of artistic expression is, like the ironist, immune to criticism, creating an aesthetic void of unprincipled and alienating art–there is no longer a coherent set of premises for the production, evaluation, and enjoyment of art. In his "On the Signs of Health and Decay in the Arts," Hopkins explicitly states that art must have a standard of evaluation or it becomes a futile enterprise:

> it is impossible to apply science so exact to the arts of painting and still less of poetry as we do to those of music and architecture, but some scientific basis of aesthetical criticism is absolutely needed; criticism cannot advance far without it; and at the beginning of any science of aesthetics must stand the analysis of the nature of Beauty. (Journals and Papers 75)

For Hopkins and Wallace, art transforms and re-orders all that is detestable and grotesque in the human condition. Hopkins further writes that in "inquiring what are the signs of a healthy and a decadent Art we must first know what Art ought to be doing and pursuing" (75). Without knowing how or why we participate and respond to art–or without having any principles for doing so–art ceases to be art and becomes desultory expression.

Wallace both diagnoses fiction's current malady and prescribes an alternative course. James Incandenza's last film ("Infinite Jest") is a "magically entertaining" work that seeks to overcome solipsistic death. The work is intended to be a form of communication, a conversation, between the director and his youngest son, Hal, to stop the teen from becoming a "steadily more and more *hidden* boy," and to "bring him 'out of himself'" (Infinite 838, 839, author's emphasis). The film is a metaphor for the potentially meaningful conversation that takes place between an (unself-conscious) author and the reader that forces an examination of mortality. Toward the end of the novel, Incandenza (as a wraith) appears to the hospitalized Don Gately and explains his films' aesthetic rationale:

> I goddamn bloody well made sure that either the whole entertainment was silent or else if it wasn't silent that you could bloody well hear every single performer's voice, no matter how far out on the cinematographic or narrative periphery they were; and it wasn't just the self-conscious overlapping dialogue of a poseur like Schwulst or Altman, i.e. it wasn't just the crafted imitation of aural chaos: it was real life's real egalitarian babble of figurantless crowds, of the animate world's real agora, the babble of crowds every member of which was the central and articulate protagonist of his own entertainment. (835-36)

Incandenza's filmic innovation is so ahead of his time that his critics cannot fathom why the "babble(/babel)" interferes with the supposedly "really meaningful central narrative conversations," and they assume that it is "some self-conscious viewer-hostile heavy-art directorial pose, instead of *radical realism*" (836, emphasis added). Wallace's "radical realism" is a call for a return to mimetic representation (or the "neo-real") (832) in

American fiction that "renders real aspects of real experiences that have previously been excluded from art" (McCaffery 140), which recalls Hopkins's emphasis on mimesis: "[beauty] lies in a (not sensuous but purely intellectual) comparison of the representation in Art with the memory of the true thing (Journals and Papers 75).[5] That is, effective (and affective) art must render things as they are, not in the Realist school of literary representation, but in the real experiences of daily human existence.

Wallace expects the reader to become engaged with his work–as opposed to the "passive spectation" that television prescribes–by sharing the burden of the writer/reader relationship: "this process is a relationship between the writer's consciousness and her own, and that in order for it to be anything like a real full human relationship, she's going to have to put in her share of the linguistic work" (McCaffery 137, 138). Wallace puts a premium on readerly exertion, which accounts for Infinite Jest's heft (1079 pages) and sheer difficulty (388 six-point-font endnotes). The reader is responsible for ordering the work's jumbled chronological sequence, often overwhelming array of information and detail, numerous narratorial perspectives, and unsettling (or defamiliarizing) juxtaposition of the comic and grotesque. Most significantly, the reader has to fight through the often-chatty mediating voice to penetrate Infinite Jest's insight into the thought and peculiarities of the culture–the reader's own culture, re-presented.

Many of the notes are purposely unnecessary, and are at times simply gags, like number 216's "No clue" (1036) and 192's "She didn't literally say *shitstorm*" (1033,

author's emphasis), that force the reader to flip physically to the back in Dunciad fashion. Whereas some notes are playful, others, like the eight-page number 24 (with its own series of footnotes), yield so much indispensable information that it must be periodically returned to. The notes are also staggered according to length, with some running several pages in length; and the difficulty is compounded in simply locating the shorter notes as they are buried between longer ones. Wallace's participatory aesthetic is evinced as readers adopt the narrative and physically reconstitute it as their own. The difference, however, between Wallace's readers' frustration and image-fiction's I-subject type is that Infinite Jest provides an "accessible payoff" for the reader's efforts (McCaffery 137). Readers take valuable information from the notes and come away with the sense that they have actually participated jointly in the game, instead of being on the receiving end of a barrage of authorial poses. The reading pattern of moving from text to endnotes mimes conversational intercourse itself and the back-and-forth shuttling of a tennis match–surely intentional in a book that has conversation and tennis for its primary subjects.[6]

Wallace's insistence on engaging the reader stems from self-abnegation–much like Hopkins–in which he realizes that once the work is written it no longer serves a purpose for its creator: "this is the way Barthian and Derridean poststructuralism's helped me the most as a fiction writer: once I'm done with the thing, I'm basically dead, and probably the text's dead; it becomes simply language, and language lives not just in but *through* the

reader" (McCaffery 141, interviewer's emphasis). This is precisely why Wallace contends that writers have no place inhabiting their artifacts: they are no longer its possessors: "once the first-person creeps into your agenda you're dead art-wise" (135). Recalling Burke's symbolic action, an artifact lives when it is adopted by active readers who transform it into their own, mythos: "the reader's own life 'outside' the story changes the story" (141), making it personally and uniquely her/his own as it is re-inscribed, re-enacted, or re-lived in the mind.

In their study of Hopkins and T.S. Eliot, Kinereth Meyer and Rachel Salmon determine that the language of these poets both constitutes experience and reports it (235). That is, the poet's experience is re-created in the consciousness of readers who "choose to read" poetry "not only as describing but also as enacting conversion" (235). Like Wallace, who effaces himself in the production of his art and releases it to his readers thereafter, Hopkins, too, employed a similar self-negation, suppressing his works, although he did allow for the future possibility that they "may be published after [his] death" (Letters to RB 66). And although he closely held on to his works it is clear that Hopkins was nonetheless driven to share them with others by twice offering The Wreck of the 'Deutschland' and "The Loss of the 'Eurydice'" to the Jesuit journal, The Month (66). Works like The Wreck of the 'Deutschland' and "That Nature Is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection" begged by the nature of their topics–a memorial to Franciscan nuns in The Wreck and a declaration on the human condition in "That

Nature . . . "–to be released to others. In a letter to Alexander Baillie of 10 September 1864, Hopkins indirectly distills his conception of the purpose of writing when he writes that the "letter-writer on principle does not make his letter only an *answer*" (Further Letters 215, author's emphasis), which is why he avoided responding to letters immediately. Instead, he allowed a letter's contents–another's inscape–to resonate in his mind, merging with his own. A work answers questions, "but that is not its main motive" (215); rather, it is a powerful communicative connection as "two minds jump together even if it be a leap into the dark" (215). All writing, then, is more than a simple response, it is also the significant merger of a self with another self's response to the common anxieties of human existence, and human "instress," to use Hopkins's neologism. Hopkins further writes that inspired poetry must engage readers by piercing their minds, filling the "broken sentence" (217) of the existential gap as "all things are upheld by instress and are meaningless without it" (Journals and Papers 127). Hopkins maintains that language perpetually breaks down in transmission, and that it is the reader's responsibility to read and reread, wrestle with difficult material, and finally stamp it on one's personal inscape, thereby finishing the work (or act) in an ever-changing inscape, making it new, vibrant, and distinctive. The process is one of "great, abnormal . . . mental acuteness," involving a "stress and action of the brain" as it "strike[s] into [the reader or writer] unasked" (Further 216).

Hopkins's chosen rhythm upholds his principle of the reader's active participation

in the poetry. Sprung rhythm, with its capacity for "boundless variety" (Further 360) within defined fields, evinces Hopkins's concern for the reader's apprehension; individual readers necessarily read poetry differently (in placing stresses and deciphering poetic meaning) and, therefore, make it their own. The reader must fight through the difficult rhythm, alliteration, assonance, neologisms, and dense, skipping imagery to appreciate fully a poem. At the head of the manuscript broadsheet for "The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo," Hopkins wrote an editorial note to Bridges in which he questioned continuing with marking a poem's stresses for the reader: "I have marked the stronger stresses, but with a degree of stress so perpetually varying no marking is satisfactory. Do you think that all had best be left to the reader?" (Manuscripts 232). For Hopkins, readers must make the poem their own. In "On the Signs of Health and Decay in the Arts," Hopkins writes that aesthetic "recovery must be a breaking up, a violence" (Journals and Papers 79) in which readers must first destroy the poem, breaking it open to apprehend its buried insight, to attain the poet's instress, (re)making the poem–reconstructing it in the mind. Hopkins's poetry at once operates in a series of creative tensions of conservatism and radicalism, the terrible and beautiful (Further 217), violence and peace, and flux and order. Hopkins's demands on readers are never excessive, however. In his quest for realistic expression, he chose (and invented) Sprung rhythm because it is the "rhythm of natural speech, the *least forced*, the most *rhetorical* and *emphatic* of all possible rhythms, combining . . . opposite and . . . incompatible

excellences, markedness of rhythm . . . and naturalness of expression" (Letters to RB 46, emphasis added). Hopkins understood that poetry can only engage a reader when it inclines toward common speech and emphatic expression in a self-effacing manner. For Hopkins, poetry that does not have these elements as goals cannot effectively (and affectively) "touch" the reader (Further 218); otherwise, it regresses into a hollow form of authorial expression: "*want of earnest* I take to be the deepest fault a work of art can have. It does not *strike at first*, but it *withers* them in the end" (360, my emphasis). Hopkins discounts authorial preening and a self-involved style with "archaic diction" as "Parnassian" (360, 216).

Hopkins disparaged the withering mannerism of the poetry of his time as "Parnassian": "that language which genius speaks as fitted to its exaltation, and place among other genius, but does not *sing*" (360, emphasis added). Sprung rhythm enabled Hopkins to fashion poetry that avoided the conformist poetics of his time for, as he writes in "Health and Decay," "the old conventionalisms had been abolished, but conventionalism is not abolished" (Journals and Papers 78). That is, Hopkins recognized the ever-present and latent danger of resting in conventional literary practice (Wallace's 'crank turning'); each poetic attempt must be a sustained effort to keep conventionalism at bay, to keep it out of one's art. Many poets of Hopkins's time were accomplished and could "see things in [a] Parnassian way and describe them in this Parnassian tongue, without further effort of inspiration," falling into the rut of "mannerism" (Further 216).

Hopkins concedes that the Parnassian poets are gifted, but asserts that they are only rarely inspired and, thus, remain in a creative stasis. They fell into a pattern of poetic familiarity and, therefore, only wrote the familiar. Although Hopkins lauded Tennyson's genius, he also uses him as an example of a Parnassian poet–an affliction to which all poets are vulnerable.

Wallace echoes Hopkins's indictment of the Parnassian style: "there's something kind of timelessly vital and sacred about good writing. This thing doesn't have that much to do with talent, even glittering talent . . . Talent's just an instrument. It's like having a pen that works instead of one that doesn't" (McCaffery 148). For both Hopkins and Wallace, talent is undermined when it is expended on 'withering' (for Hopkins) or image-conscious (for Wallace) artistic endeavors. What is essential to literature's "sacred" potential is "art's heart's purpose, the agenda of the consciousness behind the text. It's got something to do with love. With having the discipline to talk out of the part of yourself that can love instead of the part that just wants to be loved" (148). Fulfilling art, for Wallace, requires "a willingness to disclose yourself, open yourself up in spiritual and emotional ways . . . . To be willing to sort of die in order to move the reader, somehow" (149). Hopkins attains this unself-conscious authorial sacrifice in a poetics that yearns for both annihilation and assimilation with God–resulting in a potential redemption for his readers. His poems are a simultaneous declaration of vulnerability and devotion that continues to resonate for readers, despite his religious orthodoxy.

The inspired artist's effusion "takes you as it were by surprise," and involves a genius of meaningful articulation that makes the poet's "greatness stare into your eyes and *din it into your ears*" (Further 217, emphasis added). Most of Wallace's and Hopkins's aesthetic relies on intuition as there is no specific formula for creating a "redeeming [and] remedy-ing" literature (McCaffery 137), but both stress the importance of flux with constraints, and discipline fused with creative variety. Hopkins calls this intuition "inspiration," and Wallace calls it "chasing the click," a "special sort of buzz, a special moment that comes sometimes" in creating and consuming literature (138).[7] Although removed from Wallace in literary period, genre, nation, and, perhaps, beliefs, Hopkins continues to be a compelling aesthetic "touchstone" for Wallace as the novelist recognizes the importance of Hopkins's aesthetic achievements and imperative to stay in continual motion by moving constantly toward the "trumpet crash" (Hopkins, "That Nature" 112) of the literary "din."

Notes

* This chapter originally appeared in different form as "American Touchstone: The Idea of Order in Gerard Manley Hopkins and David Foster Wallace," Comparative Literature Studies 38.3 (2001): 215-231.

1 In a review article, Vince Passaro enthusiastically praises current short American fiction as "more various, more successfully experimental, more urbane, funnier, and more *bitingly ironic* than that written in the Hemingway tradition" (81, emphasis added). Instead of discussing fiction's contemporary function or what specifically is undermined, Passaro concentrates his attention solely on the "reckless irony" (84), "ironic play" (84), "hills of irony" (87), and (more) "irony" (88). Significantly, the other attribute he yokes with this ironic "renaissance" is its "experimental" nature, a manifestation of what Wallace refers to as the unchecked rush toward the avant-garde (McCaffery 132). See Vince Passaro, "Unlikely Stories: The Quiet Renaissance of American Short Fiction," Harper's Aug. 1999: 80-89.

2 Even Wallace's style is somewhat reminiscent of Hopkins's. Like Hopkins, Wallace uses punctuation to control his prose's 'pace'–Wallace's term borrowed from his junior tennis career. Here Wallace uses a steady flow of commas to stunt this sentence's pace, forcing the reader to pause at each brief clause. This sentence also happens to be the novel's thesis in short. Otherwise, Wallace uses commas sparingly in his text as he attempts to mime the speed and ferocity of common speech. Other stylistic similarities between Hopkins and Wallace include neologisms ("glittershit") (Jest 134), hyphenated words and alliteration (the sky's "spilled-fuel shimmer") (136), and repetition ("one beautiful woman, quite beautiful . . .") (229), among others.

3 The author recently requested an interview with Wallace to discuss (primarily) Hopkins's work and its relation to the novelist's creative ideals. Wallace declined the interview in a letter (David Foster Wallace, letter to author, 28 Mar. 2000), citing his reason to be that he "like[s] Hopkins too much to talk about him in an interview." He then suggested consulting "the scene near the end of Saving Private Ryan where Matt Damon asks Tom Hanks to tell him about his memory of his [Hanks's] wife in the garden, and Hanks declines and says, 'That one I keep just for me.'" Wallace's reluctance to speak formally about Hopkins implies that the poet is particularly significant to his work and creative enterprise.

4 Eschaton recalls the card game, "T-E-G-W-A-R" ("The Exciting Game Without Any Rules"), that "stands for the lawless cruelty that claims . . . Bruce Pearson's life" in Mark Harris's Bang the Drum Slowly (1956), where the only object of the game appears to be the ability to keep a straight face (Harris 19, Limon 164) .

5 Infinite Jest also specifically recalls Stendhal's The Red and the Black in many ways. Its most significant similarity, however, is its sharing Stendhal's emphasis on realism–the "founder" of "serious realism" for Erich Auerbach (Mimesis 463). Stendhal's aesthetic axiom (itself borrowed from Hamlet) that a "novel is a mirror going along a main road" (80, 371) is echoed by Infinite Jest's Québécois terrorists who "stretch mirrors across U.S. highways" (1015). See my "David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest," The Explicator 58.3 (2000): 172-175.

6 It should be noted that Wallace was a top-ranked junior tennis player in his youth and has written several essays on the subject. See his collection of "essays and arguments," A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again (Boston: Little, 1997).

7 Wallace borrows the term "click" from Yeats and compares this intuitive, aesthetic feeling to the "click of a well-made box" (McCaffery 138). It is worth noting, as well, that Wallace's 'click' echoes Tennesse Williams's Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (1955), where the alcoholic Brick chases his own 'click' through alcohol: "A click that I get in my head that makes me peaceful" (81). For Wallace, the click represents a 'high,' or as he says, a "buzz," obtained through the creation and enjoyment of literature. For a perceptive discussion of alcohol and the creative spirit, see Lewis Hyde, "Alcohol and Poetry: John Berryman and the Booze Talking," American Poetry Review 4.4 (1975): 7-12.

Part Two

Infinite Geist: Lexical Investigation, Mediation, and the Ghost of the Author

"In art man encounters himself, spirit meets spirit"–Hans-Georg Gadamer (Truth and Method 59).

"Let us therefore consider ourselves installed among the multitude of things, living beings, symbols, instruments, and men, and let us try to form notions that would enable us to comprehend what happens to us there. Our first truth–which prejudges nothing and cannot be contested–will be that there is presence, that 'something' is there, and that 'someone' is there"–Maurice Merleau-Ponty (The Visible and the Invisible 160).

1. The "Sichation" (Jest 619)

In a recent article on David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest, "'An Anguish Become Thing': Narrative as Performance in David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest" (2000), Frank Louis Cioffi bravely attempts to articulate the peculiar experience of reading Wallace's second novel while simultaneously accounting for its stunning effect upon him as a reader: "I did not abandon it, though I confess I was tempted to. As I read on, I realized that this novel was having a curious impact on me, was penetrating my consciousness in a way that struck me as unusual" (162). It is perhaps at once singular and refreshing that a literary scholar can now feel liberated enough in a journal article both to comment

critically on a literary artifact *and* muse on its effects on him as reader. This is by no means intended as disparaging, for Wallace's novel, indeed all of his fiction, does provoke a myriad of shifting emotions and reader responses. Even the process of providing a basic plot summary of Infinite Jest is a daunting exercise. Cioffi rightly asserts that it "resists formal description" (163), but then takes two pages to summarize the plot. The still embryonic critical work on this unique novel is inevitably variegated. In her article on Infinite Jest, N. Katherine Hayles feels compelled to develop a complex eco-critical position for ten pages before actually tackling the novel itself, and then proceeds to insert sporadic synopses as necessary. Erik R. Mortenson, in his comparison of William S. Burroughs and Wallace, works in the opposite direction, narrowly defining his parameters of analysis to eight pages (128-135) of this 1079-page novel. Tom LeClair, who wrote the first critical article on Infinite Jest in 1996, still seems to provide the most cogent account of the work when he suggests (in comparing it to the "prodigious" works of Wallace's fellow novelists, Richard Powers and William T. Vollman) that it "can be most economically described as synthesizing and extending characteristics of its predecessors" (31) thereby eluding the plot-summary quagmire.[1] In discussing the reader's entanglement in a text, Wolfgang Iser, in his The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response, asserts that upon finishing a work we "do not at first know what is happening to us. This is why we often feel the need to talk about books we have read . . . Even literary critics frequently do no more than seek to translate their entanglement into

referential language" (131). It is precisely this that critics like Cioffi and the others have attempted to do in their work on Infinite Jest, to digest what Cioffi has called the "performative" aspect of Wallace's work into a concretized understanding of the temporarily lived experience with that book–for the act of reading is, according to Iser, certainly an experience of living with and in the text. In what follows I offer a lexical exempli gratia of how Wallace's interactive writer-reader linguistic aesthetic operates, and demonstrate that to bypass Wallace's lexical strategies, or meta-text, is often to miss much of his text's elemental meaning. Wallace's writing is highly symbolic and employs much symbolic iconography to underscore his conception of 'presence' or mediation within the text. Examining Infinite Jest's lexical and symbolic properties also yields a subtle rejoinder to the 'death of the author' standoff in contemporary literary criticism from the point of view of the ghost of the author. All of which returns to Wallace's engagement with a literary solipsism, as he sees it, that is wasting the millennial American arts.

2. Passivity and Activity

"She has this way that gets to Hal of digging the chocolate yogurt out with the spoon and then inverting the spoon, turning the spoon over, so that it always enters her mouth upside-down and her tongue gets to contact the confection immediately, without the mediation of cold spoon, and for some reason this has always gotten under Hal's skin" (Jest 702).

In his review of David Markson's 1988 novel, Wittgenstein's Mistress, Wallace

argues that "certain novels not only cry out for critical interpretations but actually try to direct them," calling this the "INTERPRET-ME phenomenon" ("Empty" 217, 218). I take Wallace's statement as vitally relevant to Infinite Jest, which calls for interpretation while it directs readers toward prestructured interpretations. There is operating in Wallace's fiction a participatory ethos demanded of the reader and, consequently, a particular way to read and decode his work. That is not to say that there is only one, definitive critical approach, just that Wallace codes his fiction in a particular fashion, and that examining the lexical properties and structure leads to specific and significant meanings. Naturally, there are many other critical alternatives, but I will focus on the textual apparatus that compels Cioffi to call Wallace a "virtuoso vocabulist . . . aggressively demonstrating his skill" (168). In his expansive and striking interview with Larry McCaffery (conducted in 1993 while Infinite Jest was still a work in progress), Wallace comments that all of his fiction emphasizes the fact of mediated presence in narratives and that television (and the commercial arts, in general) ease recipients into "easy cerebral rhythms. It [TV] admits of passive spectation. Encourages it. TV-type art's biggest hook is that it's figured out ways to *reward* passive spectation" (137, interviewer's emphasis).[2] That is, in the interest of commercial gain and promoting North American hyperconsumption, television has stunted mediation, the "complete suppression of narrative consciousness, with its own agenda" (137). Thus, much of Wallace's fiction is comprised of a chatty and sometimes hostile mediator and "uneasy"

(137), unsettling narration with an abundance of film-like flash-cuts; sparse and then profuse punctuation; dense and long sentences; grand interruptions, interpolations, and digressions; multiple-frame narration; and a preponderance of footnotes not typically seen in modern or contemporary fiction (Infinite Jest contains 388 six-point font endnotes). Wallace allows that his methods are "nothing terribly sophisticated" (137), yet it is his underlying strategy of forcing readers to penetrate the mediator's presence and to make the requisite connections and narrative linking and textual (re)arranging that allows for linguistic participation. Wallace remarks that his fiction works counter to what TV does, "it's trying to prohibit the reader from forgetting that she's receiving heavily mediated data, that this process is a relationship between the writer's consciousness and her own, and that in order for it to be anything like a real full human relationship, she's going to have to put in her share of the linguistic work" (138). Wallace's literary aesthetic is heavily Wittgensteinian with his interest in that philosopher's work on language as primarily "a function of relationships between persons" (143); 'serious' fiction, for Wallace, is a linguistic exercise in bridging the existential gap between people as a tonic for loneliness. Wallace is ever mindful that the reader is, as he says, "marooned in her own skull" and that part of what draws us to literary texts is an enactment of suffering to overcome the fact that the reader "suffer[s] alone in the world" (127). This experience, vicarious as it may be, as Wallace remarks, can only be "nourishing, redemptive; we become less alone inside" (127). The idea of a literary 'conversation,' or what Roland

Barthes calls "entering a dialogue" between writer and reader (148), is central to Wallace's aesthetic. In a limited and perhaps reductive sense, however, all narratives can be said to have an inherent participatory ethos to them; reading is always an active exercise contrasted with television's pure, visual passivity. Perhaps, then, readerly participation or exertion is merely a question of degree and, if so, then Wallace's fiction requires the highest degree of active, narrative construction.

3. A Theory of Our Discontent

> "It'll help your attitude to look for evidence of design" (Jest 113).

From all appearances, Wallace suffers little from Harold Bloom's "anxiety of influence," although his fiction is full of shrewd intertextual references and allusions to authors ranging from Shakespeare to Stendhal, and Julio Cortázar to Don DeLillo.[3] But, beyond aesthetic influence, Wallace is also well informed about current literary-theoretical practices and their implications for his fiction. In his essay "Tense Present: Democracy, English, and the Wars over Usage," Wallace displays an acute understanding of the culture wars and of critical theory, and the politics of language.[4] Moreover, during his time at Harvard as a doctoral candidate in philosophy (aesthetics), Wallace wrote a review article on H.L. Hix's Morte D'Author: An Autopsy entitled, "Greatly Exaggerated," in which he demonstrates a strong familiarity with the long debate between

textual critics (or "auteurist criticism," in Seán Burke's words) (52) and poststructuralists regarding the death of the author.[5] Incidentally, Wallace overtly favors neither theoretical position in this piece, although he leans toward a "pro-life" stance ("Exaggerated" 143), when he asserts, "for those of us civilians who know in our gut that writing is an act of communication between one human being and another, the whole question seems sort of arcane" (144). What is most significant about Wallace's familiarity with poststructuralism, however, is his adoption (or reconstitution) of it for his own fiction. In "Feodor's Guide," a review article on the fourth volume of Joseph Frank's Dostoevsky biography, Wallace remarks that poststructuralism is simply "fascinating in its own right" (25), and in his discussion with Larry McCaffery he indicates the importance of deconstructive erasure for him as a writer: the writer is "dead, and probably the text's dead; it becomes simply language, and language lives not just in but through the reader" (141, interviewer's emphasis). Wallace's interest is always the writer/reader paradigm, of "one gut talking to another gut" ("1458 Words" 41). In the production of his works he effaces himself (but not the mediator), and thus in the reception of his fiction he is dead, erased; the literary work is reduced to fixed and inert language, requiring readers to animate it in their minds as they live it while reading. Intended or not, Wallace's aesthetic is most closely aligned with reader-response criticism, particularly the early and prototypical work of Wolfgang Iser, whose theory occupies the middle ground between the quarrels of auteurists and poststructuralists.

Wallace employs, to use Stanley Fish's phrase, an "affective stylistics" as a rhetorical strategy in his fiction.[6] Wallace has remarked that he once had a teacher who said that "good fiction's job was to comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable" (McCaffery 127), and it is precisely this aphorism that informs Wallace's aesthetic. Wallace's motives as a fiction writer tend to focus on two of the primary conditions of being human: cultural familiarity and existential despair. It is for these reasons that Wallace makes it part of his mission also to appeal to other fiction writers. For Wallace, American culture is already familiar with a sense that we inhabit a banal and hedonistic era:

> We'd probably most of us agree that these are dark times, and stupid ones, but do we need fiction that does nothing but dramatize how dark and stupid everything is? In dark times, the definition of good art would seem to be art that locates and applies CPR to those elements of what's human and magical that still live and glow despite the time's darkness. Really good fiction could have as dark a worldview as it wished, but it'd find a way both to depict this dark world and to illuminate the possibilities for being alive and human in it. (131, interviewer's emphasis)

He further remarks that, "if you operate, which most of us do, from the premise that there are things about the contemporary U.S. that make it distinctively hard to be a real human being, then maybe half of fiction's job is to dramatize what it is that makes it tough. The other half is to dramatize the fact we still are human beings, now" (131, interviewer's emphasis). And in regard to American consumerism, Wallace asserts that

> we already know U.S. culture is materialistic. This diagnosis can be done in about two lines. It doesn't engage anybody. What's engaging and artistically real is, taking it as axiomatic that the present is grotesquely

> materialistic, how is it that we as human beings still have the capacity for joy, charity, genuine connections, for stuff that doesn't have a price? (132, interviewer's emphasis)

Dramatizing the human condition, then, with an emphasis on human suffering, charity, and human relationships, is essential to Wallace's fiction. Realizing that these aspects of American culture are rarely, if at all, addressed in 'serious' American fiction has compelled Wallace to an aesthetic that tends away from casual representations of familiar cultural aspects. Instead, he works to, in Iser's words, "defamiliarize the familiar" (87): "fiction's job is opposite [to] what it used to be–no longer making the strange familiar but making the familiar *strange* again. It seems important to find ways of reminding ourselves that most 'familiarity' is mediated and delusive" (McCaffery 141, interviewer's emphasis).

4. Piercing the Veil

"The reader must first discover for himself the code underlying the text, and this is tantamount to bringing out the meaning. The process of discovery is itself a linguistic action in so far as it constitutes the means by which the reader may communicate with the text"–Wolfgang Iser (The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response 60).

In The Act of Reading, Iser's basic contention is that the literary text and reader constitute two poles of "literary communication," and, appending a note to his use of the word 'response,' notes that the German word for 'response' (Wirkung) has a more versatile meaning than its English counterpart, that of both 'effect' and 'response' (ix n.

1). Thus, the act of reading inherently implies a "dialectical relationship" (x) between the literary artifact and its readers. This is, perhaps, rudimentary, as Iser himself notes in his introduction, but my interest in Iser's reader-response criticism lies in his extension of what critics have themselves become familiar with–that is, his theory of aesthetic response goes beyond communication with readers and also involves a transformation within readers who actively participate in re-creating the text in the imagination (a "dynamic happening") (22), and thereby inhabit the work, temporarily living within the text: "the aesthetic experience leads to a nonaesthetic experience" (23); "it has the character of an event" (67). Iser argues that each literary text is coded or "prestructured" with a "repertoire" of "accepted procedures" (its "organizational structure") (85) for readers to follow; these are the text's strategies and readers' guide (69). The text is "prestructured," with its own conditions of "conception and perception," and thus "constitute[s] an organization of signifiers which do not serve to designate a signified object, but instead designate instructions for the production of the signified" (65, author's emphasis). This acts as "a kind of self-regulating system" (67), and readers continually participate by absorbing new and unpredictable events, incorporating them into a dynamic and shifting whole, modifying them through active progression; the act of reading, then, is a "dynamic process of self-correction" (67). Readers constantly feed back reactions as they absorb new data; reading becomes a "continual process of realization . . . and 'happens' like an event . . . an open-ended situation, at one time concrete and yet fluid" (68). In the act of

reading there is a constant "mutual bombardment," as Rudolf Arnheim has observed, that results in a "tension that sets off a series of different actions and interactions" (qtd. in Iser 95). Iser calls this the snow-ball effect (67), for the Argentinian novelist Julio Cortázar it is an "attack by accumulation" (534), and for Wallace it is "sudden and percussive," causing "a kind of explosion of associative connections within the recipient" that he compares with the "venting of a long-stuck valve" ("Laughing" 23). At all times, then, readers are provoked into what Iser calls a "synthetizing activity" (119) through image-building and formulating the text through "gestalt groupings" (120). Iser argues that readers are suspended between a "total entanglement" in and "latent detachment" from the text which results in a "dialectic" between "illusion-forming and illusion-breaking": "through gestalt-forming, we actually participate in the text, and this means that we are caught up in the very thing we are producing. This is why we often have the impression, as we read, that we are living another life" (127). In image-building, gestalt-forming, and through the various imaginative suspensions, we "leave behind who we are" (127). Iser rightly argues that textual meaning does not lie in the various expectations and frustrations: these are "simply the reactions that take place when the gestalten are disturbed" (128). Instead, we "react to what we ourselves have produced, and it is this mode of reaction that, in fact, enables us to experience the text as an actual event . . . it is these that make us animate the meaning of the text as a reality" (128-129). Further, because the entire process takes place within the imagination, we "cannot escape from it";

our participation in and absorption of the text transforms the work into a "presence" (131). Reading, for Iser, has the "same structure as experience" because it contains familiar experiences that are transcended through defamiliarization (131).

The aesthetic transaction between text and reader goes further, however, and achieves its zenith of affect, paradoxically, when readers become fully cognizant of the illusory situation they are bound in, for this is the highest level of textual communication: the perception of another's consciousness immanent with the reader's. Although Iser's theory of reading is invaluable–and all the more because he offers it as "a" theory, one of potentially many–he does not take his analysis beyond the interaction between text and reader. It is in the final step of the reader's conscious awareness moving from the aspect of the text–(re)animated language–to the aspect of a consciousness behind or within the apparatus of the text that the fullest ramifications of the reader's transcendence is achieved and realized. Iser writes that

> apprehension of a literary work comes about through the interaction between the reader's presence in the text and his habitual experiences, which are now a past orientation. As such it is not a passive process of acceptance, but a productive response. This reaction generally transcends the reader's previous range of orientation, and so the question arises as to what actually controls his reaction. It cannot be any prevailing code and it cannot be his past experience, for both are transcended by the aesthetic experience. It is at this point that the discrepancies produced by the reader during the gestalt-forming process take on their true significance. They have the effect of enabling the reader actually to become aware of the gestalten he has produced, so that he may detach himself from his own participation in the text and see himself being guided from without. (133-134)

The reader occupies a "strange, halfway position: he is involved, and he watches himself being involved" (134). Iser raises a crucial point here: that readers attain a near-timeless, near-ecstatic moment, where they remain in the actual event that is the world of the textual moment that they temporarily inhabit. What Iser here articulates is the readers' ultimate penetration of the illusion of the textual apparatus and achievement of an epiphany–while still engaged in the act of reading, decoding, and reformulating and, most significantly, they become self-conscious about this process–a sudden realization of another's presence–that is to say, the presence of another, similar consciousness. Call it Wayne Booth's implied author, the author, speaker, persona, or mediating presence, the semantic name for this presence is immaterial; all that matters is the reader's sudden recognition of another's (pre-coded) consciousness during the linguistic moment. The triangulation of reader, text, and writer is broken and, therefore, admits a two-way relationship between reader and pre-structured authorial consciousness (however we understand and contest 'author'). Iser does not take the final leap here and only acknowledges this transaction to be one of the "transfer of the text into the reader's consciousness" (135), however, it clearly seems to be a much stronger perceptive state extending beyond the present accumulation of language. Seán Burke, in his Death and Return of the Author, argues that this textual presence need not necessarily be reduced to any monologic "author-God" (49) but instead, quoting Bakhtin, insists that authorial consciousness is a "voice amongst the many which holds together the polyphonic strands

of the text's composition, an author who 'resides within the controlling center constituted by the intersection of the surfaces'" (48). For Burke, the "renunciation of the author-God does not do away with the idea of authorship, nor impede the creativity of the author and the intensity of his engagement with and within his text" (49). The imputation of writerly consciousness within a text does not compromise the "anti-representational ethos of a writerly writing" (49).

Readers transcend the text–a complementary shattering of illusion while paradoxically remaining in the text's imaginative space–and are doubled (vitally caught in and living in the textual moment and yet self-consciously observing themselves operating as such) and finding then a pure transaction with, a penetration of, or merging with, another's consciousness. A textual transcendence is achieved although not a metaphysical one. In Specters of Marx, Jacques Derrida's discourse on ghosts and Marx(ism)–a self-termed "hauntology" (51)–he comments that,

> transcendence, the movement of super-, the step beyond (über, epekeina), is made sensuous in that very excess. It renders the non-sensuous sensuous. One touches there on what one does not touch, one feels there where one does not feel, one even suffers there where suffering does not take place, when at least it does not take place where one suffers (which is also, let us not forget, what is said about phantom limbs, that phenomenon marked with an X for any phenomenology of perception). (151)

We have, then, at this vital moment pierced the veil of narrator, implied author, and mediator–pierced the "veil of print" (Bowers 81)–and attained not any literal author-God but another human being's consciousness, or that consciousness's original ideation, that

which was born in another subject's mind prior to its infusion–"prestructur[ing]" (Iser 85) rather than post-structuring–into the text, but that remains dormant, awaiting re-birth, (re)animation in the reader's consciousness. Illusion and the boundaries of the text and imagination fall away as ropes of sand from the mind; readers attain what Paul Ricoeur calls the text's "universal power of unveiling" (193). Instead of fully committing himself to this peculiar and nearly indescribable phenomenon, Iser quotes Jean Starobinski: "what we see arising here is a complex reality, in which the difference between subject and object disappears" (qtd. in Iser 135, author's emphasis). And because we as readers have produced an image from the imaginary object, the object that is transformed text, "which otherwise has no existence of its own," we are, then, "actually in its presence and it is in ours" (139). We may be so bold as to contend that we are in the author's (revivified) presence.

5. Ghost/Geist

"In a text which purports to be written neither by a subject, nor about subjects, who or what motivates its narrative, stands authority for its claims?"–Seán Burke (The Death and Return of the Author 78).

"The ghost, le re-venant, the survivor, appears only by means of figure or fiction, but its appearance is not nothing, nor is it a mere semblance"–Jacques Derrida ("The Art of Mémoires" 64).

After discussing various philosophical texts in search of a rational response to the problem of the reader as participant in Infinite Jest, Cioffi concludes that his "somewhat

counterintuitive solution to the paradox is that when reading certain works, such as in this case Infinite Jest, we are not under the impression or illusion that what is happening in the text is real; rather, for us it is real, it has become actual" (172). And although I have argued now at length for the possibility of the reader actually indwelling a literary text, and believe that this potential exists at all times when reading Wallace's fiction, I finally, however, do not believe this to be the ultimate reason for the profound and urgent readerly engagement that this text inspires. I would contend almost the opposite, that although Infinite Jest is captivating like few other novels, it nevertheless succeeds in this respect because of its sincere presentation of its status as illusory aesthetic object. It does not revel in the self-conscious play of its own artificiality for its own sake as many postmodern works do; rather, it presents itself as extremely improbable while it remains encyclopedically and vibrantly plausible, immediate, and overwhelming. That is, its content is only too believable and 'real,' often disturbingly so, but it calls attention to the possibility of its being nothing more than a 'told' story within its larger status as a novel. This is paradoxically no metafictional play on Wallace's part, which brand of fiction's inward and terminal regression he calls a "permanent migraine" (McCaffery 142), but rather a return to more essential narrative construction, what Infinite Jest's wraith calls "radical realism" (Jest 836). Metafiction, for Wallace, is only "valuable" in that it "helps reveal fiction as a mediated experience" and in that it emphasizes the "recursive component to utterance" (McCaffery 142). Its latent danger, for Wallace, is its potential

to become "empty and solipsistic" (142). The significant difference between 'standard' metafiction and Wallace's metafiction-like strategies is that the inevitable inward spiral to the mediator's consciousness does not remain fixed as an end; it rather spirals outward to the reader as a vibrant linguistic phenomenon: "recursive metafiction worships the narrative consciousness, makes it the subject of the text" (144, interviewer's emphasis). Infinite Jest's many (intended) mistakes draw attention to the presence of a very fallible 'presenter,' one that at times seeks effacement and at others wildly surges to the fore. Infinite Jest is a ghost story told by a ghost; its most significant conceit is that, for all of its density and 'realism,' the narrative events are meant to signify nothing beyond the fact of its own telling.

In his reading of Infinite Jest, Tom LeClair suggests that Wallace himself enters his narrative as the wraith (32), whose appearance, however, is verifiably limited to the hospital-visitation episode (Jest 827-845) but subtly emerges throughout the text. LeClair's assertion is founded on the fact that the wraith is "lexically gifted" and "etymology conscious" (32), just as Wallace certainly is. LeClair further conflates Wallace-as-wraith because the wraith–who is literally a ghost of one of the deceased primary characters, the "après-garde" (985 n. 24) film-maker, physics and optics genius, former junior tennis star, and founder of Enfield Tennis Academy, Dr. James Orin Incandenza, Jr.–as a former artist himself, promulgates similar aesthetic ideals to which Wallace himself is partial (LeClair 33). While there can be little doubt that the wraith

possesses many of Wallace's ideas of necessity the contention that the wraith equals Wallace himself is untenable simply because of the obvious connection of the wraith to Incandenza, Jr. (Jest 829). This is not to say that I dismiss LeClair's claim outright; rather, I agree that Wallace's 'presence' saturates the text. I do contend, however, that Wallace 'enters' his text through the wraith in a more rhetorically subtle manner than LeClair estimates, and that a simple equation of the wraith with Wallace is a reduction of Wallace's aesthetic achievement. The wraith functions as the text's mediator, the centering and orienting presence that organizes the entire narrative structure. While the text is profoundly moving and absorbing there is never a moment when the reader is not aware of the illusion of narrative although simultaneously immersed in Wallace's fictive world. The reason for this is the mediating filter or presence within the text. This mediating presence is none other than the wraith, and it is only in the hospital with the gunshot-wounded Gately that he makes his presence acute and palpable, thereafter receding as the narrative's inherent consciousness, its narrative periphery, yet always present.

Sporadically scattered throughout Wallace's works are the words 'phantom,' 'ghost,' 'wraith,' 'specter,' 'apparition,' and 'revenant' encoded with all of their etymological meanings and interpretive associations. Often these words are emblematic as they are specifically linked with certain characters (Incandenza, Jr./wraith, Hal/revenant, Mario/apparition, and so forth). Wallace's title alone, borrowed from

Hamlet's graveyard scene (5.1.184ff), as every critic has observed, is itself mentioned in Infinite Jest (1076 n. 337), itself implies the presence of a textual ghost, in signifying the elder Hamlet. Early in Infinite Jest appears the significant note 38: "ghostly light- and monster-shadow phenomenon particular to certain mountains; e.g. q.v. Part I of Goethe's Faust, the Walpurgisnacht six-toed danceathon on the Harz-Bröcken, in which there's described a classic 'Bröckengespenstphänom.' (Gespenst means specter or wraith.)" (994). And note 24–Incandenza, Jr.'s filmography–contains the very significant word "mediated" itself (986), calling attention to precisely who mediates the novel. Frequent emphasis on the concept of mediation occurs indirectly when attention is drawn to Incandenza, Jr.'s still-hanging poster of Fritz Lang directing his 1927 film Metropolis (Jest 48, 193, 951, 1078 n. 381), which film no longer exists as originally created and first shown in Germany–Lang once said to novelist Robert Bloch, "why are you so interested in a film which no longer exists?"[7] Metropolis's essential disappearance recalls Incandenza, Jr.'s own supposedly lost film "Infinite Jest"; and the presence of the Mediator, a messianic figure, in Metropolis signifies the importance of mediation itself to Infinite Jest. Because Incandenza himself was originally an optics genius, Infinite Jest contains numerous references to light, lenses, reflections and refractions, mirrors, concave and convex forms, holograms and holographs, optical doubling and illusions. Amplification of Wallace's references all return to the idea of a ghost and ghostly mediation: TV-show re-runs haunt the airwaves (600); a holograph is itself a ghostly image; duplicated TV images are known

as ghost-images/forms; in lenses and telescopes, secondary images, produced through defects, acquire a ghostly definition or appearance (OED); Enfield Tennis Academy's students suspect that a ghost haunts the campus; in addition to the obsessive use of the words "ghastly" and "ghostly" throughout. The word 'figurant' also appears throughout the text, and is used particularly by the wraith for mute, peripheral film and TV characters (Jest 835-836). Even here is a tangential relationship to ghosts. Erich Auerbach, in his etymological study of the history of the word 'figura' (a remote ancestor of our contemporary 'figurant') in ancient sources, observes that 'figura' has an associative meaning of "copy" and occurs in Lucretius's "doctrine of the structures that peel off things like membranes and float round in the air," and is further related to his "Democritean doctrine of the 'film images' (Diels), or eidola"; Auerbach further notes that Lucretius was the first to introduce 'figurae' as "employed in the sense of 'dream image,' 'figment of fancy,' 'ghost'" (17). Enfield Tennis Academy's students use Lemon Pledge as "a phenomenal sunscreen" (Jest 99) which later peels off in "Pledge-husks" (101) and copies of their several limbs thereby contributing to the overall sensation of a ghost-inhabited environment. I do not argue here that Wallace is aware of Auerbach's essay, but that the accumulation of specific words that are all synonymous with 'ghost' necessarily creates an emphasis on the ghost/wraith metaphor in Infinite Jest and, thus, calls for interpretation. What is significant about these many references is that in order to perceive a ghost image, there must, in most cases (as in optics and broadcast media, signally in this narrative), be

some inherent flaw or defect in the originating source. This is perhaps one of the more signal aspects of Infinite Jest's narrative construction: that the mediator himself, although strangely erudite, is also incredibly defective and disturbing. This upholds Wallace's redemptive aesthetic, for it is only through the apprehension of defects that any form of remedying action can occur, whether it pertains to aesthetic production or cultural malaise. Of fiction's redemptive possibilities, Wallace remarks that

> you're at once allowing the reader to sort of escape self by achieving some sort of identification with another human psyche–the writer's, or some character's, etc.–and you're also trying to antagonize the reader's intuition that she is a self, that she is alone and going to die alone. You're trying somehow both to deny and affirm that the writer is over here with his agenda while the reader's over there with her agenda, distinct. This paradox is what makes good fiction sort of magical, I think. The paradox can't be resolved, but it can somehow be mediated–'remediated,' since this is probably where poststructuralism rears its head for me–by the fact that language and linguistic intercourse is, in and of itself, redeeming, remedying. (McCaffery 137, interviewer's emphasis)

In another interview Wallace remarks that he wanted Infinite Jest "to sound intimate and conversational, as if somebody was talking right to you. So I think there was a kind of ghost reader for me all the way along" (QPBR n.p.). Ghost-reader implies ghost-writer. What I call the 'wraith-function' stands for the mediating presence that Wallace infuses into his novel, for these ghostly clues direct readers to the inescapable fact that they are the recipients of "heavily mediated data" (McCaffery 138)–in life, the popular media, and this text–and that their responsibility in this communicative relationship between the "writer's consciousness and her own" (138)–is linguistic and requires, if it is to be revived and actualized, active readers and responses, the readers' doubles, their ghosts. On Infinite Jest's first page are the words, "I am in here" (3). In the immediate context this is

presumably Hal Incandenza's thought, although this is not explicitly clear as these words occupy their own line and are positioned between two of Hal's interior monologue accounts of his meeting with the University of Arizona's administration. They are, in fact, 'ghost-words,' thought by Hal but operating on a secondary, meta-level. As the novel expands and Wallace's mediation principle is discovered, these words take on an additional, associative meaning: that the wraith is "in here," in the text, and is the mediating presence that confabulates and distills the novel's contents. In fact, the entire novel has, just like its latent aesthetic layers–as an allegory of "aesthetic orphanhood," for LeClair (33)–a latent contrapuntally linguistic structure, a significant deep-narrative below the welter of the surface-narrative. This, in part, accounts for the novel's complexity and the mediator's playful, cozening yet hostile presence. An obsolete, variant form of 'wraith,' in fact, is "wrath"; and variants of 'ghost' are "fury," "anger," "to rage," "to terrify," and, signally, "to wound, tear, pull to pieces" (OED): all of which Infinite Jest's wraith performs as he creates, manipulates, and mediates the text; the reader, however, reconstructs the wounded text. In an aesthetic-allegorical context, the 'wrath/rage' meaning extends to Wallace's own chagrin at the state of the American millennial arts and that his novel moves through language to "re-medy" or "re-mediate" (McCaffery 137) the situation; the mediator himself–it is no coincidence that Incandenza, Jr. is referred to by his three sons only as "Himself," indicating his abiding textual presence as both character and wraith/mediator–thus intervenes to produce reconciliation between the two consciousnesses of writer/author and reader. Even Wallace's choice of the word 'wraith,' in the main, as opposed to the more familiar 'ghost' is itself telling in the context of authorship and textual presence. 'Ghost,' according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is defined as "the supposed apparition of a dead person," whereas 'wraith' is defined as

"the spectral appearance of a living person supposed to portend that person's death"; Webster's Dictionary similarly terms a 'wraith' an apparition of "a living person in his exact likeness seen usually just before his death" (emphases added). Infinite Jest emphasizes the lexical difference between the two words when the mediator interpolates into Gately's free indirect discourse, "does wraith mean like a ghost, as in dead?" (833, author's emphasis), emphasizing the wraith's quickened aspect in the text. In her article "Intertextual Madness in Hamlet: The Ghost's Fragmented Performativity," Hilaire Kallendorf builds on the well-known fact that Shakespeare's works were intertextually informed by Daemonologie (1597) by King James I. According to King James, "these kindes of spirites, when they appeare in the shaddow of a person newlie dead . . . are called Wraithes" and serve to "discover unto them [the newly dead's friendes], the will of the defunct, or what was the way of his slauchter" (qtd. in Kallendorf 77), which further extends Infinite Jest's considerable debt to Hamlet but also implies that Incandenza, Jr. himself was murdered–that the auteur, the 'author,' was killed in both this novel and the Novel's wider theoretical context. 'Revenant' too is a logical word choice, however, that the mediator specifically designates for Hal (Jest 260, 461)–one of the two protagonists, second son of Incandenza, Jr., and a lexical prodigy himself who recalls entire entries of the OED from memory (950)–with its meanings of "one who returns from the dead" and "one who returns to a place." Both definitions are appropriate for Hal as he is considered to have fallen "into the womb of solipsism, anhedonia, death in life" (838) by his father, but presumably emerges from his "death in life" condition, ex-narrative. That is, Hal returns to his father's grave with Gately–scrupulously referred to in passing by both characters, but we must infer that this nevertheless occurs (Jest 17, 934)–to dig up the master copy of Incandenza, Jr.'s lethally entertaining film "Infinite Jest" (again recalling

Hamlet's graveyard scene) which is interred with Incandenza, Jr., in his microwave-annihilated head (1030 n. 160). The implication of 'wraith,' however, is that Infinite Jest's textual presence, its mediator, is alive when resuscitated by the reader, and can also be read as an intertextual nod to the death of the author impasse, where neither account really matters to readers as they enter a text's "world of intuition" (Iser 64), but for textual critics possibly represents the textual 'jest' or 'fetch' on deconstruction, where the latter theory of the death of the author, according to Wallace, imposes an "absence rather than presence" and "involves not the imposition but the erasure of consciousness" ("Greatly" 140). The wraith, then, serves as a transmission of the author's embedded consciousness and allows Wallace to deconstruct deconstruction's own premises through his novel, through written language, deconstruction's own privileged form (or the "graphocentric model" for M.H. Abrams) (429). Imbuing the wraith with his own writerly consciousness and establishing it as a character and not-quite character, Wallace attains a textual presence that transmits his 'message' through the exact program that deconstruction asserts: the complete erasure of authorial presence. As Marjorie Garber remarks, quoting Freud, in her wide-ranging Shakespeare's Ghost Writers, "Hamlet is a play not only informed *with* the uncanny but also informed *about* it. The Ghost is only the most explicit marker of uncanniness, the ultimate articulation of 'uncertainty whether something is dead or alive'" (127, author's emphasis). An assertion that is just as applicable to Infinite Jest and that provokes such a speculation in the embodiment of the wraith. Just as Shakespeare, it is widely held, himself acted the role of the Ghost in Hamlet (Bloom 387), it is, in a novel replete with Hamlet references, significant that Wallace himself would also 'play' the significant roles of Incandenza, Jr. (King of the rotten state that is Enfield Tennis Academy) and the wraith, underscoring the duality of

the author-ghost. For Infinite Jest's greatest jest is that there is no authorial presence while it is paradoxically steeped with authorial consciousness. It is no mistake that, according to Hal, "deconstruct" also happens to be "the one word" that Incandenza, Jr. "hated more than–" any other word (or theory), readers must infer (Jest 251). All the while Wallace establishes a connection and permits the reader to penetrate that consciousness. The textual aporia is filled by the reader, whose presence not even deconstruction would deny, as Burke observes: "a theory of the author, or of the absence of the author, cannot withstand the practice of reading, for there is not an absolute cogito of which individual authors are the subalternant mani-festations, but authors, many authors, and the differences . . . that exist between authors–within authorship–defy reduction to any universalizing aesthetic" (191). Hence Iser's semi-acceptance by both adherents to the tattered remnants of New Criticism and deconstruction. A further etymological derivative for 'ghost' is also the German geist, or "spirit, spirituality; intellectuality" (OED). Geist itself has many related forms integral to Infinite Jest, such as geister, an obsolete form of 'jester.' In this sense, Wallace's mediating ghost/geist(er) has the last 'laugh' or 'fetch' at deconstruction's expense.

* * *

Wallace dedicated his 1989 short story, "Girl With Curious Hair" (Girl 53), to Norman O. Brown, author of Life Against Death: The Psycholanalytical Meaning of History and Love's Body. The gesture is significant as Wallace's works are informed by Brown's unique philosophical-classicist-symbolic meditations. Brown's own intellectual development took a radical bent from philology to a spiritual understanding when he embarked upon a re-reading of Freud's oeuvre, as he writes in the introduction to Life

Against Death: "In 1953 I turned to a deep study of Freud, feeling the need to reappraise the nature and destiny of man" (xi). While reappraising the nature and destiny of humankind is certainly a remote, if not risible ideal, of critical inquiry in today's academic setting, it clearly was not for Brown who developed a symbolical and spiritual yet human-based epistemology. I do not mention Brown's works here to contend for any detailed correspondence between Brown's and Wallace's worldviews but merely intend to demonstrate Wallace's emphasis on spiritual understanding, partially inherited from Brown. Love's Body is a mesmerizing pastiche of aphorisms culled from a broad range of classical, biblical, and philosophical writings spliced together with Brown's interpretations and formed into what he calls a worldview of "symbolical consciousness," that is, of what it means to be a human being in a highly technological age. Of the ghostly relationship between writer and reader, Brown writes,

> Spiritual understanding (geistiges Verstehen) becomes a ghostly operation, an operation with ghosts (Geisteswissenschaft). The document starts speaking for itself; the reader starts hearing voices. The subjective dimension in historical understanding is to animate the dead letter with the living reader's blood, his "experience"; and simultaneously let the ghost of the dead author slide into, become one with, the reader's soul. It is necromancy, or shamanism; magical identification with ancestors; instead of living spirit, to be possessed by the dead. (199)

Wallace's use of the wraith as an author-proxy to inhabit his text is doubly significant as he achieves–or attempts to achieve–a spiritual relationship with his readers through his text, and circumnavigates deconstruction's theory of the death of the author at once by instantiating his narrating consciousness through the spiritual agency of the wraith–the theoretical coeval of the return or resurrection of the dead author. For, as Brown contends and Wallace demonstrates, the text has the primary power to convey the presence of consciousness to another consciousness. M.H. Abrams, in a reply to J. Hillis

Miller, writes that to experience a text without the presence of an authorial consciousness is to perceive it as itself already irremediably dead:

> His [Miller's] origin and ground are his graphocentric premises, the closed chamber of texts for which he invites us to abandon our ordinary realm of experience in speaking, hearing, reading, and understanding language. And from such a beginning we move to a foregone conclusion. For Derrida's chamber of texts is a sealed echo-chamber in which meanings are reduced to a ceaseless echolalia, a vertical and lateral reverberation from sign to sign of ghostly non-presences emanating from no voice, intended by no one, referring to nothing, bombinating in a void. (431)

Abrams's remarks on deconstruction recall Nikos Kazantzakis's in The Last Temptation, where the spiritual essence in and of language remains unapprehended to some: "but what can the letters say? They are the black bars of the prison where the spirit strangles itself with screaming. Between the letters and the lines, and all around the blank margins, the spirit circulates freely" (qtd. in Brown 196). The 'wraith-function' further undermines deconstruction by acting itself as a Derridean trace of the authorial self–a ghostly non-presence (the Derridean sous rature, "under erasure") to recall Abrams–always already present in the text, one whose annulled presence through inscription cannot but still call attention to itself nevertheless as presence–and thus, to use Derrida's construction, ~~is~~ (Grammatology 19), "since the word is inaccurate, it is crossed out. Since it is necessary, it remains legible" (Spivak xiv). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak writes, in her preface to the Grammatology, in discussing Derrida's concepts of erasure and trace that, in distinction to Heidegger's ~~Being~~, Derrida's "~~trace~~ is the mark of the absence of a presence, an always already absent present, of the lack of origin that is the condition of thought and experience" (xvii), that the trace effaces itself even as it presents its legibility (xviii). And she asserts, in a somewhat disingenuous move that anticipates and stifles potential criticism, that "we must remember this when we wish to attack Derrida . . . on certain

sorts of straightforward logical grounds" (xviii), which is to imply that the entire Derridean enterprise is itself founded on a fragile foundation–that is to say, that one must hold one's logical criticism in abeyance. Wallace has on occasion doffed the critical cap to Derrida: "if Derrida and the infamous Deconstructionists have done nothing else, they've debunked the idea that speech is language's primary instantiation" ("Tense Present" 45). And it would seem that his 'attack' on Derridean deconstruction through Infinite Jest tends to operate within the acknowledged confines of deconstruction itself, an appropriated deconstruction–or trace of deconstruction–one that, for example, asserts the erasure of the author in deferring–even dying, a scapegoat (sparagmos) author (Frye, Anatomy 193)–to and for the reader: the author, for Wallace, has "to be willing to sort of die in order to move the reader" (McCaffery 149). The wraith, then, of necessity as a 'wraith' (the embodiment, the return, of a dead being), acts as a cozening device: the Wallacean contention is that while the author may be dead, his spirit nevertheless may well return to haunt his former topology, the gaps between the inky bars of the text. As wraith, then, it is not the author–but the ~~author~~. To strike out a word, however, to put it under erasure, does not kill the word's spirit, its internal geist, but liberates it and allows it to resonate within readers' minds. It is akin to the striking of court-testimony, where the juridical action cannot strike the trace of the annulled commentary from the jurists' minds where they will, possibly, continue to exert a Heisenbergian influence on the proceedings. Garber relates Spivak's preface to the concept of the ghost: "it is this specifically Derridean [sic] inflection of 'under erasure,' 'sous rature,' that so uncannily resembles a ghost–resembles, in fact, the ~~Being~~ of a ghost. 'There are more ~~things~~ in heaven and earth, Horatio, / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy'" (180 n. 57). Spivak notes that Derrida "uses the word 'metaphysics' very simply as shorthand for any science

of presence" (xxi, emphasis added), but to recall Seán Burke–the "renunciation of the author-God does not do away with authorship, nor impede the creativity of the author and the intensity of his engagement with and within his text" (49)–we can see that it is itself to abuse the "straightforward logic" that Spivak disparages in making the Derridian leap from textual immanence to a "science of presence": to posit the brick of the author is not necessarily to posit, reductively, an edifice of Western metaphysics and the transcendental signified. In his reply to Derrida, "Destruktion and Deconstruction," Hans-Georg Gadamer writes that there is "no 'language of metaphysics.' There is only a metaphysically thought-out coinage of concepts that have been lifted from living speech" (107). Such reliance on a misleading consensus of a "coinage of concepts" thus establishes "a fixed conceptual tradition and consequently lead[s] to an alienation from the living language" (107), for Gadamer. Thus, Wallace uses the wraith-function to act as a trace, even as absent presence, that nevertheless conveys integral meaning. That Wallace has the concept of trace in mind in Infinite Jest is signified by Orin Incandenza's perspiration impressions in his bed, "white salty outline[s] just slightly off from the week's other faint dried outlines" (Jest 43). Deconstruction becomes itself a metaphysics of language with its own selectively re-appropriated "'useful' words" (Spivak xx) themselves placed under the stamp of erasure, and places any problematic word (for the deconstructive metaphysic) under erasure: "if he [Derrida] were to attempt a rigorous definition of metaphysics, the word would no doubt go 'under erasure'" (xxi). What is operating here is a Platonic excommunication of terms that do not belong in deconstruction's lexical-kingdom, which is, as Spivak relishes, the "joyful yet laborious strategy of rewriting the old language" (xx) and, in an interview, "it seems to me that 'the history of metaphysics' was a *bad* name" (qtd. in Burke 150, interviewer's emphasis), the

sanitizing of language for Spivak. To this methodology, we must invoke Seán Burke's "transcendental lure," which is to say that "any determined discourse of the death of man will find itself ensnared in a similar labyrinth of transcendental presuppositions" (99). To put a metaphysic under erasure is only to position and presuppose another in its place: "such indeed is the abyss awaiting any author of the death of man. The subject who announces the disappearance of subjectivity does so only at the risk of becoming–inferentially at least–the sole subject, the Last and Absolute subject, left to face his subjecthood in the face [of] an otherwise subjectless terrain, ever captive to a mirror of solipsism" (Burke 103). To confront the "death of man" (interchangeable with 'death of the author' for Burke) "either necessitates transcending its tenets or falls prey to its own thanatography" (103). To call for 'presence' in a text is, for some, critically naïve, and Wallace anticipates this by having the author-function reside wholly within the wraith-function, a figure that is itself a trace (Derridian or otherwise), or a vestige, of the author.[8] In an interview with Imre Salusinszky, Derrida once remarked that, "since I've always been interested in literature–my deepest desire being to write literature, to write fictions–I've the feeling that philosophy has been a detour for me to come back to literature. Perhaps I'll never reach this point, but that was my desire even when I was very young" (qtd. in Burke 170). It is thus with a somewhat sad irony that Burke concludes his chapter on Derrida with the words of the lamenting author–as prosopopeia to the dead, Derrida addresses the absent author of himself–of The Post Card and Mémoires: For Paul deMan respectively: "I have never had anything to write. You are the only one to understand why it really was necessary that I write exactly the opposite, as concerns axiomatics, of what I know my desire to be, in other words you: living speech, presence itself," and, "I have never known how to tell a story" (qtd. in Burke, 171). The

irony is that Derrida has never been able to slay his own (ghostly) authorial self in either his philosophical literary theory (itself creative) or the figurative and self-claimed, self-imposed death of his youthful, would-be author: the author who was still-born, who intended to write fictions, but instead 'spent' his entire life in either repressing (perhaps sublimating, even) his authorial self, or killing it; but it has nevertheless returned–or was never gone. The one author that he could never put under erasure is himself. In this sense, one may come away with a differing sense than intended by Spivak when she remarks in her preface that, "Jacques Derrida is also this collection of texts" (ix). Spivak concludes her preface by similarly putting her own words under erasure when she remarks, "and all said and done, that is the sort of reader I would hope for. A reader who would fasten upon my mistranslations, and with that leverage deconstruct Derrida's text beyond what Derrida as controlling subject has directed in it" (lxxxvii). This rhetorical flourish implies that the preface's argument be taken as part of a new metaphysic while it simultaneously attempts to distance itself from the specter of first principles. Spivak's final comment is crucial to her overall argument, for not to release the text (Derrida's and her own) is to claim an Absolute subjectivity (thus, solipsism) and fall prey to deconstruction's own tenets, but to release it is to preserve a trace, allowing it the full autonomy of play. And either way there is no escaping the fact of intentional inscription, of authorial direction. For Garber, "a ghost is the concretization of a missing presence, the sign of what is there by not being there" (129). In this way, Wallace's wraith signifies the presence of the returned author in spectral guise.

Ultimately, deconstruction and its significance recede for Wallace, since the conversation between writer and reader is his primary aesthetic concern, to write prose that creates the impression in the reader of "a human being actually sitting right there

talking to him" (Wallace, "Indexical" 23). There is much in the philosophy of Gadamer that is relevant to Wallace's purpose. For Gadamer, language is primarily "conversation," and to "overcome confusion"–the "strangeness that arises between one human being and another"–one "must look for the word that can reach another person," the "language of the other person," to "cross over into the language of the other in order to reach the other" ("Destruktion" 106). For Gadamer and Frank Kermode, in his "Cornelius and Voltemand: Doubles in Hamlet," 'conversation' is a "habit of a community" that is much "broader" than our contemporary usage currently suggests (Kermode 47): "the action of consorting or having dealings with others; living together, commerce" (47, OED). Paraphrasing Lacan, Gadamer contends that the "word not directed to another person is such an empty word" (106). Gadamer challenges the contemporary concept of the "'language of metaphysics'" itself, which he claims "really has no meaning," for "certainly what it can mean is not the language in which metaphysics was first developed, namely, the philosopher's language of the Greeks" but, rather, means "that certain conceptual formulations, derived from the original language of metaphysics, have impressed themselves into the living languages of present-day speech communities" (106). He further cites correlative examples of such in "scientific and philosophic discourse" and in the "mathematics-based natural sciences" where the "introduction of terms is purely a matter of convention, serving to designate states of affairs available to all, and which do not involve any genuine relation of meaning between these terms introduced into international use and the peculiarities of national language," citing the "volt" as removed from immediate thinking of the scientist, Alessandro Volta (106-107). Gadamer considers his "dialectic" as referring to the "whole wide-ranging totality of the Western tradition of metaphysics," and, thus, considers Derrida's deconstruction to reside within

that whole in a totality of philosophical dialectic, which is at once inclusive and charitable, for although Gadamer departs from Derridian deconstruction, he does, however, acknowledge Derrida's work to be a significant component and even concludes his essay thus: "this conversation should seek its partner everywhere, just because this partner is other, and especially if the other is completely different. Whoever wants me to take deconstruction to heart and insists on difference stands at the beginning of a conversation, not at its end" (113). Thus, Gadamer's "path" is "from dialectic back to dialogue, back to conversation" (109), instead of deconstruction's implosion of the "background network of meaning-relations lying at the basis of all speech" (109). In Gadamer's words, "Derrida immerses himself in the mysterious multiplicity lodged in a word and in the diversity of its meanings, in the indeterminate potential of its differentiations of meaning" (112). Such a program remains, of necessity, in a solitary space, a verbal prison that guards against the penetration of meaning into the isolated examination of individually isolated words. In "Signature Event Context," Derrida uses the example of "green is or" as a construction that does not constitute its context in itself and further asserts that "nothing prevents [its] functioning in another context as signifying marks," that "'green is or' still signifies an <u>example of agrammaticality</u>" and for the "possibility of extraction and citational grafting which belongs to the structure of every mark":

> as writing, that is, as a possibility of functioning cut off, at a certain point, from its 'original' meaning and from its belonging to a saturable and constraining context. Every sign, linguistic or nonlinguistic, spoken or written . . . as a small or large unity, can be <u>cited</u>, (put between quotation marks); thereby it can break with every given context, and engender infinitely new contexts in an absolutely nonsaturable fashion . . . there are only contexts without any center of absolute anchoring. (320, author's emphasis)

However, as John Searle argues in his reply to Derrida, "green is or" is not "agrammatical" as Derrida insists, but is simply incoherent, an isolated phrase that signifies nothing: "the sequence '<u>le vert est ou</u>' does not MEAN an example of ungrammaticality, it does not mean anything, rather it IS an example of ungrammaticality . . . . To mention it is not the same as to <u>use</u> it" (Searle 203, author's emphasis). To enclose within quotation marks serves only to draw attention to or place emphasis on the words (or "marks") themselves, and does not signify, or if it does, it only signifies incoherence, the attempt toward the production of meaning or a self-conscious effort toward non-meaning as the phrase has no context whatsoever, excepting in the addressor's mind where it can only be deemed either a linguistic error or an attempt at a private language. The enterprise itself can be construed as solipsistic because it is only comprehensible to the isolated self, choosing as it does to remain isolated and as incomprehensible as a private language without its context anchored in a community's shared discourse. But, for Gadamer (and Wallace), a "word exists only in conversation and never exists there as an isolated word but as the totality of a way of accounting by means of speaking and answering" ("<u>Destruktion</u>" 112). Thus, Wallace's lexical strategy in <u>Infinite Jest</u> forces both an immediate investigation of individual words and a determination of their larger significance in the broad weave of the entire text. The appearance, then, of the ghost-word (and poststructuralist term) "BRICOLAGE" in Gately's consciousness (from the wraith) (<u>Jest</u> 832) implies both the engineered whole of the text and the readers' similar assemblage or reconstruction of words in their own consciousnesses as a linguistic exercise which is the analogue of conversation. The forced lexical engagement with <u>Infinite Jest</u>, in its essential demand on the reader to analyze individual words and apply them in a larger context, is the remedying action of being <u>in</u> conversation, and is what takes lexical investigation beyond

deconstruction's torpor and analytic paralysis over the isolated word and further evacuation of lingering metaphysical impressions or vestiges. And, for Gadamer, "to be in a conversation . . . means to be beyond oneself, to think with the other and to come back to oneself as if to another" ("Destruktion" 110). For both Gately and the reader this becomes, in Gadamer's words, the "fulfillment of an intention of consciousness" which "does mean 'presence.' It is the declarative voice (voix) assigned to the presence of what is thought in thinking" (112, author's emphasis).

Wallace's novel is an erudite compendium of etymological references where, again, geist can also be read as 'spirit' and, by extension, denotes Zeitgeist, "the spirit of the age"–clearly no mistake in a novel that also seeks to undermine the contemporary American 'spirit' of irony–particularly, for Wallace, as manifested in current fiction. It is further no coincidence that Incandenza, Jr. (from the Latin incandescere–'to shine white'–which adds to his ghostly aspect) is an auteur film-maker, adding emphasis to his authorial presence. Moreover, Incandenza, Jr. is frequently referred to as an "appropriation artist" (Jest 23) in terms of his intertextual film-making which explains both his director-hostile commandeering of the narrative and the novel's own near-infinite intertext–he conflates and subsumes all other voices and aesthetic practices in his monolithic telling. Hal further comments that his father was an "amazingly shitty editor of his own stuff" (947) which calls attention to the enormity of Infinite Jest, and a footnote to Incandenza, Jr.'s filmography cites the humorous pseudo-journal article, "'Has James O. Incandenza Ever Even Once Produced One Genuinely Original or Unappropriated or Nonderivative Thing?'" (990 n. 24). It is useful to recall here Wallace's statement that "certain novels not only cry out for critical interpretations but actually try to direct them" ("Empty" 217, emphasis added), which is certainly the case

with Infinite Jest. In their Performance, Culture, and Identity, Elizabeth Fine and Jean Speer chart intertextuality as

> the power of narrators to create meaning and project cultural values through different renditions of the same traditional ghost story . . . . These studies provide examples of the process of 'entextualization' and 'recontextualization' in which a performance may be detached from one social situation (entextualized, decentered) and performed in another social situation (recontextualized, recentered). (qtd. in Kallendorf 71)

Kallendorf calls this the "echo of a shared discourse" (70), and it is between Infinite Jest's very much alive mediator/wraith and Shakespeare and a legion of other artists, literary and visual, and between the auteur's consciousness and the reader's that a ghostly discourse is shared.

6. The (Sinistral) Machine in the (Sinister) Ghost

"A very good clue is afforded when a sinistral sign is discovered"–Anonymous ('Sinistral' qtd. in the OED).

"O" (Jest 3).

In the suspenseful episode in which Don Gately, former cat-burglar, drug addict, and current night staffer, is shot outside the Ennet House drug and alcohol rehabilitation center, the narrative takes on the quality of reportage. That is, the narrative is told by the wraith in a conversational tone that is so personal and familiar that the illusion of 'hearing' this ghost-story (literally, a story told by a ghost) is, in-deed, arresting. The strategic use of the German word Bröckengespenstphänom ("breaking into ghost") in note 38, as noted above (Jest 994), is even more significant as we observe that gespenst

resides in the middle of this phrase, just as the wraith is centrally located in the narrative as both the character Incandenza, Jr. and as the text's mediator; the wraith ruptures the text itself, literally breaking it into ghostliness. The wraith's textual presence itself is subtle throughout except for the overt hospital episode, but Wallace provides one subtle clue besides the reader's recognition that what is received is, in fact, told instead of merely presented, or shown, in the Jamesian sense. Twenty-seven of the novel's many unnumbered chapters and subsections are specifically marked with a circular symbol with a narrow blackened crescent (☽); each symbol, or meniscus, signifies the overt mediating presence of the wraith in that episode; all other sections are either narrated in the first person or are otherwise mediated without the denuded presence of the wraith; that is, all is mediated, the polyphonic voices collated, by the wraith, but the meniscus-symbol segments signify an immediately told narrative–and the immediacy of presence–rather than a presented narration.[9] The narrative is dialogic, yet also complexly monologic in the sense that the wraith assembles the many voices through his own voice; and the narrator is also both heterodiegetic and homodiegetic at once, being simultaneously a (deceased) character and also its narrator. Seán Burke writes that absolute authorial erasure is impossible (echoing Wayne Booth's contention that an "author can disguise himself," but "can never choose to disappear") (qtd. in Ricoeur 188), if for nothing else, because the "author operates as a principle of uncertainty in the text, like the Heisenbergian scientist whose presence invariably disrupts the scientificity of the observation" (Burke 190). "Himself"'s narration thus directly influences characters and manipulates events in such a Heisenbergian fashion–in a "Heisenbergian dimension" (Jest 831)–as his perceptions, reporting/editorializing, and consequences of his actions as former character cannot be 'cut out' of the narrative; they are vitally interlocked.

Wallace thus creates a character/narrator who is inseparable from the raw events. This is vital to Wallace's aesthetic of conjoining writer and readerly consciousnesses. In "Tense Present," he remarks that "even in the physical sciences, everything from quantum mechanics to Information Theory has shown that an act of observation is itself part of the phenomenon observed and is analytically inseparable from it" (46). Both the writer's consciousness alters the textual phenomenon (via the wraith) and the reader's consciousness, the "reader's own life 'outside' the story changes the story" (McCaffery 141). Wallace notes that "you could argue that it affects only 'her [the reader's] reaction to the story' or 'her take on the story.' But these things <u>are</u> the story" (141, interviewer's emphasis). Wallace's title to his <u>Harper's</u> essay even, with the calculated inversion of 'present tense' to "tense present," itself calls attention to the 'tense presence' of both writer's and reader's consciousnesses–and <u>Infinite Jest</u>'s mediator/wraith's peculiar abiding presence as both (former) character and narrating (tense/hostile) presence, a "double-voicing" presence (Phelan 60). The wraith is both present yet still recedes throughout, miming his sudden appearances and disappearances in the hospital episode. The signification of these sporadic meniscus symbols is, again, lexical. This clue appears throughout but in no episode more significantly than the wraith's appearance to the hospitalized Gately, where the wraith telepathically transmits one of many narratively integral words into Gately's hallucinating mind in caps: "MENISCUS" (<u>Jest</u> 832). Much of Wallace's reader's participatory ethos is derived through lexical investigation–that is, simply keeping a dictionary nearby, for as Cioffi fittingly observes, "the novel sends even the relatively well-educated to the dictionary dozens, if not scores of times" and even then "some words remain elusive" (167-168). Meniscus has seven definitions, two of which are germane here: "1. a crescent-shaped body; crescent moon (rare); 2. a lens convex on one

side and concave on the other; properly, the convexo-concave form . . . but often applied also to the concavo-convex, the two being sometimes distinguished as converging and diverging meniscus respectively" (OED). Infinite Jest plays on the concave-convex motif throughout, appearing most memorably in Incandenza, Jr.'s experimental film-making and with his various, self-invented lenses. Moreover, North America itself is reconfigured and renamed the Organization of North American States (O.N.A.N.–an intended pun) with a portion of the north-eastern United States forcefully ceded to Canada; the zone, called both the "Great Concavity/Grand Convexité" (1032 n. 177) depending on one's perspective, is a walled-off dumping ground for American waste.[10] Although the first definition of meniscus clearly corresponds to the text's sporadic crescent symbols, I am particularly concerned with the second definition as the wraith, as narrative presence and as 'embodied' literary meniscus, focalizes and presents all textual material, for it is his presence that brings out the submerged, textual authorial-consciousness (concavity) and merges it with the reader's external consciousness (convexity): the two menisci diverge and converge simultaneously throughout, enacting the lexical equivalent of a conversation: "and we converse" (Jest 131).

At the risk of dissipating the gunshot episode's linguistic power, I will nevertheless summarize it: Gately is forced to protect one of the residents of his half-way house from three Canadian terrorists. He successfully fights off two of them and suffers a gunshot wound from the third; while the shooter is rendered temporarily vulnerable from sustaining ejected cordite powder in his face, the other, watching residents subdue him. What is crucial is the manner in which the episode is (re)presented, for it is not 'shown' pseudo-objectively to the reader using conventional third-person narration, but is simply told as story. That is, there is an overwhelming sensation of not being imaginatively

present, or even 'seeing' the events as Iser contends the reader can. As the episode unfolds, the mediator/wraith carefully describes the entire scene, Gately's physical actions, and the other residents' words and actions, who are engaged in parking their cars on the opposite side of the street according to a municipal bylaw. The wraith's reportage is itself filmic and he mimes his own (past) film-making aesthetic of ensuring that "either the whole entertainment was silent or else if it wasn't silent that you could bloody well hear every single performer's voice" (Jest 835) so that all of the residents' actions and voices are accounted for and heard during the telling of Gately's fight. He further editorializes and interrupts the scene with remarks like, "it's not so much that things slow as break into frames" (608), signifying his film-maker's perception of the scene, and "all this appraisal's taking only seconds; it only takes time to list it" (609), emphasizing the telling of the event instead of the illusory readerly perception of immediacy, of imaginatively 'seeing' the event. As Gately mentally prepares for the fight, he twice suffers from "Remember-Whenning" (610), fears of the outcome and memories from his criminal past that, if indulged in, would possibly cause him to flee. After these thoughts, the wraith twice inserts, "this line of thinking is intolerable" (610, 611), thereafter Gately steels his resolve for the fight. What is narratologically significant is that the wraith's very narration influences Gately's behavior and implies that these words are inserted into Gately's own consciousness just as they are simultaneously for the reader, and which also serves to foreshadow the later hospital scene where the mute and immobile Gately is subjected to the wraith's "ghost-words" (832, 922) 'heard' in Gately's "internal brain-voice" (831). It is perhaps worthwhile mentioning Christine Brooke-Rose's assertion, in her study of The Turn of the Screw, that there is "nothing in ghost-lore that forbids thought-transference" (398 n. 10). The mediator/wraith inserts further ideas and

thoughts into Gately and the other, surrounding characters, that influence the actual narrative integrity and continuity. These moments are signally prefaced with the leitmotif, "it occurs" (610ff), and are repeated later when the wraith manifests himself to Gately directly in the hospital (827ff). This leitmotif explains why Gately rather suicidally approaches the terrorists to begin with when he knows he will assuredly be shot and killed: "it occurs to Gately if you fire with an Item right up to your sighting-eye like that won't you get a face full of cordite" (610, emphasis added). This passage demonstrates the interlacing of doubled voices in Wallace's text: Gately's free indirect discourse, his assumed thought ("won't you get a face full of cordite"), is conjoined with the wraith's telling; it is both his thinking and the wraith's suggestion, with the result that the wraith both narrates/tells and manipulates the narrative's circumstances ("divisions collapse," interpolates the wraith here) (612) by suggesting to Gately that he can only be shot once as the terrorist will be incapacitated by the cordite. Gately's heroism is implied in the fact of his willingness to, and knowledge that he will, sustain at least one shot in order to rescue the abhorrent Randy Lenz ('lens'). Moreover, the wraith goes to great length to construct Gately as sanguine before and during the fight; he is progressively described as: "of jolly calm" (610), "almost jolly" (611), "of ferocious good cheer" (612), "of cheery competence and sangfroid" (614), as he horrifically beats the Canadian terrorists. Yet after this mediator-constructed cheerfulness, we are informed in a note that Gately once killed a man after being sprayed with Mace, "but it was only an accident," reports the mediator/wraith–yet Gately is said to have experienced a "red curtain of rage" and to have turned the victim's head "180° around on his neck and had the little Mace can all the way up one nostril" (1078 n. 369). This is but one inconsistency of many, and suggests that the mediator is partial to Gately, and is bent on redeeming his flaws.

Yet it is the mediator/wraith himself who bears the inherent flaws, and infuses the text with them. His Dogberryesque solecisms are many and humorous: "Grand Mall epilepsy" (278) and "Morris code" (275). At other times, his linguistic solecisms translate into behavioral solecisms, and are sinister. Like many of Infinite Jest's characters, he is at once charming and hideous. We appreciate his technical abilities and brilliance (in optics, film-making, generalist erudition, and, not least, sophisticated story-telling), yet are repulsed by his alcoholism (as Incandenza, Jr.), sexism and xenophobia (as the wraith): halfway-house resident Charlotte Treat is referred to by the wraith as a "clueless" "poor bitch" (271); Canadians are "fucking Nucksters" or simply, "Nucks" (215); "puke white Irish are on every corner" (477); a tennis player's face is depicted as having an "Eskimoid structure" (267); African Americans are disparaged throughout: a character "shakes his hand in the complex way of Niggers" (444); Asian Americans are derisively referred to as "Orientals" and "Chinese," their walking as "scuttling" (716); Asian languages are ridiculed as "monkey-language[s]," with regrettable commentary like, "evolution proved your Orientoid tongues were closer to your primatal languages than not" (716) and "it was universally well known that your basic Orientoid types carried their earthly sum-total of personal wealth with them at all times. As in on their person while they scuttled around" (718). The wraith, however, compensates for his darker aspect by seeding his story with countless references to left-hand things, and constantly mentions the words "SINISTRAL" and "sinister" (the former is another ghost-word) (832). The sinistral/sinister connection works in Infinite Jest on several compatible levels. 'Sinistral' means, among other things, "darkly suspicious," "illegitimate," and "pertaining to the left hand or side" (OED). By extension, 'sinister' is defined variously as "not straightforward," "prejudicial, adverse, unfavorable"; of information, it is "given with

intent to deceive or mislead"; it connotes both "erring" and "erroneous"; all in addition to its more conventional meanings of "situated on the left side of the body" and "relating to the use of the left hand" after its etymological cousin, 'sinistral' (OED). Both words' definitions signify the nature of Infinite Jest's narration and its mediator: the mediator/wraith is at times rankly prejudicial, is erroneous, and highly mischievous. What is most striking, however, is 'sinister''s most obscure definition, etymologically drawn from heraldry: "forming, or situated on, the left half of a shield (regarded from the bearer's point of view)" (OED). Infinite Jest is a mise en abyme narrative with the rumored existence of five "Infinite Jest" films, all of them created by Incandenza, Jr. The crucial one, "Infinite Jest (V)," is so compelling to watch that it renders its viewers catatonic, and is searched for by two groups, a Québécois terrorist organization which plans to copy the film–copies can only be made from the master, however–and disseminate it throughout the United States to avenge the "territorial reconfiguration" (1032 n. 177), and a C.I.A.-analogue organization (the O.U.S.–"Office of Unspecified Services") (88) out to foil the terrorists' plot. The film, much like the novel itself, is singularly entertaining and incurably addictive. Don Gately's appearance and circumstances place him within the heraldic tradition, albeit in a millennial American context: he has a "Prince Valiantish haircut" (277, 477) (with perhaps an intertextual nod to Prince Valiant's author, Hal Foster, after Wallace's middle name, his maternal grandfather's surname–F.P. Foster–to whom the novel is dedicated); as a child Gately plays under the name "Sir Osis of Thuliver" (cirrhosis of the liver–a condition from which Gately's alcoholic mother dies) (449); his mother calls him her "good sir knight" (448); and, in a 'heroic' context, note 254 informs the reader that "Gately's made it an iron point never again ever to run, once he got straight" (1045 n. 254), which refers to the

fight scene. Gately's own body is inscribed with the twentieth-century's equivalent of street-heraldic iconography. During a prison term, prior to the novel's narrated events, Gately etches a "jailhouse tatt" on his right-hand wrist, a "plain ultraminimal blue square" (210) which is "canted and has sloppy extra blobs at three of the corners" (211), and on the inside of his left forearm he has a "sloppy cross" tattooed by his cellmate (210). The description of the tattoos is oddly sustained, with the blue-square tattoo mentioned three times in a single paragraph and the cross mentioned but once. But Gately is "right handed" (211), which raises the question of why he performs the square tattoo with his left hand instead of rendering a more precise cross–instead of the cellmate's "sloppy" version (210)–on his left forearm: attention is twice called to Gately's sinistral aspect. Gately's inverted tattoos are furthermore symbolic of a heraldic "rebatement of honor," nine marks reserved to "deface the arms of one found guilty of an offence against the standards of chivalry" (Franklyn 274). Gately's offence is cowardice in abandoning his mother, first, when she is physically abused by Gately's step-father and, later, when he abandons her prior to her death. Two colors are specifically reserved for marks of disgrace: sanguine and tenné ('stain'; tawny, orange-brown); the latter color also happens to be the reverse spelling of Gately's rehabilitation center, 'Ennet' House. Gately is referred to synaesthetically throughout in relation to the color red, and his tattoos are inverted on his 'arms': "an inscutcheon [is] reversed for a deserter" (Franklyn 276). The official symbol of abatement of honor for cowardice is the gore sinister sanguine (276); and it is only after Gately has achieved sobriety and is "wounded in service to somebody who did not deserve service" (Jest 855) that the color red is associatively removed from him and replaced with associations with the color blue (particularly sky-blue), or azure, which signifies "renown and beauty" (Friar 344). The wraith further emphasizes both

square things and large heads throughout, linking them to Gately's canted tattoo. Incongruously interpolated comments like, "has anybody mentioned Gately's head is square? It's almost perfectly square, massive and boxy and mysticetously blunt: the head of somebody who looks like he likes to lower his head and charge" (476), is an oft-repeated refrain. The leitmotif appears with other characters as well: Incandenza, Jr.'s (supposed) second son Mario has a grotesquely oversized head (1022 n. 117); Elizabeth Tavis is said to have a "huge square head" (901); Hal Incandenza "adapt[s] his [tennis] game to a large head [racquet]" in distinction to his opponent, who "was born with a large head" (678), and so forth. Square shapes and box-like objects in Infinite Jest are all analogues for our own existential cranial boxes, our minds, a metaphor that Maurice Merleau-Ponty was fond of: "I am never in effect enclosed . . . like an object in a box" (Phenomenology 360), and, "we have to reject the age-old assumptions that put the body in the world and the seer in the body, or, conversely, the world and the body in the seer as in a box" (Visible 138). It would make sense, then, for the wraith to construct Gately as performing the "blue square" tattoo, which requires "half a day and hundreds of individual jabs" (210), instead of the cross. Gately's self-mutilation thus symbolizes 'street heraldry,' after a fashion, just as knife-owners are easily identifiable to the street-savvy Gately: "one forearm's hair has a little hairless patch, which Gately knows well spells knife-owner" (276). Gately, then, is a walking escutcheon with a blue square (with dots at three corners), cross, and enormous, potentially charging–even jousting (jesting?)–head. Heraldic references further appear beyond Gately: an Alcoholics Anonymous member has the "A.A.'s weird little insignia of a triangle inside a circle" for a tattoo and A.A. members themselves are synonymously known as "White Flaggers" (445). Most significantly, a "set of squeegees" is mysteriously found hung in the tennis academy's

dining hall "in a kind of saltire" (632). A saltire is an "ordinary"–one of the nine principal heraldic charges, of which bend-sinister is included–a "fusion of a bend [\] and a bend sinister [/] giving an X-shaped cross" (Franklyn 292). Early in the novel, bend and bend-sinister are typographically rendered: "\ /" (Jest 62), and a new A.A. White Flagger has a "deep diagonal furrow in his face, extending from right eyebrow to left lip-corner" (Jest 856). What is particularly notable here is that the squeegee saltire–hung by the wraith–signifies Gately's own saltire tattoo (left arm) and further calls attention to his illegitimacy as bend sinister is a "sign of bastardy" (OED). Significations of illegitimacy further connect with Incandenza, Jr.'s (supposed) second son Mario, presumably the illegitimate son of his uncle, Charles Tavis, usurper of Incandenza, Jr.'s Headmaster position, wife, and home, all indicated by the ghost-words, "LEVIRATE MARRIAGE" (832). Infinite Jest is as LeClair observes deformed in its ungainly aspect and "resembles a prodigious body" (35) but in no way more than in its awkward division between necessary text (981 pages) and supplementary endnotes (98 pages), a sinistral division of paramount importance for, recalling the 'sinister' portion of the heraldic shield and its definition's caveat, "regarded from the bearer's point of view" (OED), the book, then, itself is encoded as sinister. From the mediating wraith's perspective (a textual concavity), the notes are literally sinistral, whereas for the 'viewer' or reader (a convexity) they are sinistral yet "DEXTRAL" (Jest 836), that is, right-handed and "auspicious." In heraldry, the dexter always surmounts the sinister (particularly in saltire) and this surmounting extends to Wallace's sedulous respect for the reader, where we may say that the dexter (reader) is always positioned above the sinister (author). This is best signaled by the fact that the notes section contains both the wraith's own heraldic symbol as 'heading' (☽)–an increscent meniscus–and the words, "Notes and Errata" (983), which emphasize

'sinister"s secondary definition of "erring; erroneous." That the novel's weave is itself incomplete, and the mediator-wraith is very fallible, is further signified by references to The Lindisfarne Gospels–Hal has a dormitory-room carpet reproduction of one of the Gospels' carpet pages (Jest 950). The Gospels, as Janet Backhouse observes, contain almost imperceptible "gaps and discrepancies" in the complex interlacing design out of the author's practice of humility in "avoiding absolute perfection" (55). To create a 'perfect' work risked offending God, as William Gaddis observes of this practice in "oriental carpets," "made with a conscious flaw, in order not to offend the creator of Perfection by emulating his grand design" (Gaddis 906). For Infinite Jest, the minute gaps and discrepancies serve to underscore the fact of mediation–and mediation from a very fallible, very human consciousness. The motif of interlacing–perhaps the dominant feature of the Gospels' design–itself is further highlighted as Infinite Jest's primary television-broadcasting network's name is none other than "Interlace" (Jest 990 n. 24). The Gospels themselves contain two versions of the gospel texts, the original Latin and an "Anglo-Saxon interlinear gloss added two and a half centuries later" (Backhouse 17). It would seem, then, that Infinite Jest mimes this double textuality with its core narrative structure and with its interlinear, interlacing pattern, or meta-text from the wraith. The entire narrative apparatus is so convoluted and confabulated that it represents–in addition to a deformed body–a hulking machine of falsified language ("the machine language" of the mind) (117), the ghost's own telling. The both likeable and horrid wraith speaks himself through the dialogistic construction of his own making–his own directing as epic auteur film-maker. "Himself," thus, speaks himself. As readers we nevertheless watch/hear him narrate–tell his ghost-story–on grand scale, watching him reflect our own sordid potentialities, as Jeremy Hawthorn observes:

> Narrative focuses our attention on to a story, a sequence of events, through the direct mediation of a 'telling' which we both stare at and through, which is at once central and peripheral to the experience of the story, both absent and present in the consciousness of those being told the story . . . we stare at the 'telling' while our minds are fixed upon what the telling points towards. We look at the pointing . . . but our minds are fixed upon what is pointed at. (vii)

Infinite Jest is an exemplary mirror-text and, in the Joycean sense, a grand book of love (an epithalamium) that would force us to confront our own hideous aspects while seeing/hearing these very similar–very human–aspects as we read, all the while forcing also a suspension of judgment (after Robert Langbaum's "sympathy versus judgment") (75), that is often required of the reader/viewer in dramatic monologues, in which readers must first inhabit the text and impartially hear/see the speaker before judging. The mediator/wraith first creates then inhabits his own text as "complete presence," a narratorial presence that is a "machine in the ghost" (Jest 160, 988 n. 24), a textual presence that, as for Gately, speaks in the reader's own "internal brain-voice" (831). It is no surprise, then, that a supplementary though obscure definition for 'wraith' is also "fetch," with 'fetch' itself containing the novel's raison: a "far-reaching effort" as massive, encyclopedic novel itself; and "contrivance, dodge, stratagem" in terms of the created illusion of an actual and very credible fictive world, and 'fetch' as a slang synonym for none other but 'jest.' A further, admittedly indirect, reference to sinistrality emerges in an ekphrastic sense. In his essay, "Anamorphosis," Jacques Lacan discusses foreshortened distortion in Holbein's famous portrait, The Ambassadors. 'Anamorphosis' is defined as "a distorted projection or drawing of anything, so made that when viewed from a particular point, or by reflection from a suitable mirror, it appears regular and properly proportioned; a deformation"; and to 'anamorphose' is to "distort into a monstrous projection" (OED). In Holbein's portrait, two gentlemen are displayed prominently

within the mise en scène that signifies the vanitas of their worldly accomplishments. Jutting into the frame of the painted space, nearly breaking the frame, from the lower left-hand quadrant, is an unusual and unidentifiable object (when viewed directly), but, as Lacan notes, "the secret of this picture is given at the moment when, moving slightly away, little by little, to the left, then turning around, we see what the magical floating object signifies. It reflects our own nothingness, in the figure of the death's head" (92, emphasis added). Wallace's novel requires a similar left-ward or sinistral movement to perceive that which is concealed, as the entire novel itself can be read as a similar representation of vanitas in the relentless quest for perfection and fame by Enfield's tennis players, the addicts quest, first, for oblivion and escape from the reality principle and later quest to shake their substance-abuse habits. References to skulls are innumerable in Infinite Jest, which further underscores the mortality theme and links it to the Holbein painting in addition to the emphasis on Hamlet's Yorick, signally the name of one of Incandenza, Jr.'s production companies, "Poor Yorick Entertainment Unlimited" (992 n. 24). Moreover the key and selective use of the word "foreshortened" (954, author's emphasis) draws attention to the text's anamorphic quality. But if this connection remains somewhat tenuous, then the wraith's appropriation of Lacan's essay itself removes doubt. In his essay, Lacan, unsurprisingly, links anamorphosis with the phallus: "how is it that nobody has ever thought of connecting this with . . . the effect of an erection? Imagine a tattoo traced on the sexual organ ad hoc in the state of repose and assuming its, if I may say so, developed form in another state. How can we not see here, immanent in the geometral dimension . . . something symbolic of the function of the lack, of the appearance of the phallic ghost?" (87-88). Compare Infinite Jest's amusing appropriation of Lacan in Ennet House alumnus Calvin Thrust, who has "on the shaft" of his "formerly

professional porn-cartridge-performer's Unit a tattoo that displays the magiscule initials CT when the Unit is flaccid and the full name CALVIN THRUST when hyperemic" (208, author's emphasis). Wallace seeds his narrative with plenty of gags, and this may be no more than a Lacanian pun on Hamlet's "O, that this too too sullied flesh would melt . . ." (1.2.129). If nothing else, however, the reference serves to emphasize the fact of narrative distortion and the presence of the ghostly author.

7. "He Do the Police in Different Voices"

"*Novum opus facere me cogis ex veteri*" ("You asked me to make a new work out of the old")–St. Jerome, The Lindisfarne Gospels (qtd. in Backhouse 51).

In such a large-scale novel, with its relentless appropriation of contemporary and Modernist texts–like Joyce's Ulysses ("scrotum-tightening cold" and "Madam Psychosis" after Joyce's "scrotumtightening sea" and "met him pike hoses") (Jest 112) (Joyce 4, 221)–it is of no surprise that this should eventually lead to a tangential relationship with T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land (1922).[11] My concern is not so much the moments of intertextual dovetailing between the two works, but rather the literary-cultural circumstances that gave birth to these original texts and the mode of narrative voicing within them. In an act of painstaking literary scholarship, Levenson charts the literary climate that gave birth to Eliot's long poem by considering his critical writings of the period. Writing for The Dial in 1922, Eliot dismissed two contemporary anthologies of poetry in notices that analyzed the then-contemporary London literary scene more than

the actual literary compilations themselves. Eliot criticizes "literary London" for its aesthetic "caution, a sort of worldly prudence," its "lack of ambition, laziness, and refusal to recognize foreign competition" that lead to a "composition of inertias" (qtd. in Levenson 166). In this series of 'attacks,' known as the "London Letter," Eliot would go on to criticize London's literati for their "instinct for safety" (166). At this time Eliot observed a "strain between a poet who cares to experiment and a culture which asks to be flattered and soothed" (166); the experimental poet that Eliot became, having just written The Waste Land, sensed with unease the reception that his work was about to kindle during a time of bland poetics and cultural lethargy. Levenson perceptively observes that The Waste Land, in addition to its obvious poetic strengths, "stands as itself a doctrinal act, the poem as a critical gesture" (168). As we have seen thus far with Infinite Jest, that novel too, although functioning in different cultural circumstances than Eliot encountered, is also a "critical gesture" in its stance against a poisonously ironic American culture, one that also, to borrow Eliot's words, suffers from a "composition of inertias," stagnating in the rut of the perpetual avant-garde, and in Infinite Jest's challenging of dominant theoretical discourses (the death of the author). While Eliot originally worked against a literary culture of anti-experimentation that opposed the avant-garde out of a smug self-satisfaction, Wallace works out of, and in opposition to, a culture that is perpetually enthralled with the avant-garde and the quest for aesthetic novelty. In 2001, Wallace wrote a review–itself stylistically prescient and experimental–for Rain Taxi Review of Books (an avant-garde literary publication) on a new journal, The Best of the Prose Poem: An International Journal (now defunct). The notice is written in a bulleted, point-form style; each point is preceded by a statement and full colon, writes Wallace, as the "antecolonic words" do not "count against "R.T.'s rigid

1,000-word limit" (22). Hence Wallace's "tactical reason" for such a review, and the style of review itself Wallace dubs, a "new, transgeneric critical form," the "Indexical Book Review" (22). Wallace opens by pointing out the journal's physical dimensions, total words and, humorously enough, its weight before getting to his critical discussion of the new journal and the genre of the prose poem. Two of Wallace's remarks are especially instructive, and demonstrate the differences in aesthetic attitude between Eliot's and Wallace's respective eras:

> Basic aesthetic/ideological raison d'être of the above forms [the Nonfiction Novel, the Prose Poem, the Lyric Essay, etc.]: to comment on, complicate, subvert, defamiliarize, transgress against, or otherwise fuck with received ideas of genre, category, and (especially) formal conventions/constraints. (See by analogy the historical progression rhymed accentual-syllabic verse –> blank verse –> vers libre, etc.). (22, author's emphasis and symbols)

And the following point:

> Big paradox/oxymoron behind this raison and the current trendiness of transgeneric forms: In fact, these putatively "transgressive" forms depend heavily on received ideas of genre, category, and formal conventions, since without such an established context there's nothing much to transgress against. Transgeneric forms are therefore most viable–most interesting, least fatuous–during eras when literary genres themselves are relatively stable and their conventions well-established and -codified and no one seems much disposed to fuck with them. And ours is not such an era. (22)

Whereas Eliot confronted a literary culture conventional and stable to the point of deadening the national literature, Wallace engages one in which experimentation is itself the rule, one that seeks to rebel against all literary structures and conventions.[12] Further, Wallace debunks much of the attendant silliness inherent in the creation and promulgation of new genres (one need only look to some of the titles listed in Wallace's review for confirmation, such as, "The Newly Renovated Opera House on Gilligan's Island" (22) and the quest for aesthetic novelty by observing that "most formal

conventions themselves start out as 'experiments'" (24), and that it is the prose poem's very absence of formal restraint that makes it, in Wallace's eyes, so "non-urgent" and "incoherent"–most of the poems "literally fall apart under the close, concentrated attention that poetry's supposed to demand" (24). This "problem," Wallace writes, is

> endemic to many of the trendy literary forms that identify/congratulate themselves as transgressive. And it's easy to see why. In regarding formal conventions primarily as "rules" to rebel against, the Professional Transgressor fails to see that conventions often become conventions precisely because of their power and utility, i.e., because of the paradoxical freedoms they permit the artist who understands how to use (not merely "obey") them. (24, author's emphasis)

Nor, for Wallace, do transgressors tend to see that transgressing is vital and powerful only in the service of something greater than the ideal of transgression (and the writerly self); transgression–or "renegade avant-gardism" (McCaffery 132)–for its own sake merely calls attention to the author–and tends to alienate the reader who is relegated to the margins. Of rule-breaking, Wallace remarks:

> but what if Leibniz and Newton had wanted to divide by zero only to show jaded audiences how cool and rebellious they were? It'd never have happened, because that kind of motivation doesn't yield results. It's hollow. Dividing-as-if-by-zero was titanic and ingenious because it was in the service of something. The math world's shock was a price they had to pay, not a payoff in itself. (McCaffery 133)

Wallace's indignation is raised not because contributors to The Best of the Prose Poem experiment per se, for it is surely no accident that he selected the avant-garde Rain Taxi as his forum, consciously addressing an avant-garde readership and using the very avant-garde methodology that these readers esteem–in doing so Wallace deliberately speaks their *dialect.*[13] It is, rather, unjustified experimentation that he dismisses, first, as it tends to result in "mediocre/bad" writing (24) and, second, because it is inevitably infused with the writers' self-consciousness (a Hegelian "being-for-itself"), which results in prose-poetry

that aims at self-congratulatory cleverness instead of urgency, self-originary play over immediacy and authenticity. It, therefore, attenuates writing from the necessary activity (inherently of relationships) of an individual relating to the individual's community, diminishing the synecdochic power of the one being in the many and, inversely, the many being in the one, into a solipsistic expression of the one relating only to itself. So, the prose poem, as Wallace finds it in this particular anthology, begins and ends with the prose-poets themselves, often ending in insipid self-expression of the self–one need only look at Wallace's humorous statistical comparison of the percentage of poems in the collection that are "about love" and "about cooking": "0.2" for both (23): transgression is privileged over content.[14] In this respect, the comparison between Eliot and Wallace becomes richer, for The Waste Land as critical gesture also emerged through Eliot's aesthetic elaborations which culminated in a "need for an outer authority to restrain inner caprice" (Levenson 210), both his own as poet and as manifesting itself in the competing aesthetic movements of the Impressionists, Imagists, Vorticists, Futurists, and other aesthetic schools. Eliot, Levenson writes, "positions modern art against modern society; the relation is meant to be antagonistic and therefore tonic; from modern social reality we can only learn how not to be. Art–even as it may employ superstition, taboo, myth, dream, irrationality–works these into pattern and supplies what the modern world lacks: coherence, form, control, order" (211, emphasis added). Modern and contemporary reality is fragmented; we come to art to make sense of this dissolution. The individual voice is merged into a "single 'simultaneous order'" (212). Levenson writes presciently of the double bind of the avant-garde:

> Avant garde movements always threaten to disappear, either shattering into a collection of individualities or ossifying into an old guard. And this is because within the avant-garde there inheres a permanent conflict: the need at once to subvert and to institutionalize. Without subversion a

> movement cannot justify itself; without some institutional stability it cannot survive. (218)

Eliot's recognition of this paradoxical tension allowed him to manipulate circumstances so intelligently, gaining himself the sobriquets, "the Editor of modernism" and the "chief agent" of "consolidation," whereas Pound remains the "chief agent" of "provocation" (218, emphasis added), which further suggests the singular importance of experimentation with a deference to a tradition (not a servile obeisance to existent norms) with an eye toward redemption, or reconstructing what has been aesthetically dismantled. Eliot's task, then, was "to oversee the integration of the modernist avant-garde into the general intellectual life" (219), and his genius in The Waste Land is, in part, "leading modernism back towards a rapprochement with England" (211): from aridity to promise, from torpor to ordered, meaningful flux. Out of the explosive experimentation of his long poem, a conflation of English and European and ancient literary traditions, he defers to the avant-garde, yet there also remains a self-imposed order of creative constraint that results in a synthesis of all that was already once avant-garde but now merged in the Tradition. Eliot recognized that the avant-garde has a rich though temporally limited duration: it must, of necessity, ossify into an order of some sort as it achieves acceptance. Adherence to its innovative tenets guarantees for it a short–though vibrant–life. Concomitantly, the avant garde is essentially schizophrenic, with an eye to the rejected past and another to its vibrant immediacy, for it achieves its zenith in the present moment and has no place in the future–it is to be absorbed in a tradition regardless of the tradition into which it is inevitably compounded.

In my contrast of The Waste Land with Infinite Jest I am principally concerned with aesthetic origins and narratorial voicing, for these are the chief hallmarks of both

works, and it is through the harmonized disparity of voices that both works achieve their simultaneous status as art and as critical gestures. Levenson begins his analysis, naturally, at the beginning of Eliot's poem, where most analyses have bogged down (who speaks and how?), by observing the well-noted transitions between the differing poetic voices: "no consciousness presides; no single voice dominates. A character appears, looming suddenly into prominence, breaks into speech, and recedes, having bestowed momentary conscious perception on the fragmentary scene" (172, emphasis added). This breaking into speech is similar to Infinite Jest's reference to the Bröckengespenstphänom (994 n. 38)–'breaking into ghost'–which in the context of the novel indicates the method by which individual consciousnesses emerge in the text, break forth, speak, and vanish through the sporadic agency of the wraith. Levenson contends that there has not been sufficient emphasis upon "the peculiar angle of vision" that governs the opening of The Waste Land, and that because Spring comes particularly and immediately to lilacs (not humankind), and more specifically from "beneath the ground" amid the tubers and roots where snow acts as cover, the "eye here sees from the point of view of someone (or some thing) that is buried"–"how else could tubers feed a 'little life'?" (172). He further notes that the "little life" image is culled from James Thomson's "To Our Ladies of Death" ("Our Mother feedeth thus our little life") and, from the successive line, "That we in turn may feed her with our death" and, "One part of me shall feed a little worm . . . One thrill sweet grass, one pulse in bitter weed" (qtd. in Levenson 172). From this Levenson posits that the point of view is that of a corpse (172), the vegetal "sprouting of a corpse" (173), and notes the "fierce irony" that "these buried are not yet dead" which further implies a "rising from the grave" (172) and both living-dead speaking subjects and an indifferent presiding ghostly consciousness in Tiresias. From The Waste Land's notes we know that Eliot was

influenced by the anthropology of Jessie L. Weston's From Ritual to Romance and Sir James Frazer's The Golden Bough, in which the latter "describes a number of myths that chronicle the return of the dead as wandering ghosts that haunt the living," and from Levenson we know that Eliot was "much preoccupied" with ghostly returns from the grave as the "drafts of The Waste Land contain several sustained evocations of a death that is unable to put an end to life" (173), not to mention "Little Gidding"'s "compound ghost" (Eliot 217) which suggests, although in a later poetic creation, that ghosts are relentlessly present in Eliot's thinking and which adds force to Eliot's enigmatic remark that, "one cannot be sure that one's own writing has not been influenced by Poe" (qtd. in Levenson 174), suggesting an almost automatic writing from within the Tradition. All of which leads Levenson to call The Waste Land "a kind of ghost story with protagonists both haunted and haunting," that contains a "distinctly disembodied aspect to consciousness . . . which watches without being watched and seems not so much to inhabit the world as to float upon it" (174, emphasis added). The resultant problem, however, is that even such a cogent analysis as Levenson's, in which the poem is determined to consist of the "loss of clear boundaries" (particularly between life and death), the "disembodied character of consciousness," and of general fragmentation (175), itself breaks down without attention given to the poem's inherent "problem of disorder" (176) stylistically and in its motifs: "notice that we do not solve the problem of disorder by making it the problem of a disordered self" (176).

Levenson, thus, turns to an examination of Eliot's doctoral dissertation on philosopher F.H. Bradley as a means of unlocking The Waste Land's fundamental properties. Bradley's philosophy, in Appearance and Reality, is a peculiar strain of phenomenology in which all reality is first based on "immediate experience," a "state of

experience prior to any division of self and other, or self and world, a state in which no consciousness is distinguishable from its object" (177). Levenson calls Bradley's work an effort to "eradicate the hypostatization of subject and object" (177). Central to this is Bradley's Absolute, a "consummate oneness" that is the "final synthesis of all diversity, the supra-rational state past the reach of common sense which integrates and transcends contradiction," a "reality that transcends the self and transcends rationality" (178). Eliot later abandoned Bradley's Absolute–a "metaphysical monster" for William James–as "embarrassingly insufficient" because it is, as Bradley himself conceded, ultimately unobtainable (180). He did, however, hold on to Bradley's concept of the "finite center," defined as a "unity of consciousness, a unity in itself, the whole world as it exists for an individual consciousness" (180). It is easy to see the appeal of the finite center for Eliot–who later distilled it into his "monad" (after Leibniz), a "single momentary unity of consciousness, the perceptual (and conceptual) totality of a single point of view" that temporarily "constitutes the whole of reality" (180-81)–which, as Levenson notes, is akin to Pound's conception of the image, "an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" (181), and as manifesting itself in the severally distinct and flashing consciousnesses of The Waste Land. One problem remained, however, for Eliot in his integration of the finite center into his aesthetic, that of critical accusations of either "cosmic poetry" ("flights of rhetorical excess") or "egoism" ("personal idiosyncracy") in poetic composition (182-83) as the Imagists were being accused of excess on one hand and "triviality," or poets obscuring their works with themselves (183), on the other. Fundamentally, for Eliot, once the Absolute is discarded, the risk becomes the "loss of extra-individual standards and a collapse into solipsism," for the finite center, itself isolated and containing all that is real, cannot be "separated from illusion" (183). In

further elucidating the dilemma, Levenson quotes from Bradley (the quotation itself included as a note to The Waste Land) (Eliot 86 n. 411),[15] and at the risk of considering Levenson too long, I reproduce Bradley's statement in full:

> My external sensations are no less private to myself than are my thoughts or my feelings. In either case my experience falls within my own circle, a circle closed on the outside; and, with all its elements alike, every sphere is opaque to the others which surround it . . . . In brief, regarded as an existence which appears in a soul, the whole world for each is peculiar and private to that soul. (183)

For Bradley, there is no problem as solipsism resolves itself within the Absolute (184), but for Eliot there is no such easy retreat–except into the solipsistic mind.

Eliot, thus, postulated a solution in his "theory of points of view" (184). Eliot's theory is akin to Wittgenstein's sustained argument against the concept of a private language, or the problem of other minds (see Philosophical Investigations §244-271), which essentially dismissed the possibility of a private language by virtue of the impossibility of such a language to become unmoored from one's own original language, one that is relational and shared with others of one's discursive community–where the self-expression of a private word (say, "S" for pain, as an example that Wittgenstein uses) still refers to language outside this private language: "jusification consists in appealing to something independent" (§ 265). Levenson summarizes Eliot's theory as follows: "while it is true that, within the confines of any given finite center, reality and unreality, subjectivity and objectivity, cannot be distinguished, a comparison among a number of finite centers makes such distinctions possible" (184, author's emphasis). The self, in Eliot's words, "passes from one point of view to another" (qtd. in Levenson 184) and is, thus, contingent upon other finite centers, other subjectivities, "so that the reality of the object does not lie in the object itself, but in the extent of the relations which the object

possesses" (qtd. in Levenson 184, emphasis added). Meaning is only established in a plurality of consciousnesses, the self in relation to other selves "consciousness" tempered by a "tradition of consciousnesses" (186). Eliot's vision, therefore, was not one of "individuals versus authority, but of an authority composed of individuals"–individual poets and their works, as once avant-garde in their original right, comprising a "totality of individuals" and a "requisite authority" (186), an infinite center. Thus, as Eliot states in a note, the one-eyed merchant "melts into" the Phoenician sailor, and Tiresias is the "spectator" (specter, even) who "unit[es] all the rest" (Eliot 82); in this sense, the "many become one" (Levenson 188). Yet how can this be so, asks Levenson, and how does this reconcile the "poem's polyphony" (188), how can "difference be compatible with unity" (189)? Levenson perceptively notes that "individual experiences, individual personalities are not impenetrable," although existentially isolated, they are never "wholly so" (189). For Eliot, as with Wallace, language is the tool that penetrates consciousness. In the words of Merleau-Ponty, there is "one particular cultural object which is destined to play a crucial rôle in the perception of other people: language" (Phenomenology 354). The many selves of The Waste Land, as finite centers, flicker like candles–brief flares of luminosity–that instantaneously extinguish, not into the void of isolation and despair but into another integral, relational consciousness; Augustine's "To Carthage then I came" resolves itself into the (quasi-Hegelian) unity of the Buddha's "Burning burning burning burning" (Eliot 74). The poem "collocates in order to culminate" by offering "fragments of consciousness," not a "juxtaposition" of such, but an "interpenetration" (Levenson 190, author's emphasis). Dialogue opens this "common ground" as the thoughts of the subject and the interlocutor are "interwoven into a single fabric," as Merleau-Ponty writes: "we have here a dual being, where the other is for me no longer a mere bit of behavior in my

transcendental field, nor I in his; we are collaborators for each other in consummate reciprocity. Our perspectives merge into each other, and we co-exist through a common world. In the present dialogue, I am freed from myself" (354). One more task remains for Levenson: the "problem of Tiresias" (190), for to posit a governing consciousness risks the attenuation of the poem's many individual voices. Levenson argues that Tiresias also "dissolves into constituents" and, as such, is an "intermittent phenomenon" in The Waste Land (190) which provides "instants of lucidity" (192). Thus, her/his ("the two sexes meet in Tiresias") (Eliot 82 n. 218) voice is one of "authoritative consciousness at the center of the poem" (the "most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest") (82 n. 218), one that "falls silent, letting events speak for themselves" (Levenson 192). We see here, then, a unique relationship between The Waste Land and Infinite Jest in terms of fundamental, guiding aesthetic practices (critical gestures in the attack on literary solipsism), and as an important literary precedent (for Infinite Jest) in narrative construction and the unveiling of consciousnesses within the comprehensive consciousness of the wraith. Eliot's aesthetic principle operates at once within the context of poetic composition and within The Waste Land itself for the task Eliot imposed upon himself, as Levenson observes, was to "restore equilibrium, to effect a satisfactory poise among competing aesthetic demands" (186); he, thus, "revised" the "habit of the modernist mind" which oscillated between the extremes of the "apostles of freedom" and the "guardians of order" (186). Similarly, Wallace also works–through his fiction and critical writings–to restore a balance between radical experimentation and personal idiosyncracy and the other pole of extant aesthetic norms, to create highly cerebral work that simultaneously engages both the avant-garde literati and the common reader, to ensure that the work of fiction-crafting does not terminate in a merely

individualistic and, therefore, isolated practice but expands outward to the reader who is already inclined toward a solipsistic position because saturated in the products of the cultural entertainment industry. In Wallace's works there are strong moments of consolidation, and one may argue that Wallace's entire aesthetic endeavor may be construed as an act of consolidation, what he continually calls a Dostoevskyian redemption, but in an extra-Christian sense.

To return to the Rain Taxi review, it is essential to note that while Wallace's confrontation with the contemporary American avant-garde Zeitgeist is certainly vituperative at times, it is also informed by respect and charity. In "Tense Present," Wallace, before embarking on a cogent engagement with Descriptivist-grammarian principles, announces a position he calls the "Democratic Spirit" which, as he explains, is "one that combines rigor and humility, i.e., passionate conviction plus sedulous respect for the convictions of others" (41-42). Central to this position, he writes, is an "intellectual integrity" in which "you have to be willing to look honestly at yourself and your motives for believing what you believe, and to do it more or less continually" (42). It is this "democratic spirit" that informs Wallace's work. For him, one must first check oneself and one's work before criticizing the work of others. For Wallace, at the heart of any matter there must be a charity that values the other as much as the individual self, that values the opinions of others within the context of one's community–that one must seek the good in relation to what is external to the individualistic self. It is at once the Eliotian tradition of provocation and antagonizing, followed with consolidation and rapprochement. Further, Wallace appends a brief Latin epigraph to "Tense Present" from Augustine, "Dilige et quod vis fac" (40) ('Love, and do what you will').[16] The quotation is crucial in two respects: first, it elucidates the spirit from which all of Wallace's

contentions flow, and that they are first and foremost informed by a spirit of charity ("sedulous respect"); second, the quotation itself implies a prescriptivist premise that he clearly takes for a principle that thwarts his own inclination toward inner caprice: that if you are first and foremost loving, then all subsequent action will be infused with the democratic spirit's ethos of passion and humility, and sincere respect for others. Throughout the Rain Taxi review Wallace selects a number of The Best of the Prose Poem's contributors whose work is "good/alive/powerful/interesting," selecting one for particular examination, Jon Davis: "a poet whom this reviewer'd never heard of before but whose pieces in this anthology are so off-the-charts terrific that the reviewer has actually gone out and bought the one Jon Davis book mentioned in his bio-note and may very well decide to try to advertise it in this magazine, at reviewer's own expense if necessary–that's how good this guy is" (23). Following this is an editor's note instructing the reader to "see page 3, upper right quadrant" where there is a prominent advertisement for Davis's latest collection, Scrimmage of Appetite, and carrying the slogan, "probably well worth checking out" in Wallace's distinctive argot ("probably well worth . . .") and, in minuscule print: "paid for by the reviewer of The Best of the Prose Poem: An International Journal" (3).

8. "Making Heads Throb Heartlike"

"Though the deceased wail in pitiless Orcus, our moan is the sharper, because we who live dwell alone and unsure in the cragged eyries and mountain fastness of a defiant solipsism"–Edward Dahlberg (Can These Bones Live 42).

"I cannot comprehend myself directly, but only through the mediation of what I *am not*"–Leszek Kolakowski (Modernity on Endless Trial 117, author's emphasis).

As ghost-story, then, for Wallace, Infinite Jest is also a love-story. In Wallace's short story, "Tri-Stan: I Sold Sisse Nar to Ecko," the mediator inserts an editorialized comment, as quotation, from an extra-diegetic character: "(. . . 'that every love story is also [a] ghost story. . .')" (Brief 209). Significantly, the mediator here calls attention to his/her ghostly textual presence by interpolating the editor's square brackets and the indefinite article omitted from the 'original' quotation. The mediator is, thus, textually in parenthesis, a textually encapsulated consciousness. Infinite Jest, as ghost story, calls attention to its reciprocal status as love story ("language is made out of love") (Brown, Life 69); the novel, as aesthetic allegory, signifies the love-aesthetic of the self-effacing artist, as all "authority in the spiritual world is *self-liquidating*" (Frye, Double 54, emphasis added). Wallace remarks on art and love:

> You've got to discipline yourself to talk out of the part of you that loves the thing, loves what you're working on. Maybe that plain loves . . . . There's something kind of timelessly vital and sacred about good writing. This thing doesn't have that much to do with talent, even glittering talent . . . Talent's just an instrument. It's like having a pen that works instead of one that doesn't. I'm not saying that I'm able to work consistently out of the premise, but it seems like the big distinction between good art and so-so art lies somewhere in the art's heart's purpose, the agenda of the consciousness behind the text. It's got something to do with love. With having the discipline to talk out of the part of yourself that can love

> instead of the part that just wants to be loved. (McCaffery 148)

In a meticulously constructed novel like Infinite Jest, it is certainly no mistake that Enfield Tennis Academy's campus–founded by Incandenza, Jr.–is designed "as a cardioid," giving the campus a "Valentine-heart aspect" (983 n. 3). The readers' presence in this fictive world depends on their following the mediator's *telling* of this immediate story, while consciously being aware of their receiving a told, spoken narrative. It is the readers' tacit agreement to accept the story in this fashion–although certainly accompanied with a sense of bemusement and wariness that the narrative will resolve itself, that there will be, as Wallace says, a "payoff" (McCaffery 137) for this confusion, this linguistic relationship, rooted in trust. The wraith communicates to Gately through the "internal brain-voice," which "was why thoughts and insights that were coming from some wraith always just sound like your own thoughts, from inside your own head, if a wraith's trying to interface with you" (Jest 831). Not only do readers construct and re-create the narrative, they also 'hear' it in their own voices, their own minds. One of Incandenza, Jr.'s many films is aptly entitled, "The Machine in the Ghost" (988 n. 24). That Wallace intertextually refers to Gilbert Ryle's classic "dogma of the ghost in the machine" (Ryle 15)–a Cartesian mind/body dualism–is very likely in a philosophical-aesthetic novel that attempts to 'speak' internally to readers, to bridge the existential gap, to remind them that they are not isolated "revving head[s]"–one more "brain heaving in its bone-box" (Jest 231)– but "complete presence" (160), one among many others but actualized only in relation to others. Ryle outlines the situation as follows:

> Material objects are situated in a common field, known as 'space,' and what happens to one body in one part of space is mechanically connected with what happens to other bodies in other parts of space. But mental happenings occur in insulated fields, known as 'minds,' and there is, apart from telepathy, no direct causal connection between what happens in one

> mind and what happens in another. Only through the medium of the physical public world can the mind of one person make a difference to the mind of another. The mind is its own place and in his inner life each of us lives the life of a ghostly Robinson Crusoe. People can see, hear and jolt one another's bodies, but they are irremediably blind and deaf to the workings of one another's minds and inoperative upon them. (13)

Wallace's phrase regarding the readers' condition, that they are "marooned" in their skulls (McCaffery 127), echoes Ryle's sentiments. One of Wallace's most sustained attacks is against solipsism; he aims to jolt readers out of solipsistic thinking, to overwhelm them with the impression–nay, the fact–that they, while reading, participate in a conversation with another, similar consciousness that also feels pain, joy, depression, loneliness–that is alone. Infinite Jest's many characters tend to "identify their whole selves with their head" (272), seeing only the duality of "heads and bodies" as Hal does in the novel's opening sentence (3); they are engaged in "life's endless war against the self," a war "you cannot live without" (84). Wallace's novel, then, is primarily concerned with a "*spiritual*" (269, author's emphasis) reconciliation between the spiritual and the body that is very much akin to Norman Brown's spiritual, symbolical consciousness: "to reconcile body and spirit would be to recover the breath-soul which is the life-soul instead of the ghost-soul or shadow; breath-consciousness instead of brain-consciousness; body consciousness instead of head-consciousness" (Love's Body 231). Northrop Frye echoes Brown when he calls for a return to the "soma pneumatikon, the spiritual body," meaning that the "spiritual man is a body" (Double 14). Wallace's concern is steeped in a love for readers and their increasing isolation and alienation in a sophisticated, electronic culture that purports to communicate without mediation, to disguise agendas and, in the main, to sell. Hawthorn notes that the need for narrative in the contemporary era has never been more crucial:

> we live in a world increasingly dominated–and characterized–by the telling of stories; by *anonymous communication*, by messages notable for what has

> been termed '*agency deletion*,' and by disseminated but disguised authorities and authoritarianism. From the voice that can now announce to us in a car that the oil pressure is dangerously low, to the newspaper editorial which informs us that 'we' must accept a decline in living standards, the theme of increasingly strident authority surviving the death of many different authors forces itself upon our attention. (x, emphasis added)

Gadamer would concur when he observes that our "technological era" has contributed to a "forgetfulness of Being" that has caused us to skip "over the continued resistance and persistence of certain flexible unities in the life we all share, unities which perdure in the large and small forms of our fellow-human being-with-each-other" ("Destruktion" 109). Wallace calls this a "hunger for narrative," noting that "we have to substitute the hedonism and spiritual naïveté that left us with nothing with *something*," and the most effective means for affecting readers for Wallace is art, particularly fiction that "*seduces* the reader and holds out real promise" ("1458 Words" 42, emphases added). Wallace's ghostly conceit is, indeed, shrewd and shrewdly layered as the wraith, while inserting words into Gately's consciousness, also transmits into the reader's consciousness–a community, 'out of many, one' (E Pluribus Unum, as opposed to Infinite Jest's characters' obverse, "E Unibus Pluram" (1007, n. 110), 'out of one, many')–the very narrative processes and rhetorical formulae (the tricks behind the magic) that Infinite Jest employs, and further, by extension and implication, suggests that this is the way significant, serious fiction should perform, not obfuscating the fact of mediation within a communicative medium (as Wallace notes the entertainment industry does) but suggesting that this is the only meaningful way that literature transacts "*spiritual* instead of *mental*" (Jest 269, author's emphasis) meaning:

> but when they [literary works] succeed . . . they serve the vital & vanishing function of reminding us of fiction's limitless possibilities for reach & grasp, for making heads throb heartlike, & for sanctifying the

> marriages of cerebration & emotion, abstraction & lived life, transcendent truth-seeking & daily schlepping, marriages that in our happy epoch of technical occlusion & entertainment-marketing seem increasing consummatable only in the imagination. ("Empty Plenum" 218)

A solipsistic self-consciousness is clearly targeted by Wallace in most of his fiction, whether from the perspective of the writer in composing clever, self-conscious works or in the attempt to engage the isolated reader. But Wallace's aggravation of our self-consciousnesses has a further redemptive sense. Wallace would aggravate the isolated, dormant self-consciousness within us that rarely moves beyond, in G.W.F. Hegel's terms, a "being-for-itself" or "being-in-self" toward the productive self-consciousness that is self-consciously "being-for-another" as the necessary correlative to living wholly, beyond the immediate self.[17] Frye observes that in the first translation of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit 'geist' was mistranslated as 'mind,' which distorted and diminished the power of Hegel's argument from the start (Double 36). And, for Frye as with Wallace, attaining a spiritual self-consciousness is essential to breaking from "the prison of Narcissus" (36). Significantly, a slight and passing reference to Hegel's Phenomenology occurs in Wallace's first novel, The Broom of the System (252). And although a minor reference, it does serve nevertheless to illustrate Wallace's approach to language as both relational and as the only means for penetrating the solipsist's fortress. Hegel writes that "language is self-consciousness existing *for others*, self-consciousness which *as such* is immediately *present* . . . It is the self that separates itself from itself, which as pure 'I' = 'I' becomes objective to itself, which in this objectivity equally preserves itself as *this* self, just as it coalesces directly with other selves and is *their* self-consciousness" (395, §652, author's emphasis). For Hegel, language is a different "content," one that is "no longer the perverted, and perverting and distracted, self of the world of culture . . . it is the Spirit that has returned

into itself, is certain of itself, and certain in itself of its truth, or of its own recognition" (395-396, §653). Language "emerges as the middle term, mediating between independent and acknowledged self-consciousnesses" (396, §653). Language is the crucial mediating apparatus that allows for one's self-consciousness to leave the self, to find in the other a measure of similarity or "sameness" (Wallace, Brief 131), and to return to the self transformed, less alone. It is the fundamentally Hegelian dialectic of interpenetrating consciousnesses that Wallace employs as a rhetorical strategy in his fiction, and there is much congruity between Hegel's concepts of "confession" and "forgiveness" and Wallace's linguistic-aesthetic rationale:

> by putting itself, then, in this way on a level with the doer on whom it passes judgement, it is recognized by the latter as the same as himself. This latter does not merely find himself apprehended by the other as something alien and disparate from it, but rather finds that other . . . identical with himself. Perceiving this identity and giving utterance to it, he confesses this to the other, and equally expects that the other, having in fact put himself on the same level, will also respond in words in which he will give utterance to this identity with him, and expects that this mutual recognition will now exist in fact. His confession is not an abasement, a humiliation, a throwing-away of himself in relation to the other; for this utterance is not a one-sided affair, which would establish his disparity with the other: on the contrary, he gives himself utterance solely on account of his having seen his identity with the other; he, on his side, gives expression to their common identity in his confession, and gives utterance to it for the reason that language is the *existence* of Spirit as an immediate self. He therefore expects that the other will contribute his part to this existence. (Hegel 405, §666, author's emphasis)

In one of Wallace's most complex and dense short stories, "Octet," a series of nine "pop quizzes" about extremely complex human relationships, the relationship between writer and reader is inverted. The ninth pop quiz begins, "you are, unfortunately, a fiction writer" (Brief 123) and continues to outline the very psychologically complex dilemma of the author of these pop quizzes themselves, sincerely stating that the purpose of the overall piece is to "'interrogate' a human 'sense of'" *something* inherent to all of us (123).

The piece further elaborates that the entire sequence of quizzes ultimately fails, that the author (whose title and responsibility have now been ceded to the reader in the context of the quiz's question) must attempt to convey that the quizzes themselves attempt to "break the textual fourth wall and kind of address (or 'interrogate') the reader directly," a "puncturing of the veil of impersonality" (125), without resorting to "postclever metaformal hooey" (128) and "pseudometabelletristic gamesmanship" (127). Ultimately, the piece concludes with the words, "so decide" (136), which implicates the reader in an empathic understanding of what the author is trying to achieve in trying "to demonstrate some sort of weird ambient *sameness* in different kinds of human relationships" (131-132, author's emphasis), and demonstrating the vital relationship that both are entangled in–that this piece takes on a Hegelian-like spiritual "confession" that seeks through language an honesty and integrity with the reader and that further requires the reader to respond in kind. To pursue the spiritual, the harmony between head- and body-consciousness that extends beyond the mind's clamoring, for Wallace, is "not a choice. You either do or you're a walking dead-man, just going through the motions"–or, you can attain "something really powerful and beautiful" ("1458 Words" 42).

Notes

1 See Frank Louis Cioffi, "'An Anguish Become Thing': Narrative as Performance in David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest," Narrative 8.2 (2000): 161-181; N. Katherine Hayles, "The Illusion of Autonomy and the Fact of Recursivity: Virtual Ecologies, Entertainment, and Infinite Jest," New Literary History 30 (1999): 675-697; Erik R. Mortenson, "Xmas Junkies: Debasement and Redemption in the Work of William S. Burroughs and David Foster Wallace," Dionysos 9.2 (1999): 37-46; Tom LeClair, "The Prodigious Fiction of Richard Powers, William Vollmann, and David Foster Wallace," Critique 38.1 (1996): 12-37; Catherine Nichols, "Dialogizing Postmodern Carnival: David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest," Critique 43.1 (2001): 3-16. See also my own difficulties with Infinite Jest in "American Touchstone: The Idea of Order in Gerard Manley Hopkins and David Foster Wallace," Comparative Literature Studies 38.3 (2001): 215-231 and "David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest," The Explicator 58.3 (2000): 172-175. For a more conventional assessment, see Sven Birkerts, "The Alchemist's Retort," The Atlantic Monthly February 1996: 106-108, where Birkerts calls Infinite Jest a "very strange piece of business altogether" (106) and a "postmodern saga of damnation and salvation" (108). It should also be noted that, in the interest of demonstrating the recent critical interest in Wallace's work, the first book-length study of Wallace, Marshall Boswell's Understanding David Foster Wallace, is forthcoming from the University of South Carolina Press's "Understanding Authors" series in Spring 2003.

2 For a perceptive analysis of television and contemporary American fiction, see Wallace's "E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction," The Review of Contemporary Fiction 13.2 (1993): 151-194, reprinted in A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again (Boston: Little, 1997) 21-82. It should also be noted that Wallace in no way blames television for contemporary fiction's woes: "TV didn't invent our aesthetic childishness here any more than the Manhattan Project invented aggression" (McCaffery 129). Rather, he contends that TV and "the commercial-art culture's trained it [American culture] to be sort of lazy and childish in its expectations" (128).

3 Wallace twice nods to DeLillo in particular in Infinite Jest when he refers to the "M.I.T. language riots" (Jest 987, 996) from DeLillo's Ratner's Star, and when Orin Incandenza traces infinity symbols on his so-called "subjects'" "bare flank after sex" (Jest 47) which recalls David's similar actions in Americana (78).

4 See David Foster Wallace, "Tense Present: Democracy, English, and the Wars over Usage," Harper's April 2001: 39-58.

5 See David Foster Wallace, "Greatly Exaggerated," A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again (Boston: Little, 1997) 138-145.

6 See Stanley Fish, "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics," Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature. (Berkeley: U of California P, 1972) 383-427.

7 I am unable to track down Lang's quotation but am grateful to University of Wollongon (Australia) archivist Michael Organ for his superior website devoted to Lang's Metropolis, where the quotation may be found. <http://www.uow.edu.au/~morgan/Metroa.html>.

8 It is worth noting that the term 'vestige' itself appears in Infinite Jest as a metaphor for Gately's previous life as a narcotics-addicted cat burglar. Of all of Gately's prior self-destructive tendencies, only one survives as a vestige of his former self, his perilous driving of his boss's "priceless art-object car" through Boston's streets without a license and while ignoring traffic signs and laws: "It's a vestige. He'd admit it's like a dark vestige of his old low-self-esteem suicidal-thrill behaviors" (Jest 476ff). 'Vestige,' with its own definitions of "a mark, trace, or visible sign of something" and "an impression made upon the brain by an image" (OED), both further signify and bolster the ghost metaphor in the novel.

9 The presence of these crescent-moon symbols has perplexed many online readers of Infinite Jest. See, for instance, Steve Russillo's "Infinite Jest Utilities Page," <http://members.aol.com/russillosm/ij.html>, and his "Chapter Thumbnails," where he indicates these segments with an asterisk and posts that their "significance I've yet to discern."

10 It is further significant that yet another of the wraith's ghost-words is "GERRYMANDER" (832) which indicates the literal manipulation of borders to gain an unfair advantage (usually electoral). Here, however, it signifies both the reconfiguration of North American borders and the wraith's own transgression of narrative and existential boundaries.

11 For my discussion of The Waste Land and Eliot's aesthetic ideals, I am heavily indebted to Michael H. Levenson's superb critical study, A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine, 1908-1922 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984), 165-220. Levenson provides what is, to my mind, the single most penetrating and insightful reading of Eliot's poem to date.

12 It is interesting to note that in attempting to define the prose poem Wallace questions whether certain works, such as Kafka's "Little Fable" and any of "the

innumerable ¶'s in Faulkner that scan perfectly as iambic-pentameter sonnets" count themselves as prose poems (22). One of Wallace's examples turns out to be Eliot's "Hysteria," of which Wallace's own microscopic short story, "A Radically Condensed History of Postindustrial Life" contained in his Brief Interviews with Hideous Men (Boston: Little, 1999) 0 [sic], bears a striking similarity, one that mirrors the fundamental difficulties in establishing and maintaining significant relationships in our contemporary era, just as Eliot's poem does.

13 The importance of selecting and using the appropriate dialect in addressing a specific discourse community is emphasized by Wallace in "Tense Present." In this piece, he notes that most people use a plurality of dialects in day-to-day living, and admits to using both the "Standard Written English" of his "hypereducated parents" and the "hard-earned Rural Midwestern" dialect of his peers (50). In the latter, Wallace uses constructions like "Where's it at?" instead of "Where is it?" as part of "a naked desire to fit in" and not be "rejected as an egghead" (50-51). Wallace claims that the "dialect you choose to use depends . . . on whom you're addressing" and that "the dialect you use depends mostly on what sort of Group your listener is part of and whether you wish to present yourself as a fellow member of that Group" (51-52). Thus, for Wallace, there is a singular importance in using a specifically transgeneric medium (in creating his "Indexical Book Review") so as to at once signify his membership in the particular community of avant-garde readers that subscribe to Rain Taxi and to submit his arguments for their collective ratification or rejection. Either way, Wallace's meaning in the Rain Taxi review, if it is to be at all heeded, is directly coextensive with the dialect he appropriates.

14 It is only fair to observe that Wallace has used two of the "transgeneric" forms he disparages in his Rain Taxi review in his short story, "Incarnations of Burned Children" (a "snap fiction" piece) and two recent pieces, "Peoria (4)" and "Peoria (9) 'Whispering Pines,'" which are classified as "prose poetics." Both of these generic titles, however, seem to be imposed by the publications themselves and cannot necessarily be linked to Wallace. If Wallace is experimenting with these putatively transgeneric forms, however, he is certainly doing so in the service of something greater than simple experimentation. "Incarnations," as the title suggests, is a powerfully fast-paced evocation of a rural family's immediate reaction to their infant son's scalding by boiling water, and their inner, self-conscious reactions to the tragedy. While the "Peoria" pair is slightly more poetic than Wallace's fiction in the main, there is little if any self-conscious play at work. The first piece evokes the landscape of rural Illinois in a way that echoes Auden's "Amor Loci" and "In Praise of Limestone" with their celebration of the immediacy and history of place. The second piece essentially describes a stealthy group of children gazing at a shaking car in the country-side, while the car's inhabitants, in Frye's words, are "rutting in rubber" (Double 8). What makes Wallace's use of the genres of 'flash fiction' and 'prose poetry' significant is similar to his appropriation of dialect for his "Tense Present" essay. Both genres are prevailing forms in current literary production, and thus Wallace uses them to convey his singular messages, while avoiding inner caprice. See "Incarnations of Burned Children," Esquire n.d. 2001 <http://www.esquire.com/features/articles/2001/001012_mfr_wallace_1.html> and "Peoria," TriQuarterly 112 (2002): 131-133.

15 It is difficult to avoid noting the fact of Eliot's appending notes to his poem as being a rather avant-garde move in itself, and one that is continued in Infinite Jest as radically experimental in the context of the genre of the novel. Levenson observes that in its dealing with fragmented consciousnesses, The Waste Land "becomes conscious of itself" (192) and, thus, the inclusion of explanatory notes–notes that reveal many of Eliot's poetic allusions and appropriations–calls attention to the poem's self-consciousness, its inherent ordered disorder, and the fact of the merging of traditions through an avant-garde rhetorical strategy.

16 William James, in his The Varieties of Religious Experience, translates Augustine as, "if you but love [God], you may do as you incline" (77, author's interpolation), and William Gaddis, in his superb novel The Recognitions, has protagonist Wyatt Gwyon translate the phrase as, "Love, and do what you want to" (899). Both James and Gaddis are significant to Infinite Jest: James's Varieties is referred to throughout Infinite Jest, and Gaddis's Recognitions is a novel that Wallace maintains that he "like[s] very, very much" (Word n.p.). There are strong moments of congruity between Wallace's aesthetic and that of Gaddis's in The Recognitions. If Infinite Jest, as Wallace remarks, is a "long encomium to the dead father" (Wiley n.p.), then we may also say that The Recognitions is a long encomium to Wyatt's dead mother, for example. The similarities are too numerous to elaborate here and perhaps deserve a separate study, but both artists' emphasis on love as informing artistic production is the most crucial conjunction. William James claims that Augustine's adage is "morally one of the profoundest of observations" (77), and Wyatt's recognition of this in application to his day to day living and his art–"now at last, to live deliberately" (Gaddis 900)–becomes another significant aesthetic touchstone for Wallace in both his fiction and non-fiction.

17 In my relation of Hegel and Wallace I am particularly indebted to David Morris's exemplary article, "Lived Time and Absolute Knowing: Habit and Addiction from Infinite Jest to the Phenomenology of Spirit," Clio 30.4 (2001): 375-415. As his title clearly indicates, Morris is particularly concerned with time and spirit in relation to habit. And although tangentially yoked with Morris's reading of Hegel's conception of time, I am more interested in Hegel's dialectic of spiritual self-consciousness as integrally linked to other self-conscious communities via the mediating power of language.

Part Three

The Eschatological Imagination: Translations

"I have never been an optimist or a pessimist. I'm an apocalyptic only. Our only hope is apocalypse"—Marshall McLuhan (The Medium and the Light 59).

"In every moment slumbers the possibility of being the eschatological moment. You must awake it"—Rudolf Bultmann (qtd. in Kermode, Sense 25).

"I wanted to get the Armageddon-explosion, the goal that metafiction's always been about, I wanted to get it over with, and then out of the rubble reaffirm the idea of art being a living transaction between humans"—David Foster Wallace (McCaffery 142).

1. The End

I have now taken Wallace's Infinite Jest through two distinct, though not incompatible or mutually exclusive, readings, situating that novel in Part One as a type of aesthetic allegory that links the significant and then-radical aesthetic of Gerard Manley Hopkins with Wallace's own contemporary literary agenda, and, in Part Two, as an elaborate reply to the 'death of the author' theoretical impasse–a critique of poststructuralism employing poststructuralist motifs and methodology–and shall now conclude this study with a treatment of literary endings, or a theory of ending that is, for

Wallace, both ending and beginning. Theories of endings (apocalyptic and otherwise) are not new either to the popular imagination or to, what Northrop Frye has called, the "educated imagination." It might be said without exaggeration that the apocalyptic imagination is an inherent, endlessly recurring feature of American letters and culture, if not the foundation of Western civilization's thinking as a whole that, of course, ultimately emerges from the Revelation (Apocalypse) of St. John on Patmos that is translated into the American mythos via the Puritan settling of the New World, and undergirded with an end-times' consciousness that transforms New Haven into a New Jerusalem, a transformation that manifests itself in both literal interpretations of the Bible and in poetic transformations like Wallace Stevens's "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven." The manifestation of apocalyptic thinking, then, is discernible in numerous aspects of Western, particularly American, cultural organization–whether theological, philosophical, pedagogical, or popular. That apocalyptic thinking continues to exert itself in the contemporary imagination is at once both surprising and unsurprising. Surprising, in that the fear of a literal apocalypse has faded with the passing of the Cold War; American and Soviet detente has been transformed into a balance of cooperative political and economic relations; the fear of imminent nuclear annihilation has passed; and, therefore, apocalyptic fears and projections would seem to be diminished. Yet the latent apocalyptic imagination in the contemporary popular American imagination reviving itself in the wake of the attacks of 11 September 2001 and recent American foreign policy

developments that recall the Cold War political stances of years ago make it unsurprising that apocalyptic unrest should be once again at a relatively high pitch. Public intellectual forums, such as Harper's magazine, with its continual and necessary critique of current American foreign policy, under the general editorship of Lewis H. Lapham, suggests that the seemingly dormant apocalyptic imagination is once more being revived. According to that magazine, in a recent cover essay "A Comet's Tale: On the Science of Apocalypse," a recently conducted poll announced that 59 per cent of the American public believes that the prophetic forecasts of the biblical book of Revelation "will come true," and a further "quarter of Americans" also believe that the Bible "despite a conspicuous textual absence of airplanes, skyscrapers, or Muslims–predicted the horrific but hardly apocalyptic attacks of two Septembers ago" (Bissel 33-34). Add to this the current American war in the middle-east and conflagratory American rhetoric of a so-called "axis of evil" (the term coined by National Post columnist and former speech-writer for the current Bush administration, David Frum), and the resuscitation of the popular apocalyptic imagination comes as no surprise whatsoever.

Naturally, however, millenarian thinking is hardly new to America, and neither is apocalyptic thinking a novelty in intellectual circles. What Frank Kermode has called the "sense of an ending" is an inherent feature of Western human ideology, theology, and philosophy. To those–all of us–born "into the middest" (Kermode 7) of the Heraclitian flow of time, there seems to be a built-in metaphysical need or desire to consider our

historical age or period as apocalyptic; humankind, as Kermode suggests, requires "fictive concords with origins and ends, such as give meaning to lives and poems. The End will reflect their irreducibly intermediary preoccupations" (7). Of necessity, apocalyptic theorizing is a staple in theological seminaries, but that apocalyptic proclivities should inform much of secular Western intellectual discourse should be a more difficult proposition to accept. Nevertheless, examples abound: one might remark of Hegel's dialectic that it is itself apocalyptic with a synthetic ending colliding into a new and recurring synthesis; those, like Harold Innis first, and Marshall McLuhan after him and Arthur Kroker in the present time, who intellectually chart the rise and fall of empires and civilizations through communicational and technological innovations can also be said to be informed by an apocalyptic imagination. Marxist ideology is, like theology, itself sustained by the sense of an ending in which the proletariat revolts and rises up against oppressive capitalist ideologies and regimes. Philosopher and cultural critic, Leszek Kolakowski in Modernity on Endless Trial (1990), keeps a vigilant eye on things apocalyptic by defending the necessity of the sacred within the context of a modern secular cultural environment that would de-mythologize the sacred: "politics has replaced religion, . . . the psychiatrist has taken the place of the priest, and . . . technological utopias have supplanted eschatological dreams" (64). In what is arguably one of the most significant philosophical works of the twentieth century, Truth and Method (1960), Hans-Georg Gadamer enunciates an "eschatological consciousness" (xxxviii) in his broad

treatise on hermeneutics in contradistinction to the "aesthetic consciousness." In literary studies there is no end to charting apocalypse as a significant cultural feature of every period's literature, most saliently, however, in Frye's "poetic imagination" (Anatomy 125), which in proclaiming a recurring motif of re-creation for humankind is itself both Blakean and, therefore, fundamentally apocalyptic, though naturally without fundamentalist zealotry, proclaiming instead an ethos of renewal or renovation through language. The motif of apocalypsis, Greek for 'revelation,' 'unveiling' which, in Frye's words, has "the metaphorical sense of uncovering or taking the lid off" (Great Code 135), is an inherent feature in the theory of literary studies itself with each theory potentially flourishing and revealing and, then, receding in prominence just as the once dominant New Criticism gave way to structuralism then to poststructuralism, and onward to the more specifically ideologically informed gender and race theories of today. It can be said, in a broad sense, that every literary theory is itself constructed or founded on a conception of an ending in order to engage in a renewed exploration of literary and cultural texts: postcolonialism, poststructuralism, and gender theories all require as an assumed epistemological bedrock some form of terminal point in which to begin their method of literary investigation; each presupposes–by implication–an ontological end to evaluating texts from certain passé or hegemonic perspectives: each, again essentially, requires an apocalyptic ground-clearing, an explosion of previously assumed ideals or ideologies, which, we may assume, lead to a revelatory (an uncovering or unveiling) exploration of human thought, a re-evaluation.

Poststructuralism requires an end to logocentric discourse and the cessation and razing of hegemonic power structures through language; feminist theory also requires the terminal disruption of phallogocentrism; Marxism posits the detonation of capitalist agendas; postcolonial theory requires the erasure of master narratives employed as hegemonic discourse–each, in its own way, shares a foundational sense of endings, which is implied in the shared 'post' prefix that adorns their nomenclature or is implied in their basic methodology. Endings give rise to new methods of literary discourse, and all may be said to flourish under the larger and often obscure banner of 'postmodernism,' itself the Ur-ending of an era's (such as Modernism's) own renovation of dialectic in and of art, philosophy, and theology. Further, contemporary, postmodern discourse in the Humanities is, of necessity, itself eschatological, for there is no general consensus on postmodernism's genesis, direction, or end-point, and there must be an end-point to critical discourse: the architectonic structure of literary theory's corpus cannot be said to be finished or concluded, yet speculation regarding postmodernism's own ending must become, at a certain point, a source of discourse-anxiety in the twenty-first century. Whether postmodernism's advent is established at 1945 (after the atomic blasts of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) or the early 1960s (in parallel with American unrest, riots, civil-rights and peace demonstrations, and the political assassinations of that turbulent decade), which it is held vaguely in various camps, it has now been the cultural condition or environment that North America has lived with–or in–for roughly fifty years–an

enormous length of time for a class of intellectual periodization, particularly in an age of instant communication and near-daily technological innovation. But who can, or will, forecast the end of an ending? There is, often, little reluctance in pronouncing endings and, in the same move, inaugurating new movements–beginnings, yet there is a general intellectual hesitancy to move beyond the postmodern. The fixture of the 'post' prefix to modernism itself implies that this is the last era, which perforce raises the question, quo vadis? Even as early as 1970, and well before the avant-garde term postmodernism became a familiar, cachet term, Marshall McLuhan introduced the term "post-history" to depict

> the sense that all pasts that ever were are now present to our consciousness and that all futures that will be are here now. In that sense we are post-history and timeless. Instant awareness of all the varieties of human expression reconstitutes the mythic type of consciousness, of *once-upon-a-time*-ness, which means all-time, out of time. (Medium 88, author's emphasis)

McLuhan's "post-history" succinctly encapsulates the current post-industrial, electronic era; we seem to be, as never before, positioned on a perpetual brink, arrested in an ahistorical moment where little–and yet everything at once–changes beyond the size, shape, and efficiency of our electronic gadgets. In terms of contemporary American fiction, we are now placed in a peculiar position of *post*-postmodernism–the original purveyors of a postmodern sensibility (Vladimir Nabokov, John Barth, Robert Coover, and Thomas Pynchon) now approach their senescence, not that a human life span constitutes a literary period. But the aesthetic agendas and art of a period would more

likely constitute the borders and boundaries of a period, and the ironic and black humor fictional renovations of the 1960s and 1970s, which were especially directed to the hypocrisy of *their* time, are becoming as remote to our contemporary condition as any other period's literature–that is to say, they have become assimilated in a tradition, or have become canonized as a once-avant garde movement. This is not to say that they have lost their value to the contemporary imagination, and are, indeed, valuable literary artifacts, only that the original aesthetic ideals of this distinguished vanguard no longer have the resonance and relevance necessary to the present day. What is further striking, and this is a point meticulously elaborated in Wallace's essay "E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction," is that the succeeding generations of American fiction writers have not, in the main, moved away from the original postmodern aesthetic bequeathed to them by the Barths, Coovers, and others, nor have these elder statesmen of literary production, in fact, adopted their own aesthetic ideals to fit their contemporary context, aside from an incorporation of digital media and an awareness of hypertext in their works that acknowledges the presence and influence of the computer age on contemporary culture–yet they offer little or nothing in terms of its consequences. If the term "early postmodernism" seems quaint or absurd, I nevertheless continue to use it if only because Wallace himself deploys it in his interview with Larry McCaffery (147), and for good reason. Few would argue that there is a distinct difference between the poetics of Modernist poets, Stéphane Mallarmé and the later T.S. Eliot, and it can be argued that

Mallarmé signifies the inauguration of Modernism while Eliot's Four Quartets signifies its conclusion. In this sense alone we might argue that Mallarmé represents an early Modernism, while Eliot represents a 'high' or late Modernist aesthetic, and one not to be duplicated. In an American context, William Gaddis's The Recognitions (1955) arguably represents the termination of the high-Modern aesthetic in American fiction; few would contest that The Recognitions has a greater similarity to the aesthetics of Modernism than postmodernism, though perhaps inaugurating the postmodern fiction aesthetic. My sense of early and late postmodernism is, perhaps, that it is enhanced, aggravated, and imposed on our culture by rapid technological and communicational developments, developments that all of us vie to assimilate into our daily lives, and with which literary theory and criticism always seems to try to catch-up. Nabokov bears little similarity to Mark Leyner in any sense beyond the minor fact that both are American novelists; there seems to be a much larger divide or schism between the aesthetic of early and current postmodernists than there was between postmodernism and its Modernist forbears–it is easier to find congruity between Mallarmé and Eliot than Nabokov and Leyner. If contemporary American fiction reflects contemporary American culture, and I would contend that it does if only on an elementary level, then the mainly ironic work of the 1970s fiction writers–in confronting and depicting the first wave of nuclear fears from the Cuban Missile Crisis, for example–can no longer claim the same powerful resonance with the American imagination that it once did. This representational art would seem to have

little relevance for the contemporary reader beyond the historical relationship of the work to the preceding cultural conditions in which they originated. The art of this era remains significant as a type of touchstone; the eschatological conditions of early postmodernism cannot resonate with *contemporary* eschatological conditions as they no longer resemble our own. Visions of the eschatological past cannot speak to the exigencies of the eschatological present. Since postmodernism has been our intellectual period for so long, and seems in certain respects to have run its course, then, perhaps it is time to re-evaluate it from an eschatological perspective. But I shall return to this point in what follows; I only use this postmodern conundrum to illustrate the idea of an ending in contemporary literary discourse and fiction at a foundational level. Perhaps, then, as Paul Fiddes remarks, "all texts are eschatological" (18) as they represent a 'last discourse' in any and all of their various manifestations, and it is only in the degree or relationship with the contemporary culture that gives birth to them that they speak to us.

Frank Lentricchia's After the New Criticism (1980) is a critical-theoretical-historical work that examines the so-called "crisis"–a significant term itself that accompanies all apocalyptic discourse and that also signifies apocalypse (Kermode 25)–in then-contemporary literary theory, a crisis between efforts to "essentialize literary discourse by making it a unique kind of language–a vast, enclosed textual and semantic preserve–and, on the other hand, by an urge to make literary language 'relevant' by locating it in larger contexts of discourse and history" (xiii). Lentricchia, in 1980,

proclaimed New Criticism to be "dead" (xiii), and, in a history of critical theory, seeks to move away from an apocalyptic examination of theory and, instead, focuses on the "ruptures" in critical thinking rather than the "end of things" (xiv). While Lentricchia establishes his work as a "kind of dialogue with the theorists . . . examined" (xiii), there is nonetheless an implication of the end (After the New Criticism), or an ending, of a "movement" (xii). Lentricchia posits that his work is a quasi-historical examination of American literary theory up to and beyond New Criticism, yet he cannot help but pronounce New Criticism dead. Lentricchia moves to anticipate apocalyptic concerns in his work by writing that "it is the very condition of contemporary critical historicity that there is no 'after' or 'before' the New Criticism" (xiii), and by encapsulating the words "ruptures" and "periods" with quotation marks, there is still no escaping the apocalyptic agenda of renewal or purgation of contemporary theory in the wake of New Criticism ("at the end of things") (xiv) that is the kernel of his work. A telling term he uses in the history of contemporary theory is "ruptures" (xiii), which itself implies an eschatological imagination at work at this locus of investigation. I am not trying to quibble with Lentricchia's work or his perspective, for the work is valuable and necessary in terms of viewing the fertile ground of twentieth-century North American literary investigation; rather, I am trying to depict the apocalyptic energies that, often of necessity, inform human discourse, particularly literary discourse: for, as Kermode writes, conceptions of "the End"–of anything–have perhaps lost their "naïve *imminence*" as they are perpetually

disconfirmed, they have nevertheless have become "*immanent*" in the contemporary imagination (Kermode 6, author's emphasis). That is to say, that apocalyptic–or better still, eschatological–import has become an immanent feature of all human discourse. We are incapable of engaging in discourse–any discourse, even a specialized autotelic discourse such as literary theory–that involves the human imagination without invoking or implying or unconsciously informing such discourses without the immanent content of apocalypse, without the sense of an end. Apocalyptic discourse of the type that I envision is naturally not a literalist manifestation of the end of human life or the cosmos or anything related to charismatic, orthodox theological content, but more with an obvious or elementary perspective, or view, to engaging in discourse with an end in mind.

The term apocalypse has been used with such frequency and applied so promiscuously that it has almost become a cliché, a term that no longer contains much of its original meaning. A simple consideration of how it has primarily become synonymous with Armageddon-type catastrophe instead of its original meaning of 'revelation,' 'uncovering,' or 'unveiling' in the popular imagination suggests this. The term's contemporary ablated meaning for disaster also manifests itself in current literary discourse, particularly in studies of contemporary American fiction. Perhaps, as Derrida has written in his essay on "nuclear criticism," "No Apocalypse, Not Now (full speed ahead, seven missiles, seven missives)," there is no other way to conceive of twentieth-century life, and after, but in apocalyptic terms, framed by an eschatological imagination:

"the anticipation of nuclear war (dreaded as the fantasy, or phantasm, of a remainderless destruction) installs humanity–and through all sorts of relays even defines the essence of modern humanity–in its rhetorical condition" (24). Numerous critical studies of the apocalyptic nature of contemporary American fiction abound, but, in the main, these studies probe postmodern conceptions of entropy and chaos. The work of N. Katherine Hayles, focuses on the emergence in the 1990s of cyberpunk fiction and the implications of digital/electronic culture on the human subject and the contemporary literary artifact. Studies like Tom LeClair's The Art of Excess: Mastery in Contemporary Fiction (1989) examine the 'systems' novel, the literary response to the complexity of military-industrial, bureaucratic, and electronic cultural factors in elder postmodernist novelists like Don DeLillo, Joseph McElroy, and Thomas Pynchon. Other, more recent studies, provide a more contemporary response to the postmodern conception of chaos and disorder resulting from the next generation of technology that LeClair responds to, like Joseph M. Conte's Design and Debris: A Chaotics of Postmodern Fiction (2002) and, again, N. Katherine Hayles's Chaos Bound: Orderly Disorder in Contemporary Literature and Science (1990). All of these studies can, in general terms, be categorized or classified as apocalyptic in the sense that they chart cultural crisis and ruptures–and I use Lentricchia's term ("ruptures") because in our era of unprecedented technological expansion, each innovation has the appearance of a rupture that explodes the previous innovation in a rapidly condensed span of time, ruptures that are difficult to make

meaning of as they outpace our ability to adapt to and incorporate them into quotidian human existence. Joseph Dewey's important In a Dark Time: The Apocalyptic Temper in the American Novel of the Nuclear Age (1990) is the lone study of contemporary fiction to frame an American mythos of apocalyptic fear in the contemporary American novel, one that specifically and signally emerges from America's movement into the post-atomic age, an 'apocalyptic temper' heightened in certain respects by the eighties' pop-cultural infatuation with nuclear-annihilation that is also reflected in early apocalyptic films like Mad Max (1979), Apocalypse Now (1979), Blade Runner (1982), War Games (1983), The Terminator (1984), or the made-for-television The Day After (1983), a fear that is a by product of the Reagan administration's Strategic Defense Initiative, or 'Star Wars' missile-defense initiative, now being revived under the second Bush administration. But while Dewey's study is invaluable and notes a strong correlation between American nuclear culture and the contemporary novel, his use of the term apocalypse is heavily informed by the American fear of nuclear annihilation, and is thus, perhaps, better termed the 'eschatological temper.' In fact, Paul S. Fiddes distinguishes between apocalyptic types in his The Promised End: Eschatology in Theology and Literature (2000), noting that the apocalyptic type that Dewey employs as a methodology for his study is more properly termed "*apocalyptic eschatology*, a kind of eschatology that envisages the end of history and the cosmos, and which may (or may not) be a feature of *apocalypses*" (25, author's emphasis). That is, apocalypse as revelation is often distinct

from eschatological catastrophe, and the latter does not necessarily mean that it is or will be accompanied by revelation, only annihilation; yet the two are often easily merged because of the orthodox association of St. John's Revelation and the forecasted doom of his particular revelation: "the word 'apocalyptic' has . . . become synonymous with the end of the world" (Chevalier 33). I point out this triviality in word-choice only to emphasize the cultural shift in the meaning of apocalypse to eschaton (essentially, the divinely ordained climax of history) (OED), as a type of human-ordained historical climax, again, not to quibble with Dewey's work. Hereafter I will use the term 'eschatological' in lieu of apocalypse though I will carefully note the differences in apocalypse as revelation or catastrophe as appropriate when the context is muddied in competing versions of such, for two reasons: first, as mentioned, eschatology is more accurate in terms of discussing 'ends' in all of their various manifestations and, second, because 'eschatology' means 'last discourse' (OED). In keeping with a discourse of endings as perceived in the aesthetic of David Foster Wallace's fiction, it is more useful to prefer eschatological to apocalyptical, though both signally overlap and involve a redemptive revelation in Wallace's works. Further, although there is some attention given to the subject of eschatology and literature in contemporary literary criticism, these works tend to shy away from an examination of just what it means to think eschatologically about *contemporary* literature, not just medieval or Renaissance literature, which are, for obvious reasons, more conducive to an eschatological discourse

because those periods both believed in a certain literal, divinely ordained ending. If we take as axiomatic that we live in a complex and frenetic time–more complex than any other and certainly much faster paced–a time of exponential technological development, the narrowing, shrinking, or even collapsing of even geo-political borders, and a peculiar hegemonic dominance of one nation (for the United States is the sole dominant power on the globe for the first time since the Roman empire) militarily, economically, and culturally, and even if we optimistically consider these days to include a flourishing of creative and intellectual energies like no other instead of an eschatological indication of the flight of Minerva's owl (after Harold Innis's theory of intellectual energy preceding imperial decline), we must still contend with the nagging sense that we inhabit a fragile *cusp* of or on something we do not know. It is interesting to observe that the term 'eschatology,' according to Cynthia Marshall (who takes her definition from the OED), "dates from the middle of the nineteenth century" (5). That we can see a close correspondence between the advent of the term 'eschatology' and eschatological thinking in Western civilization and the rise of nineteenth-century industrialism is significant. If the genesis of industrialism in Western society signifies a parallel escalation in eschatological complexes, then we may say that our continuation and exponential surmounting of industrial culture with our hectic electronic culture must be matched by, or produces, a corresponding increase in eschatological anxiety, whether one takes our era's eschaton to be biblical or otherwise. Rumors of clonings and the debate over stem-

cell research in the United States alone, of the most recent technological 'breakthroughs' are clearly shocking on many levels to an American culture that has not had sufficient time or legislation (for legislation seems always to be at least one remove behind technological discovery) to absorb their cultural impact. Eschatological anxiety is, thus, an obvious correlative of what William Gaddis has ironically called "the rush for second place." If we remove sacred and literalist connotations from eschatological thinking we are, nevertheless, left in a place where endings exert a powerful influence on the contemporary imagination, even though, try as we might, in the postmodern era to denigrate the essential property of endings in our art. Thus, after Marshall, we might generally conclude that eschatology encompasses "the complex system of ideas about last things" that also "suggests more widely the personal, social, and historical attitudes and approaches toward ultimate things, including death and apocalypse" (5). Further, if we look at contemporary American literature and art, we find that the artists of our time deploy apocalyptic/eschatological motifs or themes in relation to contemporary American culture on an unprecedented scale. One need only look to such works as Walker Percy's Love in the Ruins (1971), The Second Coming (1980), The Thanatos Syndrome (1987), Novel Writing in an Apocalyptic Time (1986); James Merrill's The Changing Light at Sandover (1980), Wallace Stevens's "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" (1949) (not to mention other Modernist precursors like Eliot's The Waste Land [1922] and Four Quartets [1944]), Richard Powers's Galatea 2.2 (1995), George Saunders's CivilWarLand

in Bad Decline (1996), Evan Dara's The Lost Scrapbook (1995), Chuck Palahniuk's Fight Club (1996), anything by William T. Vollmann and Mark Leyner, Flannery O'Connor's The Violent Bear it Away (1955), Thomas Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow (1973), Don DeLillo's Underworld (1997) and Cosmopolis (2003), all of William Gaddis, John Updike's Toward the End of Time (1997), any and all cyberpunk and science fiction (Philip K. Dick, William Gibson, and Samuel R. Delaney most prominently), or any of the films already mentioned and Larry and Andy Wachowski's The Matrix (1999), not to mention more mainstream and sensational productions such as Armageddon (1998) and Deep Impact (1998), and the appearance of Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins's fundamentalist, fear-mongering forecast of biblical eschatological doom in their projected twelve-volume Left Behind (1995-) series of novels, the most recent of which, Desecration, was the "best-selling novel of 2001" (Bissel 36), and as a series has sold over fifty million copies as of 2002 (Maryles n.p.)–truly apocalyptic numbers for any publishing house. Yet while America's creative energies rush toward Armageddon and eschatologically themed works, there is a peculiar silence from critical quarters; very little in the way of critical commentary is directed to the contemporary eschatological imagination. Perhaps this is so because, often, the eschatological imagination is difficult to detach from the apocalyptic-eschatological imagination and, by association, paranoid millenarianism. Even so, one would still think this to be a fertile area of cultural-critical investigation. Of the more recent studies that involve some type of eschatological

investigation, Cynthia Marshall examines Shakespeare from an eschatological view in the particular context of his last plays in Last Things and Last Plays: Shakespearean Eschatology (1991) and Caroline Walker Bynum and Paul Freedman investigate the eschatology of the middle ages in their edited collection, Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages (2000). Richard K. Emmerson and Ronald B. Herzman have, perhaps, coined, or have made more prominent in critical quarters, the phrase, "the apocalyptic imagination" in their collaborative study, The Apocalyptic Imagination in Medieval Literature (1992); of necessity, however, their study relies on a close reading of early church doctrine in explicating medieval texts and, thus, their methodology does not resonate in a broader and more imaginative context, particularly for the later twentieth century and after. These studies, then, although valuable, do not link the very human proclivity to endings and the eschatological imagination, and, paradoxically, they cannot move away from St. John's Revelation and maintain an eschatological discourse at once. There is also a scattering of article-length studies of particular works of literature from an apocalyptic/eschatological perspective, but these, again, do not move very far from the particular works treated, nor do they posit an eschatological temper running through the particular artists' oeuvres as I will claim occurs in Wallace's fiction.[1] Moreover, there is again the sense in these critical studies that the eschatological imagination that informs these artists' works is detached and isolated from the larger body of literary eschatological visions. That is to say, I find no indication of an 'eschatological theory' that allows

disparate works from Thomas Kyd to David Foster Wallace to be understood in terms of a general understanding of what eschatological thinking means in the context of a human being that possesses an eschatological identity simply because of his individual mortality and, more particularly, an eschatological identity that is augmented by the specific cultural forces of living in a time that is constructed as *post*-structural, *post*-modern, and *post*-history. It would appear that there is, to borrow Wallace Stevens's phrase, a very necessary fiction of eschaton inherent in the human condition, without which we could neither make meaning of our transient individual occupation of this globe nor understand the future in any real sense. This is partly so because the term eschatology is loaded with catastrophic, biblical connotations (apocalypse as Armageddon), and is, thus, all too easily associated with end-times millenarian and other, more conservative orthodox, movements, most of which contemporary criticism would sooner and, for the most part, rightly ignore. It is, perhaps, difficult to disassociate the sacred connotations of eschatology, and to liberate the word from its sacred heritage, and it is probably impossible to do so fully. In this chapter I will seek to renovate, or loosen, these limiting orthodox meanings, as much as possible, from the word by applying it to the human imagination and, therefore, attempt to offer a theory of what it means to inspire or inform works of contemporary American literature with an eschatological imagination that is courageously oriented to the production of redemptive contemporary fiction, for an eschatological theory must, of necessity, involve a new beginning or a sense of redemption. As Frye

wrote in The Educated Imagination (1963), which feels so long ago, though is more relevant than ever,

> the critic's function is to interpret every work of literature in the light of all the literature he knows, to keep constantly struggling to understand what literature as a whole is about. Literature as a whole is not an aggregate of exhibitions with red and blue ribbons attached to them, like a cat-show, but the range of articulate human imagination as it extends from the height of imaginative heaven to the depth of imaginative hell. Literature is *a human apocalypse*, man's revelation to man, and criticism is not a body of adjudications, but the awareness of that revelation, the last judgment of mankind. (44, emphasis added)

We might also add films, or all imaginative, cultural texts, to Frye's conception of literature with his approbation, for they too depict the full "range of articulate human imagination" and humankind's daily ascent to heaven or descent to hell. And we may, also, say with Frye that to investigate "man's revelation to man" is, perhaps, the most essential aspect of literary investigation that, in Derrida's famously recurring phrase, "always already" begins with an ending.

* * *

2. The Mantle

"The language of apocalyptic writing is richly symbolic and the importance of the visions which are described is never in their literal meaning. It can be taken as a rule that every element in this kind of writing has symbolic value–persons, places, animals, actions, parts of the body, numbers and measurements, stars, constellations, colors and garments–and if we are not to misunderstand or distort the writer's message, we must appreciate the imagery at its true value and do our best to translate the symbols back into the ideas which he intended them to convey" ('Apocalypse,' The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols 33).

"Should I find it depressing that the young Dostoevsky was just like young U.S. writers today, or kind of a relief? Does anything ever change?"—David Foster Wallace ("Feodor's Guide" 28 n. 21).

For my title, 'the eschatological imagination,' I have borrowed from Joseph Frank's five-volume biography, Dostoevsky (1976-2002). Throughout his exhaustive critical biography, and primarily in the final two installments, Frank continually refers to Dostoevsky's "eschatological vision of human life" (Mantle 172), his "eschatological imagination" (196, 313; Miraculous 101, 146), his "eschatological apprehension of life" (Miraculous 312), the "eschatological tension" of the "Christian ethic" of a "totally selfless agape" from the "perspective of the imminent end of time" (321), his "eschatological ideal" (341), his "eschatological hope" (Mantle 368), his "epochal formulation" of a "future humankind that would literally be a huge, united, and interdependent organism–a humankind in which any separation between individuals would no longer even be physically conceivable" (370), and Dostoevsky's "ideological eschatology," the "moral message of love and self-sacrifice that Christ had brought to the world" (Liberation 299). As far as I can tell Frank has coined the phrase, the eschatological imagination, though it

has been revived in recent years in James Alison's theological study, Raising Abel: The Recovery of the Eschatological Imagination (1996). The phrase appears to have evolved in Frank's own thought over the sustained course of completing his study of the evolution of Dostoevsky's imagination, literary aesthetic, and world-view. In his first volume, Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt, 1821-1849 (1976), Frank defines Dostoevsky's primary aesthetic and world-view (to "conquer hatred and replace it by love") as a "moral-artistic cosmos" (367). Only in the second volume, The Years of Ordeal, 1850-1859 (1983), does Frank come closer to a theoretical definition of what will eventually become the more concrete "eschatological imagination" of the final three volumes. Frank first notes that Dostoevsky's imagination is informed by an "apocalyptic view" (37), and that the "strength" of Dostoevsky's work can be traced to his desire to "communicate the saving power of [the] eschatological core of the Christian faith" (64). Frank's "eschatological imagination" is never extensively defined in any one of the volumes, but he comes closest to establishing his sense of a Dostoevskian eschatological poetics in the second volume:

> Dostoevsky's imagination at this point [after his incarceration in Siberia] could not resist taking the eschatological leap that was to become so characteristic for him–the leap to the end condition of whatever empirical situation he is considering–and so, in order to dramatize the supreme importance of hope for human life, he deliberately *invents* a situation in which it is systematically destroyed. (158, author's emphasis)

This "eschatological core" or "leap" eventually becomes the more refined eschatological imagination of the successive volumes. Frank seems reluctant to arrive at an overarching definition of the eschatological imagination, perhaps because of the infinite varieties of

eschatological conditions and experiences that Dostoevsky conceived. This also calls attention to the versatility or mutability of the eschatological imagination as it is suited to any imaginative context, sacred or secular. What is particularly striking and revealing about this is the flexibility of the phrase; it is applied throughout to Dostoevsky's Christian world-view, his doubts and frustrations, personal experiences, fiction writing, and his passionate engagement with the then-contemporary ideologies (particularly utopian socialism and nihilism among the Russian intelligentsia), all of which are bound together by a common perception of an end, often a disastrous one, one that is pivotally grounded in a language of renewal. Envisioning and depicting endings, often catastrophic ones, for Dostoevsky and for Wallace, in their fiction is their way of dramatizing cultural transformation, or new beginnings.

I introduce Frank's work here for three reasons that I will return to in the course of the chapter. First, it is clear from reading Wallace's work, particularly his essay "Feodor's Guide"–a review article of Frank's biography published in the Village Voice Literary Supplement (1996) just three months after the release of Infinite Jest (January 1996)–that Wallace aligns himself to the Dostoevskian tradition almost to the point of viewing himself as assuming Dostoevsky's prophetic mantle in a contemporary American context.[2] Next, there is a real similarity between the fiction of Dostoevsky and Wallace, in terms of iconography and symbols, and, more importantly, in the correspondence between both artists' unflinching eschatological depiction of debased and despairing

human nature with a redemptive end. Thirdly, my conception of an eschatological approach is largely indebted to Frank's foundational phrase and his meticulous observations regarding Dostoevsky's aesthetic development. An analysis of Wallace's close reading of Frank's intimate reading and understanding of Dostoevsky allows us to capture a strong sense of the similarities between Dostoevsky's and Wallace's aesthetic and to understand how Wallace deploys this influence throughout his fiction to dramatize ultimate endings. We may say, then, that we are in medias res now in terms of arriving at an approximation of Wallace's eschatological vision that is, first, steeped in Joseph Frank, and to a larger, more important extent, Dostoevsky. Wallace's work is, of course, not simply reducible to an aping of Dostoevsky's poetics, for as we have already seen in the case of G.M. Hopkins (Part One) and others, Wallace's work tends to involve a unique appropriation of a wide variety of artistic influences and styles that becomes a vital reinterpretation or reformulation constructed out of ends for new beginnings.

Wallace's use of a chatty, familiar, and conversational tone in all his essays often belies his sincerity and passionate feelings about his subjects. Indeed, his jocular and witty treatment of these topics seems to suggest that his essays are written with haste, that the thoughts expressed there are random opinions, without any formal rhetorical devices at work, and, therefore, not to be taken too seriously. They are first and foremost friendly; though they seek to persuade the reader, they are respectful, warm, and often highly amusing. And while they are extremely intelligent, and while the reader never forgets

that the writer is extremely intelligent, these essays always have an open, even vulnerable, style to them. They make an honest appeal to the reader that is neither pretentious nor heavy-handed. What is most striking about these essays, and "Feodor's Guide" in particular, as one returns to and re-reads them, is the deep and sophisticated involvement that they demand from the reader in parsing their subtexts. "Feodor's Guide," like the later Rain Taxi Review review article discussed in the previous chapter, is, of course, simply a review article. But, like all of Wallace's work, to consign this essay to that simple class is to ignore the deeper gestures and larger ramifications that are its true subject matter. Primarily, like Dostoevsky's own essays and fiction, Wallace has one target in mind, the contemporary aesthetic condition or 'worldview' of ironic nihilism in American fiction. Whereas Dostoevsky spent his literary and personal life engaging the utopian socialists and intellectual nihilists (like N.G. Chernyshevsky's popular What is to be Done? [1863]), Wallace engages the contemporary American literati's easy reliance on ironic nihilism, a self-promoting nihilism that mocks, sneers and, thus, negates sincere discourse and debate from the outset. Two contemporary examples of this ironic nihilism are the work of Mark Leyner, directly addressed by Wallace in his essay on television and American fiction, and relative new-comer, Neil Pollack.[3] One of the two epigraphs that head "Feodor's Guide," a snippet of dialogue from Turgenev's Fathers and Sons, merits full quotation here:

> 'At the present time, negation is the most useful of all–and we deny–'
> 'Everything?'

> 'Everything!'
> 'What, not only art and poetry . . . but even . . . horrible to say . . .'
> 'Everything,' repeated Bazarov, with indescribable composure.' (17)

As we have already noted in the epigraph to Wallace's "Tense Present: Democracy, English, and the Wars over Usage" from Augustine, Dilige et quod vis fac ('Love, and do what you will'), Wallace's epigraphs are crucial rhetorical strategies both in terms of emphasizing his belief in the reader's participation (in seeking out a translation to the Augustinian quotation and inviting the reader to take the meaning beyond the scope and limitations of an essay and adopt it, or, at least, consider its consequences) and here in "Feodor's Guide" in signifying the essential strategical engagement of the essay, beyond its immediate limits as a review article. While the essay is a generic book review for a well-known literary supplement, it also bears the marks of a contemporary aesthetic treatise that, again like the Rain Taxi Review essay, pillories contemporary American avant gardists–the producers and consumers of contemporary avant garde literature–in a publication that is considered perpetually avant garde by the literati.

In the concluding paragraph of the essay, a rally or call to arms of sorts to contemporary fiction writers that moves far away from the initial and ostensible subject of the essay, Wallace declares that although he considers the current moment to be a dark and difficult one for fiction writers who would strive for sincere expression, he also recalls Dostoevsky as a "model" (25)–much like Wallace's earlier consideration of G.M. Hopkins as a "touchstone" (McCaffery 149) for contemporary writers–and concludes his piece by

writing that "Frank's books present a hologram of one of them" (25).[4] The hologram metaphor is a significant one for Wallace, mainly because Infinite Jest–the novel he wrote partly to address the many literary-aesthetic dilemmas of the postmodern era–deploys holograms in a plethora of ways as we have noted in the ghost/geist portion of the previous chapter. In the context of his Dostoevsky essay, however, not only does Wallace call attention to the fact of Frank's mediation of Dostoevsky as a model/hologram for contemporary writers, but he actually acts as a hologram himself through his own essay by mediating Dostoevsky through the particular lens of his essay-authorial self. In an interview with Charlie Rose, Wallace remarks about Infinite Jest that he intended his novel to be "not particularly postmodern or jumbled up or fractured," although, in respect to his use of endnotes, he also contends that, for him, "reality's fractured right now" and that he is "constantly on the lookout for ways to fracture the text that aren't totally disorienting" (Rose 11). As we have observed, Wallace's primary motivation for fracturing his narrative is to jar the reader into a sense that someone is mediating the textual content, its data, and its arrangement and chronological sequencing–that a *human* agency is responsible for this textual ordering on the other end of the literary transaction in our contemporary world that tends to disguise mediation, particularly in the commercial arts like television. Wallace's essays are no different than his fiction in terms of textual strategies. "Feodor's Guide" contains six interpolated, off-set and italicized segments encapsulated with double asterisks that are only tangentially related to

both the essay proper's subject, Joseph Frank's biography and Dostoevsky's literary-cultural achievements. He further seeds the essay with his now familiar and expected endnotes, twenty-five in total, or five pages of notes in a short, thirteen-page essay, which further fragment the essay's organization. All six excerpts are first-person, monologue-style philosophical meditations that recall the Underground Man's withering discourse in Dostoevsky's prose dramatic monologue, Notes from Underground (1864). And although some of these are lengthy, I quote three of these philosophical meditations as examples of how Wallace fragments his essay and because they integrally inform his overall entreaty:

> ***But if I decide to decide there's a different, less selfish, less lonely point to my life, isn't the reason for this decision my desire to be less lonely, meaning to suffer less pain? So can the decision to be less selfish be anything other than a selfish decision?*** ("Feodor's Guide" 19, author's emphasis)

> ***Is it possible really to love somebody? If I'm lonely, empty inside, everybody outside me is potential relief: I need them. But is it possible to love what you need? Does love have to be voluntary to be love? Does it have to not even be in my own best interests, the love, to count as love?*** (21, author's emphasis)

> ***What is 'an American'? Do we have something in common, as Americans? Or do we all just happen to live inside the same arbitrary boundaries? How is America different from other countries? Is there something special about it? Forget about special privileges that go with being an American–are there special responsibilities that go with being an American? If so, responsibilities to whom?*** (22, author's emphasis)

The other three excerpts address such topics as, whether one is a "good person" or not (18), "faith" (18), and belief (23). None of the excerpts have any immediate relation to Joseph Frank's biography or Dostoevsky, yet, at the same time, they are completely

intertwined with Dostoevsky's eschatological imagination–for all of these conundrums present themselves repeatedly in his fiction.

At one point in the article, Wallace addresses the difficulty of reading Dostoevsky in a contemporary American context in which Dostoevsky's fiction's "time and culture and language are alien to us" (19). He further observes that Dosteovsky's "prose and dialogue can come off stilted and pleonastic and silly" (19) because of "excruciating Victorianish translations" (26 n. 5); that Dostoevsky's works exhibit a "soppy-seeming formality" (19); that "social etiquette is stiff to the point of absurdity" augmented with "obscure military ranks and bureaucratic hierarchies" (19); and that "rigid and totally weird class distinctions" are "hard to keep straight and understand the implications of" (19-20). That Wallace is so initially hard on Dostoevsky's works is itself surprising until we come to understand the rhetorical strategy behind the essay: that it aims to be a hologram of Dostoevsky–of making Dostoevsky's works more accessible to the contemporary American imagination–through the tripartite mediation of, first, Dostoevsky himself, Joseph Frank, and then Wallace himself. For Wallace, here, Dostoevsky embodies such a dynamic light source that requires, because of the levels of cultural obscurity that block or deflect his radiance, a type of light mediator–or a translator. A translator not in the literal sense of translating Dostoevsky's Russian works into the English language, but a translator who would translate Dostoevsky's ideological agendas into a contemporary American idiom and context. Thus, Wallace's italicized and

interpolated commentary represents a refashioning and re-mediation of Dostoevsky in which that author's central concerns are translated into an American postmodern context, one that has ossified, for Wallace, into a culturally toxic Weltanschauung of irony, self-reflexivity, and mordant spoofing of American hyperconsumerism. Dostoevsky, in Wallace's words, "dramatize[d] the profoundest parts of all human beings, the parts most conflicted, most serious: the ones with the most at stake" (21). It is no mistake that the portions of Dostoevsky that Wallace re-writes from an American perspective have to do with what today's postmodern literary agendas and fiction-writing perspectives would find trite, naïve, and insipid: the lost, or rapidly diminishing, shared values of personal worth and goodness; faith in something beyond the immediate solipsistic subject; loneliness and selfishness; loving someone without thought for oneself; the value of communal participation (as 'Americans'); and the value of looking to other holograms. The very humanistic appeal that lies beneath Wallace's essay also becomes a recurrent refrain throughout his fiction, which is unsurprising as Joyce once remarked that a novelist manipulates one or two recurrent themes over the course of a writing career. Through his contentions regarding Dostoevsky, we see a reflection of what is most valuable to Wallace the essayist and fiction writer:

> FMD's concern was always *what it is to be a human being*–i.e. how a person, in the particular social and philosophical circumstances of nineteenth-century Russia, could be a real human being, a person whose life was informed by love and values and principles, instead of being just a very shrewd species of self-preserving animal. (21, author's emphasis)

Wallace implies that to read Dostoevsky properly, to understand the intellectual battles that Dostoevsky fought and to appreciate Dostoevsky's aesthetic is to see a refracted image of Dostoevsky in Wallace's own work. To say that Wallace mirrors Dostoevsky's eschatological aesthetic is to imply that Dostoevsky's society mirrors our own. Though, as Wallace observes, nineteenth-century Russian society clearly differs from twenty-first century American society, there is a dramatic correspondence nonetheless in terms of dramatizing the human condition. While "Feodor's Guide" examines, on the surface, the works of Joseph Frank and Dostoevsky, the essay's deeper implication is that contemporary American novelists have, in Wallace's words, "abandoned the field" (24); they no longer dramatize the significance, value, and worth of being human, or just what it means to live in an eschatological age. For Wallace, Dostoevsky "possessed a passion, conviction, and engagement with deep moral issues that we, here, today, cannot or do not allow ourselves" (23). In examining Dostoevsky's age of nihilism, Wallace diagnoses the present age:

> And on finishing Frank's books, I think any serious American reader/writer will find himself driven to think hard about what exactly it is that makes so many of the novelists of our own time look so thematically shallow and lightweight . . . To inquire why we–under our own nihilist spell–seem to require of our writers an ironic distance from deep convictions or desperate questions, so that contemporary writers have to either make jokes of profound issues or else try somehow to work them in under cover of some formal trick like intertextual quotation or incongruous juxtaposition, sticking them inside asterisks as part of some surreal, defamiliarization-of-the-reading-experience flourish. (23)

Part of the reason for this contemporary, literary nihilism, Wallace suggests, is attributable

to aesthetic shifts in the genre of the novel itself, which "involves our era's postindustrial condition and postmodern culture" (23). Whereas, for Wallace, the Modernists "elevated aesthetics to the level of metaphysics" (23), making "formal ingenuity" the standard for noteworthy fiction, postmodernist writers "presume as a matter of course that serious literature will be aesthetically distanced from real lived life" (23). As such, the peculiar aesthetic conception of 'serious' fiction now means, at least for Wallace, an admixture of self-conscious textual ingenuity and the avoidance of problematic moral issues that emerge from the present time, issues that would require a writer to make some sort of ideological claim whether masked by character or literary personae. Wallace observes that although Dostoevsky's fiction is celebrated for "its wisdom and compassion and moral rigor," Dostoevsky was himself, ironically, "a prick in real life–vain, self-absorbed, arrogant, spiteful, selfish" (21). Yet despite this, Wallace calls Dostoevsky, in a word, "*brave*" (24, author's emphasis). Wallace continues: "he never stopped worrying about his literary reputation, but he also never stopped promulgating ideas in which he believed. And he did so not by ignoring the unfriendly cultural circumstances in which he was writing, but by confronting them, engaging them, specifically and by name" (24).

What is of crucial importance in this essay is that while Wallace meticulously diagnoses the contemporary literary environment, he also implicates himself several times as complicitous with the contemporary literati: "our intelligentsia (us) distrust strong belief, open conviction" (24); and: "we will, of course, without hesitation use art to

parody, ridicule, debunk or protest ideologies. But there is a difference" (29 n. 25). There is also a fundamental difference in Wallace's conception of 'ideology,' for he does not directly refer to the types of literary theoretical ideologies (Marxism, poststructuralism–"our age's *own* radical-intellectual fad" ("Joseph Frank's Dostoevsky" n.p.)–feminist theory, and so forth) practiced by the neo-liberal Humanities faculties of today's academy, which would be better understood, perhaps, as political agendas instead of ideologies of belief, though it is arguable that he nevertheless implicates the "theory industry" ("Fyodor" 25 n.3) here as well. Advancing an 'ideology'–a system of ideas, beliefs–means, for Joseph Frank, precisely to dramatize the characteristic moral-spiritual themes of a period against the background of a particular culture (qtd. in Wallace 18). He, then, concludes the essay by quoting a portion of Dostoevsky's The Idiot, excerpted from a ten-page monologue on suicide, and asks the reader to imagine the critical reception a contemporary novelist would elicit by daring to allow a contemporary character to speak in this fashion: "so he–*we*, fiction writers–won't–ever–dare try to use serious art to advance ideologies. The project would be as culturally inappropriate as Menard's Quixote. *We'd* be laughed out of town" (25, emphasis added).[5] In "Feodor's Guide," Wallace has implicitly and single-handedly called for a termination of the type of postmodern self-conscious and ironic fiction that he sees as the hallmark of our time. In this sense, his essay is eschatological: it both diagnoses, in demarcating an end, and ushers in a pivotal transformative opportunity for American fiction writers. In a sense, Wallace

drops the gauntlet and presents a challenge to contemporary writers who read The Village Voice:

> Given this–and it is a given–who is to blame for the philosophical passionlessness of our own Dostoevskys? The culture, the laughers? But they wouldn't–could not–laugh if a piece of passionately serious ideological contemporary fiction was also ingenious and radiantly transcendent fiction. But how to do that–how even, for a writer, even a very talented writer, to get up the guts to even try? There are no formulae or guarantees. But there are models. Frank's books present a hologram of one of them. (25)

While this is no doubt a challenge to, or exhortation for, other writers, Wallace, perhaps, also subtly indicates that he himself has already undertaken the very challenge he presents to his fellow writers, that he has attempted to write the very "passionately serious ideological" work that is also "ingenious and radiantly transcendent" that he calls for in his essay. Wallace, as we have noted, is careful to implicate himself first and foremost in his essays before moving to challenge the literary intelligentsia. The timing of the appearance of this essay–April 1996–coincides with the publication of Infinite Jest–January 1996–too closely, too rhetorically strategically, for Wallace's concluding statement to be read any other way, for whenever Wallace challenges the literati in his essays, as he has done in both "Tense Present: Democracy, English, and the Wars over Usage" and the Rain Taxi Review essay, he first makes certain that he has attempted to overcome the very aesthetic-philosophical dilemmas he draws attention to in his own fiction–by practice.

Wallace has remarked in several interviews, since the release of Infinite Jest, that

reviewers and readers have largely misunderstood his novel: "I didn't read a whole lot of reviews, but a lot of the positive ones seemed to me to misunderstand the book" (Rose 11). That while although he intended to write a novel that was both difficult and highly enjoyable ("the project . . . was to do something long and difficult that was also fun") (Donahue par. 9), Wallace comments that he wanted it to be "extraordinarily sad and not particularly postmodern" (Rose 11). In an interview with Laura Miller, Wallace says of Infinite Jest: "I wanted to do something sad. I'd done some funny stuff and some heavy, intellectual stuff, but I'd never done anything sad" (Miller 1). Yet although the book was founded on a principle of sorrow, most reviewers, still partially accurately, called it "brashly funny," "a comic masterpiece," "a blockbuster comedy," "frequently hilarious," and "uproarious"; one of only a few reviews to understand the novel somewhat accurately called it an "1,088-page encyclopedia of hurt." "Feodor's Guide," in an indirect fashion, moves to reply to these critics. Wallace notes two significant features of Frank's books: first, that Frank founds his critical biography on the premise that "Dostoevsky's masterpieces are often read and admired even without any real appreciation of their ideological agendas" (25 n. 1)–that is, that they are largely misunderstood–and, second, that Frank never mentions the intentional fallacy "or tries to head off the objection that his biography commits it all over the place" (25 n. 2). Wallace observes that what is so valuable about Frank's study is his "maximum restraint and objectivity: he's not about imposing a certain theory or way of decoding Dostoevsky, and he steers way clear of

arguing with other critics who've applied various axes' edges to FMD's stuff" (25 n. 2). Frank takes as his critical methodology the view that understanding Dostoevsky's intellectual environment, the "historical facts," and "Dostoevsky's own notes and letters" (25 n.2) is the only way to appreciate fully that novelist's works: "his argument is never that somebody else is wrong, just that they don't have all the facts" which, in Wallace's view, "gives implicit authority to Frank's agenda of providing completely exhaustive and comprehensive context, The Whole Story" (25 n. 2). It is here that Wallace contrasts Frank's methodology with contemporary criticism:

> It is the loss of an ability to countenance and discuss the *particularity* of works of literary genius that is maybe most to be loathed about the theory industry's rise to power in contemporary fiction criticism. A lot of post structural theory is fascinating in its own right, but when it comes to actually reading some piece of fiction, most theoretical readings consist in just running it through a kind of powerful philosophical machine. (25 n. 3, author's emphasis)

For Wallace, what makes Frank's biography so singularly important and successful is his "determination to treat *both* the ideological forces at work around Dostoevsky's fictions *and* the completely distinctive and unabstractable way in which FMD transforms those forces" (26 n. 3, author's emphasis). Wallace also praises Frank's close readings of Dostoevsky's most celebrated works, noting that these readings "aim to be explicative rather than argumentative or theory-driven–i.e. their aim is to articulate as fully as possible what exactly Dostoevsky himself wanted the books to mean" (18). There is, like the conclusion to the essay in which Wallace challenges his contemporaries and suggests

that his novel is an example of "passionately serious ideological fiction" (25) that he calls for, a suggestion that his own work should be read by critics, academics, and readers in much the same way that Frank reads Dostoevsky: "to trace and explain the novels' genesis out of Dostoevsky's own ideological engagement with Russian culture" (18). Wallace's subtext (itself a refraction or reflection of Dostoevsky and Frank) suggests that forcing a particular literary-theoretical agenda on his novel will not apply, or will lead to misunderstanding, at best. Such readings would not be 'wrong,' but these readings would simply, as in the case of Frank's scholarly contemporaries on Dostoevsky, not "have all the facts" (25). Frank remarks, in the preface to the fifth volume, that "it is impossible to read Dostoevsky, however, without becoming aware that his major characters are deeply involved in the socio-political ideologies and problems of their time; but his own so-called political ideas seemed so eccentric that hardly anyone took them seriously" (Mantle, xi). Frank also contends that Dostoevsky "focused all the problems of that great culture in his great novels–not on the level in which they ordinarily appeared to his contemporaries, but transforming them in terms of his own eschatological . . . vision" (xiii). To make the most of his work, one must pay particular heed to the current intellectual climate and Wallace's oblique critical writings on the state of contemporary fiction. That is to say, by endorsing Frank's critical methodology, Wallace implies that his own work should be read and replied to in a similar fashion: that the intentional fallacy should be disregarded in favor of careful explicative reading, critical theories jettisoned, and greater focus paid to

the intellectual and ideological struggles that an author–Wallace himself, in this case–engages in, and to focus on Infinite Jest's unique *particularity* in relation to other works of contemporary American fiction. Further, what is particularly fascinating about this essay is that Wallace never acknowledges the interpolated, off-set philosophical set-pieces–they are simply left for the reader to puzzle out. By including these meditations, however, Wallace indirectly seeds his essay with the serious, moral issues that he finds lacking in contemporary fiction:

> ***Does this guy Jesus Christ's life have anything to teach me even if he wasn't 'divine'? What are the implications that somebody who was supposed to be God's relative and so could have turned the cross into a planter or something with just a look still voluntarily let them nail him up there, and died? And did he know? Did he know he could break the cross with just a look?–Speaking of knowing: did he know in advance that the death'd just be temporary? Had God clued him in? I bet I could climb up there, too, if I knew an eternity of right-handed bliss lay on the other side of six hours of pain–Does any of this even matter? Can I still believe in J.C. or Muhammed or Buddha or whoever even if I don't 'believe' they were relatives of God? Plus what would that even mean, anyway: 'believe in'?*** (23)

That this interpolated passage alone thematically bears a striking resemblance to the discourse between Ivan and Alyosha in the "Grand Inquisitor" chapter of The Brothers Karamazov in terms of belief is also a textual strategy on Wallace's part; these textual interludes on significant human subjects (belief, here) indirectly whet the readers' appetite to consult Dostoevsky directly, and prepare readers for what they will encounter in Dostoevsky's fiction. These interpolations are deeply significant, in addition to their jarring textual position, they force the reader to pause and consider them and the

questions they impose on the readers' mundane existence. They act as a clarion call for readers to enlarge their perspective and remove themselves from the solipsistic concerns of daily life, and to consider the importance of believing in something that is larger than the immediate self. Rhetorically, Wallace solves the dilemma he postulates throughout and *through* his own essay, and further calls attention to the fact that he has already moved to redeem a terminal point in American literature through his own novel, Infinite Jest.

* * *

3. The Brothers Incandenza

"'And you wouldn't believe what's happening between them now–it's terrible, it's a strain, I'm telling you, it's such a terrible tale that one cannot believe it: they're destroying themselves, who knows why, and they know they're doing it, and they're both revelling in it'" (The Brothers Karamazov 4.4.181).

The significant correspondence between Wallace and Dostoevsky is not, however, limited to "Feodor's Guide," for Wallace has consciously constructed and patterned Infinite Jest so meticulously after Dostoevsky's greatest and final novel, The Brothers Karamazov (1880), that, one could argue, in many significant ways, Infinite Jest is a re-writing, re-contextualization–even a (re)translation–of The Brothers Karamazov into the contemporary American idiom and context.[6] Stylistically and thematically, Infinite Jest

reflects the "hologram" of The Brothers Karamazov. Wallace's novel, in many crucial and sometimes obvious respects, as we have seen, bears striking similarities to Joyce's Ulysses and Shakespeare's Hamlet, in addition to Eliot's The Waste Land, but the most important and *overarching* appropriation of a Western literary text is of Dostoevsky's The Brothers Karamazov. In "Feodor's Guide" Wallace devotes three consecutive notes to what he calls the "excruciatingly Victorianish translations" of Constance Garnett (26 n. 5), and also critiques the then-recent translation of Crime and Punishment by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky by quoting from their translation:

> *"'Now is the Kingdom of reason and light and . . . and will and strength . . . and now we shall see! Now we shall cross swords!' he added presumptuously, as if addressing some dark force and challenging it . . ."* Umm, why not just 'as if addressing some dark force'? Umm, can you challenge a dark force without addressing it? Or is there, in the Russian, something that keeps the above from being redundant, stilted, *bad*? If so, why not recognize that in English it's bad, and clean it *up* in an acclaimed new Knopf translation? I just don't get it. (26 n. 5, author's emphasis)

In the succeeding note, Wallace questions just what the ubiquitous Dostoevskian phrase to "fly at" somebody really means: "it happens dozens of times in every FMD novel. What, 'fly at' them in order to beat them up? To get in their face? Why not just say that, if you're translating?" (26 n. 6). Wallace is not being mean-spirited toward the valuable work of Pevear and Volokhonsky, and it is clear that he deeply admires Dostoevsky's works, and it is precisely because he reveres Dostoevsky that he finds it lamentable that his works–and his thematic and stylistic brilliance–do not translate very easily and well into English, particularly millennial American English. As neither a fluent speaker of

Russian, nor an expert in Russian literature, Wallace is clearly in no position to translate Dostoevsky's works himself to his own satisfaction; he is, however, in a unique position to translate in a more broad and figurative sense, nevertheless. What Wallace does achieve in Infinite Jest, however, is a *transposition* or *transumption*–a textual metalepsis–of The Brothers Karamazov into the specific ideological environment of contemporary America. Just as Dostoevsky's "particular foes were the Nihilists, the radical progeny of the '40's socialists" (29 n. 23), Wallace's "foes" are the contemporary literary ironic nihilists, the type that refuses to countenance or confront serious moral issues through art. Wallace tempers his nihilistic conception, however, for he concedes that it is inaccurate to claim that we have rejected all religious and moral principles as the more radical nihilists of Dostoevsky's time espoused: "maybe it's not true that we today are nihilists. At the very least we have devils we believe in. These include sentimentality, naïveté, archaism, fanaticism. Maybe it'd be better to call our art's culture one of congenital skepticism" (24).

It is through Infinite Jest that Wallace acts to engage this "congenital skepticism." A further reason why Dostoevsky's works do not translate well, or are easily misunderstood by the contemporary reader, is that because the "devils"–a significant word for Wallace to choose considering that it is the title of a major Dostoevsky novel (1871) and because of the important dialogue between Ivan Karamazov and the Devil in The Brothers Karamazov–of our time ("sentimentality, naïveté, archaism, fanaticism") are

mainly what the contemporary reader distills from Dostoevsky's translated works. Ironically, the ideological traits that we now abhor are mainly what the contemporary reader adduces from Dostoevsky's works: we often find the (translated) language of Dostoevsky's fictions embarrassingly sentimental and naïve (because of the characters' sincere expression), replete with archaisms (linguistic and cultural), and Dostoevsky's characters to be fanatical in their actions. Dostoevsky moved to engage what he perceived to be destructive ideological elements of his society, elements that our contemporary society mirrors, though in a different form, yet, and this is the irony, his works read, as Wallace remarks, stiltedly and badly and make us uncomfortable to the point that we fail to see the important correlations between Dostoevsky's society and our own. While Dostoevsky's work has never been more relevant and necessary for contemporary American culture, his works nevertheless appear to us to be the very type of fiction that we should (and do, in the main) shun as naïve and fanatical; that while his works *could* act as a necessary homeopathic remedy for what ails contemporary American society, we frequently see them as an exemplar of what we flee from. We cannot get past the surface translations. We have, instead of regarding Dostoevsky as an important exemplar of a courageous writer for *our* time as well as his own, embraced Dostoevsky's heir, Nietzsche; we have spurned belief and now cling to an individualism that privileges solipsistic gratification over communal values. This modern lack of belief philosopher Leszek Kolakowski calls a "massive self-aware secularity" (8) introduced by "the prophet

of modernity" (9), Nietzsche:

> he was successful in passionately attacking the spurious mental security of people who failed to realize what really had happened, because it was he who said everything to the end: the world generates no meaning and no distinction between good and evil; reality is pointless, and there is no other hidden reality behind it; the world as we see it is the Ultimum; it does not try to convey a message to us; it does not refer to anything else; it is self-exhausting and deaf-mute. All this had to be said, and Nietzsche found a solution or a medicine for the despair: this solution was madness. (8-9)

In "Feodor's Guide," Wallace writes that "in our own age and culture of enlightened atheism we are very much Nietzsche's children, his ideological heirs; and without Dostoevsky there would have been no Nietzsche; and yet Dostoevsky is among the most deeply religious of all writers . . ." (27 n. 9). Infinite Jest calls this contemporary enlightened atheism, "enlightened self-interest" and "unconsidered atheism" (Jest 428, 443).

That Dostoevsky was such a blatantly religious writer–though he cultivated his own faith much like developing his own aesthetic–may also have something to do with his untranslatibility and his sometimes cool reception among contemporary writers, for our culture does not respond well to religious belief, particularly in art: religious belief tends to contain all of our 'devils'–sentimental, naïve, archaic, and fanatical–who are supposedly exorcized by our contemporary writers. But if we compare Dostoevsky's time with our own, and substitute 'belief' and 'rational thought' for Dostoevsky's 'reason and faith' and 'atheism,' then perhaps there is more congruence between Dostoevsky's fiction and our time than we are currently aware of, or are prepared to acknowledge. In our time,

religious faith and atheism have little cultural capital, or even meaning; they are far too naïve, particularly among our literary intelligentsia, to be taken seriously. The word 'atheism' alone seems to be a quaint and anachronistic word among a culture of atheists where atheism is itself the accepted norm, or *environment*, that rarely requires articulation, instead of a particular label or position that would be stated in Dostoevsky's time. Nevertheless, and this is Wallace's point throughout his essays and fiction, contemporary American culture has lost something important when we sacrifice 'belief' to 'reason' and confuse the importance of belief in general with sentimental or fanatical religious belief. In "Feodor's Guide," Wallace states that "we believe that ideology is now the province of SIGs [Special Interest Groups] and PACs [Political Action Committees] all trying to get its slice of the big green pie–and, looking around us, we see that it is indeed so" because, for Wallace, "we have abandoned the field" (24). In the original version of this essay, however, Wallace addresses by name the specific groups we have, for him, abandoned the field to:

> fundamentalist Christian movements whose absence of compassion and whose readiness to judge show clearly that they're clueless about the 'Christian' principles they would impose on others. To the rightist militias and conspiracy-theorists whose paranoia about the government depends on the government being just way more organized and efficient than it really is. And, especially in literary and academic fields, to the mostly absurd and embarrassing Political Correctness movement, whose obsession with the *forms* of utterance and behavior show too well how desiccated and aestheticized our most liberal instincts have become, how desperately removed from what's really important: motive, feeling, belief and its absence. ("Joseph Frank's Dostoevsky" n.p., author's emphasis)

For the published version of this essay, Wallace confines his discussion to the literary arts and belief in general terms, but in the original, excised version he attacks right-wing conservative movements and the academy; it is useful, in comparing the two versions, to observe that Wallace finds the contemporary phenomenon of unbelief to have rather perniciously insinuated itself at all levels of contemporary culture, not just the literary arts which he primarily targets. Moreover, Wallace's findings make the correspondence with Dostoevsky all the more relevant, for, in Dostoevsky's time, what was written was a reflection of what you believed, your ideology. In a short interview, Wallace speaks about the importance of a type of fiction that engages and antagonizes a sense of belief in the culture:

> It's nothing less than trying to address cultural infantilism. When people my age talk about how miserable a time this is, they usually explain it by diminished economic expectations. But I think of it more as a lack of identification. If you're about thirty, *believing in something bigger than you* is not a choice. You either do or you're a walking dead man, just going through the motions. Concepts like 'duty' and 'fidelity' may sound quaint but we've inherited the best and the worst, and we've got to make it up as we go along. *I absolutely believe in something*, even though I don't know what it is. ("1458 Words" 42, emphasis added)

For Wallace, the importance is not in celebrating a religious belief after Dostoevsky, but of acknowledging the importance of belief in our belief-bankrupt time. Wallace continues: "the belief, in whatever it is, is not for something but for your own sake. If we don't as a generation find that, we'll either crash and burn or come up with something really powerful and beautiful" (42). Wallace's concern with belief is often yoked to his

concern with American cultural solipsism; the notion of belief is essential, in his view, to considering something that is larger than the immediate subject, something that can move the self into an acknowledgment of something important external to the often self-absorbed concerns of the contemporary individual. In this important sense, belief–Dostoevskean or Wallacean–is essential to the human condition. Although Dostoevsky clearly held deep-seated religious convictions, it is, however, important to recall that The Brothers Karamazov, in Victor Terras's words, is "a work of secular literature" (Reading Dostoevsky 127). It is further important to note just how intensely religious belief was bound up with the more practical nature of living in nineteenth-century Russia, and that religious belief informed politics and social policy. To advocate a socialist utopian ideal was also, in most cases, to advocate an atheistic belief system. In other words, religious expression in Dostoevsky is also political expression; religious belief integrally informed one's cultural views and actions to a much larger degree than in our time. That we often associate the religious belief of Dostoevsky's works with the more naïve and fanatical religious belief of our time is often to misread Dostoevsky and miss out on his important cultural commentary, a commentary that is most instructive to our own age. That Wallace chooses one of his epigraphs for "Feodor's Guide" from Ivan Turgenev's Fathers and Sons (1862), as already mentioned, is further significant when we consider that Dostoevsky spent much of his literary career engaging the literary-philosophical ideology of his contemporary, Turgenev. In tracing the countless literary,

mythical, and biblical intertextual quotations and echoes and allusions throughout The Brothers Karamazov, Victor Terras observes that "the figure of the Devil [Karamazov 11.9.634] fits the image of a man who, in one way or another, accompanied Dostoevsky through virtually all of his adult life, Ivan Turgenev. It is safe to say that no other living man occupied as important a place in Dostoevsky's mind as did Turgenev" (Reading 116). Although Dostoevsky admired Turgenev's literary ability, he nevertheless personally disliked Turgenev and rejected both his "pessimistic agnosticism" (118) and his "attacking Russia in print and moving to Germany and declaring himself a German" which "offended Dostoevsky's passionate nationalism" (Wallace, "Feodor's Guide" 27 n. 14). In a letter, Dostoevsky wrote of Turgenev's short story, "Phantoms," that "in my opinion, there is a great deal of trash in that piece: something pettily nasty, sickly, senile, *unbelieving* from weakness, in a word, the whole Turgenev and his convictions. (However, the poetry in it will redeem a great deal)" (qtd. in Terras 118, author's emphasis). Interestingly, Turgenev's story was published in Dostoevsky' journal, Epoch, which, in conjunction with Dostoevsky's passing praise of Turgenev's prose signifies a perhaps modest respect for his contemporary. Turgenev, for his part, declared Dostoevsky to be a "latter-day de Sade" and considered Dostoevsky's characters to be "bywords for depravity and degeneration" (Avsey xi). As such, Turgenev's works are parodied and challenged throughout much of The Brothers Karamazov. The significance of Wallace choosing a Turgenev quotation to preface his discussion of Dostoevsky is itself

intertextual. Wallace acknowledges–through a Turgenev quotation that emphasizes absolute cultural negation and nihilism–Dostoevsky's ideological commitment in his fiction, and provides an example of the type of literary nihilism that Dostoevsky fought. In doing so, Wallace subtly suggests that the same kind of cultural nihilism of Dostoevsky's time is apparent in contemporary American literature. Wallace, thus, closes the circle of intellectual progression through Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, and back to the contemporary moment: he picks up the literary mantle bequeathed by Dostoevsky to engage "Nietzsche's children, his ideological heirs" (27 n. 9), and employs a Dostoevskyian methodology to engage them. Translator and scholar, Ignat Avsey, calls The Brothers Karamazov a "panorama of Dostoevsky's most passionately held beliefs and ideas" (xxiii); we may say, then, that Dostoevsky's final novel is a 'novel of belief,' and belief in humanity first and foremost and humanity's necessary ability to confront the darkest aspects of itself and redeem them through language.

Infinite Jest mirrors The Brothers Karamazov in even the most minute, stylistic ways though both novels resemble each other significantly in terms of plot structure, use of chronology, types of narration, polyphonic voicing, engagement with respective ideologies, elaborate characterization and character types, length and density, intertextuality, and the use of richly comic episodes within larger dark and heavily intellectual themes. These two novels, first and foremost, however, resemble each other in their staggering and inventive uses of language. Dostoevsky is now considered to be a

master stylist. However, as Victor Terras writes, "a reputation as a poor stylist has accompanied Dostoevsky since the publication of his first works" (Reading 10). Critics have attacked Dostoevsky's style as "prolix, repetitious, and lacking in polish"; his works have further been "found to lack balance, restraint, and good taste," and their "aesthetic value [has been] found to be slight or nonexistent" (10). Terras observes that the stain of the initial critics' opinions was removed only by M.M. Bakhtin's insights on Dostoevsky in his Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics (1984 [first published in 1929]) (Reading 10), where Bakhtin observed that Dostoevsky's novels are intentionally fractured, nonlinear, and constructed as a "polyphonic concert of living voices" (10). For Terras, a "controlled, economical, and well-integrated narrative style is not what Dostoevsky pursues. He will write elegantly only when the voice in question demands it" (10). Terras concedes that, "if one disregards the 'polyphony' argument," then

> Dostoevsky's highly uneven narrative style, often distinctly colloquial, often journalistic, sometimes *chatty*, then again lyrical, solemn, or pathetic, . . . and may be legitimately seen as an aesthetic flaw. Today it is commonly seen as an innovative trait, adopted by [Louis-Ferdinand] Céline, [William] Faulkner, [Günter] Grass, and other leading novelists of the twentieth century. (10, emphasis added)

These stylistic traits of Dostoevsky's novels–and The Brothers Karamazov in particular–essentially marked a shift in the nineteenth-century novel. Dostoevsky's radical aesthetic of exploring characters' inner psychological turmoil and motives as opposed to an emphasis on external conditions has since been widely emulated by twentieth-century novelists.[7] Accompanying this stylistic recognition, however, arises a

more recent problem: the problems of Dostoevsky's *translations* rather than the problems of poetics. Though neither a speaker of Russian nor, clearly, a translator, Wallace nevertheless observes in "Feodor's Guide" that Dostoevsky, a very "complex and demanding author" to begin with, is "alien to us" particularly because of the "time, culture, and language" out of which he wrote (19). Professional translators of Dostoevsky echo Wallace's view. Victor Terras concurs when he points out that, because The Brothers Karamazov was written over a hundred years ago, "historical events which were making headlines then have receded into the limbo of expert historical erudition," and that the novel is "removed from the American reader of today geographically, culturally, and chronologically" (Companion ix). Terras further remarks that Dostoevsky is a "'tricky'" writer, for one, because of his "subtle allusions" that are "often outside the scope of even an educated American reader's knowledge" (ix-x). And while praising the widely used Constance Garnett-Ralph Matlaw translation, Terras notes that it has overly "'corrected'" Dostoevsky, "usually destroying a nuance in the process" (x).[8]

Dostoevsky scholar Edward Wasiolek has also criticized the Garnett-Matlaw and David Magarshack translations for "ineptly" translating such a word as nadryv, the crucial leitmotif of Book Four, as 'heartache' and 'laceration' respectively (820), and goes so far as to call this word substitution "misleading," "wholly inappropriate," and a "positive hindrance" (820). Wasiolek prefers "strain" (from the sense of, "to strain or hurt oneself by lifting something beyond one's strength") (820), while Terras agrees and adds

"rupture" to the word's meaning: "to rupture, to strain (as by lifting too heavy a load)" (Companion x, 82). Naturally, as Avsey observes (quoting George Steiner), "'there can be no exhaustive transfer from language A to language B,' 'no meshing of the nets so precise' that every aspect of sense and association can survive the transfer" (xxviiii). There is a marked shift in the ways in which Dostoevsky has been translated into English over the years. There seems to be two phases to modern Dostoevsky translations. In the 1930s to the 1950s, translators emphasized Dostoevsky's themes and philosophy (exemplified by the work of Garnett, Magarshack, and Leatherbarrow); now, connected to a better appreciation of Dostoevsky's stylistic brilliance, there is both a heightened awareness and emphasis on translating his style and sophisticated word-play (best exemplified in the recent translations of Ignat Avsey [1994] and Pevear and Volokhonsky [1990]), which emphasis on style indirectly augments the thematic and ideological power of Dostoevsky's works. Instead of a perfect translation, Avsey contends "*style*" to be "the all-important element by which an author is known to his readers" (xxviiii, author's emphasis). And Pevear, in his introduction to The Brothers Karamazov, similarly asserts that,

> perhaps from a similar mistaking of Dostoevsky's intentions, previous translators of The Brothers Karamazov into English have revised, 'corrected,' or smoothed over his idiosyncratic prose, removing much of the humor and distinctive voicing of the novel. We have made this new translation in the belief that a truer rendering of Dostoevsky's *style* would restore missing dimensions of the book. (Pevear xi, emphasis added).

Terras associates Dostoevsky's "stylistic patterns" with what Roman Jacobson has called

"the poetry of grammar" (qtd. in Terras, Companion x), in which stylistic brilliance, the actual linguistic effect, is as much a part of an author's rhetorical strategy as a novel's themes–that is, the novel's message is intertwined with the linguistic mechanisms that transmit the message. To smooth over, correct, or revise Dostoevsky's prose without first carefully regarding the elements of Dostoevsky's style is to diminish, even nullify, his work. Of Dostoevsky's stylistic ability, Avsey writes:

> he breaks every rule of grammar, syntax, and punctuation; his vocabulary is full of unusual words, to which he even adds one that he introduced into the language, stushevatsya (gently to drop out of existence); in short he stretches his own language to its uttermost limits, exploiting its potential to the full, like a good floor gymnast leaving no corner of the floorspace unused. He can throw in here and there an apparently innocuous word which will baffle experts and make native speakers scratch their heads in puzzlement when pressed for a precise meaning. (xxviiii)

Upon reading Avsey's description of Dostoevsky's ability, one recalls Frank Louis Cioffi's assessment of Wallace and Infinite Jest:

> the novel sends even the relatively well-educated to the dictionary dozens, if not scores of times . . . . Some words remain for me elusive and are probably jokes I'm not getting or neologisms of Wallace's: contuded, hulpil, egregulous, ascapartic, gumlet. This is a virtuoso vocabulist at work, performing busily, somewhat aggressively demonstrating his skill. (168)

One particular example of a translating 'correction' that utterly changes the cast of Dostoevsky's novel is the aforementioned nadryv ('to strain,' from the verb, nadryvat). Wasiolek contends that the word must be translated as 'to strain' instead of the Garnett-Matlaw version of 'lacerate' (820). For Wasiolek, Dostoevsky's "special use" of this word means "a *purposeful* hurting of oneself," and "a purposeful and pleasurable self-hurt"

(820, author's emphasis). Wasiolek finds numerous textual examples to support his translation of nadryv. He notes that Father Ferapont's "ascetic deprivations are a self-denial"–he "'hurts' himself, so that he can hurt the other monks" (820); his "ascetic deprivations are weapons of humiliation of others and exaltation of self" (820). Similarly, for Terras, to translate nadryv as "lacerate" (Garnett) or "heartache" (Magarshack) sacrifices the "psychology of the emotional or mental rupture [or 'strain']" (Companion 82), or, for Wasiolek, a "primal psychological fact," the "impulse in the hearts of men that separates one man from another, the impulse we all have to make the world over into the image of our wills" (820). For Wasiolek, this "basic psychological characteristic" works to "corrupt what seem to be good motives," and notes that Dostoevsky's mature works all focus on facets of the human self and will that "subvert[s] the best and highest motives to its own purposes" (821). A further example of the 'strain' motif and its psychological consequences is found early in the novel in the 'Women of Faith' episode (2.3.48) where Father (or 'elder') Zosima greets a woman who has recently lost her infant son. What is significant is the narrator's commentary on her inner, psychological condition:

> There is among people a silent, long-suffering grief; it withdraws into itself and is silent. But there is also a grief that is *strained*; a moment comes when it breaks through with tears, and from that moment on it pours itself out with lamentations. Especially with women. But is no easier to bear than the silent grief. Lamentations ease the heart only by *straining* and exacerbating it more and more. Such grief does not even want consolation; it is *nourished* by the sense of its unquenchableness. *Lamentations are simply the need to constantly irritate the wound.* (Brothers 2.3.48, emphasis added)

The narrator's digressive assessment of the woman's grief is arguable, of course. It is important to observe, however, that she suffers from nadryv, and covets and nourishes her grief, taking a somewhat morbid, self-sustaining pleasure in her suffering. In the next chapter, Zosima meets with "a lady of little faith," one who similarly suffers from chronic "despair" and cannot genuinely love humanity without the expectation of either reward or gratitude: "if there's anything that would immediately cool my 'active' love for mankind, that one thing is ingratitude. In short, I work for pay and demand my pay at once, that is, praise and a return of love for my love. Otherwise I'm unable to love anyone" (2.4.57). The woman goes through several rhetorical contortions to justify her position to Zosima but he, nevertheless, penetrates her insincerity, or her "*sincerity with a motive*," as it is repeatedly called in Infinite Jest (1048 n. 269, author's emphasis). What Dostoevsky and Wallace specifically highlight in their novels is the psychological strains and debilitating self-consciousness that operates within each character and that cause them to suffer greatly or increase their suffering. Infinite Jest's subtle and heavily repeated correlative of Dostoevsky's 'strain' is the leitmotif of excessive weight: "never try and pull a weight that exceeds you" (973), which advice is associated with every major character of the novel. At the monastery, the insignificant character, Kalganov, a university student who represents his class of the time, is confronted by beggars: "only Petrusha Kalganov took a ten-kopek piece from his purse and, embarrassed for some reason, hastily shoved it at one woman, saying quickly: 'To be shared equally.' None of his companions

said anything to him, so there was no point in his being embarrassed; which, when he noticed it, made him even more embarrassed" (2.1.35). Kalganov's psychological contortions are easily missed because of his insignificance as a character and because of the triviality of the narrator's anecdote, yet what is nevertheless significant is that the narrator makes such an effort to examine this typical student's modest effort at charity. He is utterly consumed by self-consciousness and his appearance before others; his sincerity in donating the ten kopeks is undermined by the narrator's observations of Kalganov's mental strain. Infinite Jest is similarly saturated with such examples of self-consciousness, informed by a fear of perception by others:

> A depressing new Sober Club in Somerville's Davis Square where A.A.s and N.A.s–mostly new and young–get heartbreakingly dolled up and dance stiffly and tremble with sober sexual anxiety and they stand around with Cokes and M.F.s telling each other how great it is to be in an intensely social venue with all your self-conscious inhibitions unmedicated and screaming in your head. The smiles alone in these places are excruciating to see. (Jest 1045 n. 246)

And Infinite Jest's example of philanthropic charity mirrors Dostoevsky's emphasis on nadryv:

> For some reason now I am thinking of the sort of philanthropist who seems humanly repellent not in spite of his charity but *because* of it: on some level you can tell that he views the recipients of his charity not as persons so much as pieces of exercise equipment on which he can develop and demonstrate his own virtue. What's creepy and repellent is that this sort of philanthropist clearly *needs* privation and suffering to continue, since it is his own virtue he prizes, instead of the ends to which the virtue is ostensibly directed. (1052 n. 269, author's emphasis)

The philanthropist's insincere charity recalls many of Dostoevsky's characters who are

either, first, insincere in their dealings with others and, second, who psychologically take an intentional pleasure in the suffering of themselves and others to uphold the psychological ideal they strain or yearn for. Again, what initially appear to be good motives are ruptured by self-interest. Essentially, the characters of both novels construct elaborate mental cages for themselves and enjoy their enslavement to their psychological suffering. It is no mistake that a recurrent leitmotif of Infinite Jest is cages. Nearly every character is trapped in "a cage of the self" (777) that results in severe depression, suicide attempts, addiction, anhedonia, and an inability "to care or choose anything outside of it" (777). Film-maker James Incandenza, himself an alcoholic and addicted to trying to fail (although he succeeds brilliantly at everything he attempts) (994 n. 34), creates five different versions of his film, "Cage" (993 n. 24); Don Gately refers to his drug addiction as "the cage" (888), and Joelle van Dyne calls free-based cocaine her "encaging god" (235); Enfield Tennis Academy student, LaMont Chu, is trapped in the cage of desiring tennis fame (388). And although Wasiolek calls Magarshack's translation of nadryv as 'heartache' "wholly inappropriate" (820), it is of interest that Wallace infuses his novel with the leitmotif of the 'heart' throughout his novel, as does Dostoevsky; nearly every character is associated with either the literal organ or the figurative sense of heart as the center of thought, feeling, and emotion (OED). In this sense, there is a continual rending, straining, or rupturing of the characters' hearts, both literally and figuratively in their communal dealings with others. What tends to occur throughout Dostoevsky's

fiction is an integral and inseparable bond between stylistic form and thematic content: "Dostoevsky's psychological mastery is very largely a function of his stylistic craftsmanship" (Terras, Companion 83). Dostoevsky's carefully chosen language and leitmotifs, his keywords and repetition, peculiar syntax and intentionally dense and, sometimes, ungrammatical usage all *reflect* the human subjects he writes about; further, the specific ways in which these characters speak, with their particularity and idiosyncratic and, often, eccentric tics betray or reveal precisely who they are well beyond the narrator's gloss. In fact, the chatty narrator of The Brothers Karamazov himself 'suffers' from the same colloquial and linguistic 'problems' which make him all too human as well. In this welter of individual voices the reader cannot find any authoritative voice to ground the novel's dense information–there is no 'authority' because all the voices are uniquely and individually *authentic* as the many characters speak themselves. Readers are forced to ground their perceptions and judgements through comparisons of the competing versions of the many characters' voices. It is impossible to appreciate Dostoevsky's significance, his novelistic achievement, his humor, and his significant psychological and ideological themes without a translation that adheres to the spirit of his stylistic and linguistic usage; without such a translation, all that is rendered for the contemporary reader is the plot and themes, and, because Dostoevsky's plot is so meticulously yoked to language usage and poetics, it is insufficient to appreciate Dostoevsky on his own, particularly for the contemporary American reader.

While Terras considers the Garnett-Matlaw translation to be an "admirable achievement," it is, nevertheless, he writes, "based on what I believe to be a flawed notion of what Dostoevsky was trying to do" (Companion x). For Terras, "Dostoevsky was trying to create an individualized 'amateur' narrator, remarkable more for a certain ingenuous bonhomie and shrewd common sense than for sound logic, an elegant style, or even correct grammar" (x). Richard Pevear, in his insightful introduction to his own translation, asserts that The Brothers Karamazov is "already charged with dramatic potential" as an intense account of a murder, its investigation, and trial of an innocent man, but which Dostoevsky "enhances by his methods of composition" (xiv). For 'methods of composition' we may substitute 'style,' and it is in style that these two novels most strikingly resemble each other. There are, of course, the more apparent plot, character, and leitmotif congruities between the two novels as well. Orin Incandenza, as a solipsistic sensualist, is a contemporary American Dmitri Karamazov, and is symbolically associated with spiders and cockroaches throughout (Jest 45), while Dmitri considers himself an "insect" (3.4.109), "a cockroach" (3.11.153), "bitten by a spider" (3.4.113), suffering from an "insect sensuality" (109): "he's a sensualist. That is his definition, and his whole inner essence" (2.7.79). Both Wallace and Dostoevsky use the symbol of the spider throughout: for Wallace, the spider is mainly associated with the disease of addiction (Jest 357), whereas for Dostoevsky the spider is the "image for absolute evil" (Frank, Ordeal 148). Orin, a professional football punter, recalls Dmitri most acutely as a

sensualist, however, and he spends all his idle time seducing young mothers–a neurotic obsession resulting from the implied incestuous relationship between him and his mother, Avril, and the fact that his mother is a notorious philanderer; his need is both to wound each "Subject" through the action of love and destroy the subjects' familial relationships. Orin's attention to each 'subject' is lavish, and he is considered to be an artful and considerate lover–never thinking of himself, although this is part of the ruse of his seduction, his "sincerity with a motive." With each new subject, Orin falls deeper into the abyss of the solipsistic self:

> They have shifted into sexual mode. Her lids flutter; his close. There's a concentrated tactile languor. She is left-handed. It is not about consolation. They start the thing with each other's buttons. It is not about conquest or forced capture. It is not about glands or instincts or the split-second shiver and clench of leaving yourself; nor about love or about whose love you deep-down desire, by whom you feel betrayed. Not and never love, which kills what needs it. It feels to the punter rather to be about hope, an immense, wide-as-the-sky hope of finding a something in each Subject's fluttering face, a something the same that will propitiate hope, somehow, pay its tribute, the need to be assured that for a moment he *has* her, now has *won* her as if from someone or something else, something other than he, but that he *has* her and is what she sees and all she sees, that it is not conquest but surrender, that he is both offense and defense and she neither, nothing but this one second's love of her, *of*-her, spinning as it arcs his way, not his but *her* love, that he has *it*, this love (his shirt off now, in the mirror), that for one second she loves him too much to stand it, that she *must* (she feels) have him, *must* take him inside or else dissolve into worse than nothing; that all else is gone: that her sense of humor is gone, her petty griefs, triumphs, memories, hands, career, betrayals, the deaths of pets–that there is now inside of her a vividness vacuumed of all but his name: O., *O.* That he is the One.
>
> (This is why, maybe, one Subject is never enough, why hand after hand must descend to pull him back from the endless fall. For were there for him just one, now, special and only, the One would be not he or she but

> what was between them, the obliterating trinity of You and I into We. Orin felt that once and has never recovered, and will never again.)
>
> And about contempt, it is about a kind of hatred, too, along with the hope and need. Because he needs them, needs her, because he needs her he fears her and so hates her a little, hates all of them, a hatred that comes out disguised as a contempt he disguises in the tender attention with which he does the thing with her buttons, touches the blouse as if it too were part of her, and him. As if it could feel. They have stripped each other neatly. Her mouth is glued to his mouth; she is his breath, his eyes shut against the sight of hers. (Jest 566-567, author's emphasis)

I quote this passage at length because Wallace's fiction is so densely packed with recurrent key words and leitmotifs that to quote snippets is to lose the force of an episode's linguistic power and resonance; Wallace's prose has an accumulating effect that does not lend itself to the critic's propensity to sparse quotation. On one level, the passage is significant for the appearance of key words that are reflected in other characters' thoughts and dialogue throughout the rest of the novel which is a strong feature of The Brothers Karamazov. And significant words from this passage are repeated and connect to the earlier mentioned ones; Wallace's prose constantly circles back to its origin in microcosmic passages, as here, just as they do in the macrocosm of the novel as a whole. "Left-handed" is keyed to the omnipresent sinister/sinistral motif of the novel (discussed in Part Two); "betrayed" and "betrayals" connect to Orin's sense that he has been betrayed by his mother (incest) and father (through the conflict over Joelle van Dyne). The connection of "sky" with "hope" is an ongoing leitmotif, and Wallace's narrator goes to elaborate lengths to emphasize that the sky is blue throughout the novel, which tends to act as a modest argument against solipsism–that the sky is universally blue

for all, and which trivial repetition serves to undermine what Wallace calls the "solipsistic conceits" of private language and private color theories ("Tense Present" 47 n. 23). In The Brothers Karamazov, Ivan, who represents the chilly, intellectual solipsism of his age, in his exchange with Alyosha thinks "though I do not believe in the order of things, still . . . the blue sky is dear to me" (5.3.230). Joseph Frank calls Ivan's brief "irrational love" an "understanding" that is "possible only when the ego is taken beyond itself" (Mantle 602), something he never achieves. "Arcs" are linked to the meniscus symbols and concave/convex forms throughout; the twice-mentioned "mirror" here conjoins a series of the novel's motifs of lenses, refractions, reflections, realism, and, again, solipsism; "death of pets" connects the episode where Orin inadvertently kills his mother's dog, "S. Johnson" (771); "Forced capture," "leaving yourself," "pay its tribute," are all linked to the motif of psychological cages. "Somehow" and "maybe" suggest the narrator's uncertainty, or, better, Dostoevskyean "hedged assertions" (Pevear xv). Alliteration ("fluttering face," "deep-down desire," "split-second shiver," and "vividness vacuumed") and alliteration and repetition abound ("and is what *she sees* and all *she sees*"), not to mention this episode's key words, "someone" and "something," both of which are linked to the other episodes on belief (79-85); the transition from "something" and "somehow" and "someone," which signify hope and belief, to "neither" and "nothing" of successive lines signify Orin's emptiness. The very Dostoevskyean "as if" (for example, "he was as if in a frenzy") (Karamazov 4.6.200) appears three times. The words "hatred" and "need"

meticulously parallel each other–contrast or match, even–in their equal, four-times repetition. There are three parenthetical asides: the second one superfluous, "(she feels)," while the third one is a paragraph. This type of re-enforced writing, of obsessively linking motifs through specific word repetition and strategic stylistics is reminiscent of Dostoevsky's own stylistics. Terras observes that Dostoevsky's "stylistic effects" include "emphatic repetition and parallelism, 'key words,' accumulation of modal expressions, paradox, and catachresis" and numerous "verbal leitmotifs and symbols" (Companion x). Pevear similarly argues that "all the oddities of [Dostoevsky's] prose are deliberate; they are a sort of 'learned ignorance,' a willed imperfection of artistic means, that is essential to his vision" (xv). The Brothers Karamazov's narrator has a unique "stylistic complex" (Pevear xv) and uses "hedged assertions" (xv) ("it is also true, perhaps . . ." and "I do not know the details but have only heard that, it seems . . .") (Karamazov 1.5.29; 1.3.13), frantic repetition of the ubiquitous key words ("almost," "even," "suddenly," "some," "somewhat," "certain," "our," and "also") and expressions ("as if," "as it were," "almost always," "and so on and so forth"), parenthetical intrusions–"(so they say at least)" and "(a fact worth noting)" (1.3.15; 1.3.13). At times, the narrator will latch onto a specific word and use it repeatedly for only a sentence or even a page, as in this example:

> And therefore, in a nervous and *certainly also* mentally ill woman, there *always occurred* (and had to *occur*), at the moment of her bowing before the chalice, an inevitable shock, *as it were*, to her whole body, a shock provoked by expectation of the inevitable miracle of healing and by the most complete faith that it would *occur*. And it would *occur*, even if only for a moment. (2.3.46, emphasis added)

These two sentences are exemplars of the narrator's style in The Brothers Karamazov. The word "occur" appears four times; "inevitable," "shock," and "moment" are all repeated; the parenthetical aside and breezy "as it were" are both particular to the narrator as is his dense use of the trademark words, "certainly," "also," "always," and "even." He is further generally repetitive: "yet he himself seemed to be waiting for *something*, and watched intently, *as if* still trying to understand *something*, *as if* still not comprehending *something*" (2.6.73, emphasis added). Pevear concurs with Terras when he claims that the narrator is "an amateur writer," and as "more of a talker than a writer, he has his own artistry: he often uses internal rhyme or assonance . . . and sometimes allows himself triple alliterations" (Pevear xv): "'the unworthy one will disappear down his back lane–his dirty back lane, his beloved, his befitting back lane'" (3.5.117). This sentence represents a unique example of repetition, two separate alliterations, and one triple alliteration (which also recalls Hopkins's stylistics). The latter is spoken, interestingly enough, by Dmitri, who confesses to his younger brother Alyosha in a breathless monologue; and it is further interesting to note that the 'love' scene quoted above from Infinite Jest uses a similar, complicated pacing of language, varying from light to heavy subordination, short sentences to an extremely long, convoluted middle one, which emphasizes both the passion and lust that consumes Orin in his destructive self-love. Orin shares a further similarity with the sensualist Dmitri; both love out of a type of hatred: "the kind of hatred that is only a hair's breadth from love" (3.4.114). Toward the

end of the novel, Dmitri remarks to Katerina Ivanovna, "I loved you even as I hated you" (12.5.689). Finally, what is significant about Orin's solipsistic love is the narrator's commentary regarding it during the hand-model's seduction. The narrator's reflection of Orin's views recalls one of Wallace's philosophical meditations from the Dostoevsky essay: "If I'm lonely, empty inside, everybody outside me is potential relief: I need them. But is it possible to love what you need? Does love have to be voluntary to be love?" ("Feodor's Guide" 21). Of love, the narrator comments that love "kills what *needs* it" (Jest 566, emphasis added), and adds the comment–a comment that indirectly answers Wallace's essay's speculation–that love destroys the individual's self-centered need, the desire for, and the individual conception of self-interest and self-gain, that legitimate love is, indeed, "obliterating" as it paradoxically negates the individual "You and I" and transforms them into the solipsism-remedying "We" (Jest 567). "Need" is specifically equated with "hate" both stylistically, in its parallel placement of the repeated words "hatred" and "need" (567), and in the actual action that Orin engages in–he uses the actions of love for himself only, which is simply a guise for contempt for and hatred of others. And although the narrator is meticulously descriptive and highly conscious of word-choice, placement, and poetic devices in this set-piece, he is also strangely non-descriptive when Orin "does the thing with her buttons" as though to convey that Orin's attentions are habitual and devoid of emotion and sincerity–he merely performs a function that is negated by its actant's motives and thus culminates in nothing: "O., *O"* (566). In this sense, the

narration carefully reflects both the action and the psychological state of the participants; the narrator's presence and stylistics are highly revealing of the characters. The culmination is that they "have stripped each other" of their clothing only, but remain apart from each other spiritually; they are stripped and alone. All of which recalls The Brothers Karamazov's Zosima's teaching that Hell is "the suffering of no longer being able to love" (6.3.322), which, in Infinite Jest recalls both a symbol of hell (tennis ball vacuum) and the narrator's later discussion of anhedonia. In this sense, the narrator's strategic, stylistic realization of the narrative impacts the moral message–the "moral thesis" (Jest 742), as one of Incandenza's films is said to have–of the novel, something that Wallace knows that Dostoevsky was ever and only concerned with.

There are other connections between the two novels that emphasize that Wallace has endeavored to rewrite The Brothers Karamazov in a contemporary American idiom. First and foremost, The Brothers Karmazov examines father-son relationships, while Infinite Jest also, among many other things, explores the disastrous consequences of three generations of fathers on the Incandenza brothers, Orin, Mario, and Hal. Both fathers, James Incandenza and Fyodor Karamazov, are drunks; and both compete with their eldest sons for the affections of a woman: Incandenza and Orin for Joelle van Dyne and Karamazov and Dmitri for Grushenka. Dostoevsky once wrote that in the four Karamazovs could be obtained "a picture of our contemporary reality, our contemporary educated Russia" (qtd. in Frank, Mantle 690); similarly, the Incandenzas are constructed

to be representative, in their various interests, levels of education, and life philosophies, of millennial America. Dostoevsky's narrator breaks up his narrative to heighten the suspense. Book eight, chapter six ends with investigator Pyotr Ilyich knocking at Grushenka's door–for three chapters, as Frank remarks, "frozen like a character from Tristram Shandy" (Mantle 651); similarly, Infinite Jest's narrator, in classic Dostoevsky fashion, abandons Gately after he is shot for over two hundred pages before returning to him and enlightening the reader that Gately has tenuously survived (601, 809). Characters from both novels are doubled or mirror each other, specifically in Infinite Jest where the variations on names emphasizes the point: succeeding tennis academy headmaster, Charles Tavis, has a variety of cognomens, but is most commonly referred to as C.T. which reflects former halfway-house staffer, Calvin Thrust; Don Gately is reflected in halfway house resident Doony Glynn; Joelle van Dyne's radio persona, Madame Psychosis, is reflected in Gately's step-father, known only as the M.P. after his military-service assignment, and the deadly street psychedelic DMZ is also known as "Madame Psychosis" (170), among many others.[9] Dostoevsky uses color symbolism throughout, and Infinite Jest repeats the colors blue and red with an obsessive frequency. Both novels also rely on the repetitive use of other symbols, such as spiders and the heart, as already mentioned.

Terras accurately observes that the "inserted anecdote is a special feature of The Brothers Karamazov" (Companion 103), and Pevear rightly asserts that Dostoevsky's

characters

> are not only speakers; most of them are also writers: they write letters, articles, poems, pamphlets, tracts, memoirs, suicide notes . . . . Words form an element between matter and spirit in which people live and move each other. Words spoken at one point are repeated later by other speakers, as recollections or unconscious echoes. (xvii)

Infinite Jest similarly revels in the written and spoken word in an array of genres and styles: letters (663-665, 1006 n. 110, 1047-1052 n. 269); a transcript of a puppet-film of government officials (385-386); email (139-140); a filmography (985 n. 24); tattoos (207-211); essays (138-140); a curriculum vitae (227); screenplays (172-176); half-way house transcripts (176-181); dictionary definitions (17, 900); a table of active terrorist groups (144); a calendar of "subsidized time" (223); a magazine article (142); an examination question (307-308); signs (518, 720, 952); slogans and mottoes (81, 513); a memoir chapter (491-503); bumper-stickers (891); government transcripts (876-883); T-shirt slogans (128, 156); mathematical equations and tables (330, 1023-1024 n. 123); a magazine interview transcript (1038 n. 234); newspaper headlines (438); spy-interrogation transcripts (787-795, 938-941); telephone conversations (242-258); intertextual quotation from Joyce's Ulysses (112, 605), Burgess's A Clockwork Orange (118) to William James (1053 n. 280), Don DeLillo, and Harold Bloom (911, 1077 n. 366) and beyond; and plagiarized academic articles (1056 n. 304) all merge to make this novel a celebration of the written word in a massive hybrid or collage of speakers' voices. As with The Brothers Karamazov, specific words and phrases are spoken and recalled by

other, unrelated characters. In Infinite Jest the wraith "pirouettes" before the hospitalized Gately and inserts the word ("*PIROUETTE*") (Jest 832, author's emphasis and caps) into Gately's mind during this significant episode; the word further repeatedly emerges throughout the novel in other characters' dialogue, description, and thoughts (84, 261, 459, 613, 840, and et cetera). Similar descriptions–"pubic spiral of pale blue smoke" (239) and "a little pubic curl of smoke" (613)–for different characters' actions emphasize the spoken quality of the narration, and the narrator's aspiration to poetic turns of phrase ("Bored-eyed guys in white cotton blew blue bubbles and loaded her in the back of a leisurely sirenless ambulance") (906) as well as his limited range and repetition. Mario's unresolved illegitimacy reflects the unsolved illegitimacy of Smerdyakov. The Brothers Karamazov is, in Terras's words, a "novel of suspense" (Companion 107) as it gradually builds to its monumental conclusion and leaves the reader speculating about what will happen to the brothers: "the fate of the three Karamazov brothers is left hanging in the balance as the novel ends" (109), whereas in Infinite Jest readers must speculate about the fate of Don Gately and Hal Incandenza, whether the deadly samizdat is recovered by terrorists or government agents, or whether the entire novel is itself a jest and whether Gately's dream-hallucination about exhuming James Incandenza's grave is to be taken as foreshadowing or delusive. Chronology in both novels is compressed and expansive or vague, fragmented, and certainly non-linear. This chronological manipulation has become such a mainstay in contemporary fiction that mentioning it here may not seem

particularly noteworthy, but joined with the other similarities between the two novels, and noting that both novels are future-oriented, as though toward an end that is also a new beginning, makes chronological features more salient. Enfield Tennis Academy student LaMont Chu reflects the monastic Rakitin in social ambition; both hunger for advancement. Chu has "an increasingly crippling obsession with tennis fame" and aspires to "the Show" of professional tennis (Jest 388), and Rakitin is "an insignificant person," but has a "restless and covetous heart"–"he knew for certain that he would become a figure of some sort" (2.8.85), an "influential figure" according to the Avsey translation (107). In the larger construction of both novels two groups are featured prominently and reflect each other: Ennet House, the alcohol and narcotics halfway house, resembles Dostoevsky's monastery; both 'houses' rely on similar beliefs in a higher power, and both contain residents of varying commitment. Significantly, Wallace's original manuscript version of Infinite Jest maintains that Ennet House "smells like God" (qtd. in Moore 14) instead of the novel's "smelled like an ashtray" (Jest 591), which emphasizes that the rehabilitation center is a place of retreat from the maximally ironic culture that surrounds it. The Alyosha-like character, Mario, from his perspective, "felt good both times in Ennet's House [sic] because it's very real; people are crying and making noise and getting less unhappy, and once he heard somebody say *God* with a straight face and nobody looked at them or looked down or smiled in any sort of way" (591, author's emphasis). Joseph Frank writes that the depiction of the child Ilyusha and his classmates allowed

"Dostoevsky to fulfill his long-cherished desire to depict the relation between a charismatic Christian figure and a group of children" (Mantle 599), which Wallace reflects with the children of E.T.A.; Infinite Jest's Eschaton debacle, the nuclear analog game played on a tennis court (Jest 321-342), in which nearly every student is severely injured, reflects Ilyusha's stone-throwing fight with his classmates (4.3.176-180). In his notebooks, Dostoevsky expressed a desire to write "a novel about children . . . with a boy hero" (qtd. in Terras, Companion 12), which was accomplished in The Brothers Karamazov. Similarly, Infinite Jest can also be said to be a novel about children with a boy hero: on the surface, there is the obvious connection to the children of E.T.A.; below this is the ramification that many of the characters are emotionally infantile and remain in a "spiritual puberty" (694). In a long segue on ironic art and depression (694-695), the narrator remarks that the ubiquitous "weary cynicism" of millennial America is essentially a mask to cover "gooey sentiment and unsophisticated naïveté," the "last true terrible sin in the theology of millennial America" (694). Through Hal, the narrator remarks, however, that "what passes for hip cynical transcendence of sentiment is really some kind of fear of being really human, since to be really human . . . is probably . . . to be in some basic interior way forever infantile" (694-695). Further, Don Gately, who turns out to be the novel's unlikely hero, is, in the eyes of Mario (the other possible hero-candidate), a "square-headed boy" and a "slow boy over a class theme at Ringe and Latin special" (593). According to Terras, "the psychology of children is as complex as that of adults

and that children are a capable of great good and great evil as any adult–reappears in The Brothers Karamazov" (Companion 12), which emphasizes both novels' detailed treatment of children. The shabbily clad but highly realistic wraith that presents himself to Don Gately in the hospital clearly recalls Ivan's hallucinatory vision of a similarly shabbily clad devil (11.9.634-650). Wallace borrows subtle motifs and transplants them into his novel, like the thrice-mentioned poster of Fritz Lang directing his film, Metropolis (193, 951, 1078 n. 381), which, strangely, continues to hang in the Headmaster's House long after Incandenza's death; the name of the tavern where Dmitri humiliates Captain Snegiryov, is the "Metropolis" (4.6.201). Structurally, both novels are mise en abyme: Infinite Jest contains five versions of Incandenza's film, "Infinite Jest" (the lethal samizdat), and The Brothers Karamazov contains a "hagiographic biography" of Father Zosima written by Alyosha which, according to Frank, "indicates the paths that all (including Ivan) will take in the remainder of the book to refute his Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" (628).

Mario Incandenza resembles Alyosha Karamazov in a number of thematically important ways, but particularly mirrors Alyosha in matters of belief. Because of Mario's physical deformities and limitations (Jest 79, 312-317, 589) he is foremost "a born listener" (80), and is the type of person with whom all the characters speak sincerely: "bullshit often tends to drop away around damaged listeners, deep beliefs revealed, diary-type private reveries indulged out loud" (80). He is also the only character in the novel who is neither cynical nor ironic, who "doesn't lie" (249), is sincerely joyful (85), and

displays a genuine charity toward all other characters (772, 971), much like the patient, loving, and ever-listening Alyosha. Alyosha is ambiguously described at times as "slow [and] underdeveloped" (1.4.26), a "sickly, ecstatic, poorly developed person . . . a meager, emaciated little fellow" (25), "very strange" (1.3.18), a "holy fool" (21), a "novice" (18), who always tells the truth (2.7.78-79), wears "a foolish grin" (82), and is a "lover of mankind" (18). Both, after a fashion, are Dostoevskyean 'idiots,' and both are religiously oriented: Mario's "nighttime prayers take almost an hour and sometimes more and are not a chore. He doesn't kneel; it's more like a conversation" (Jest 590) Mario, in addition to his physical limitations, is further academically impoverished (317), though is somehow also strangely considered the "family's real prodigy, an in-bent savant-type genius" (317). He further exhibits Alyosha's civility in his continual smiling and features, among his idiosyncratic gestures, a Dostoevskean "extra-inclined half-bow" (316, 317) which he deploys in response to "citizens' kindness and cruelty" alike (316). That Wallace has written Mario to be an Alyosha figure is best viewed in the narrator's anecdote regarding Head Trainer Barry Loach (967-971). The anecdote is a digression branching off from the narrator's description of the E.T.A. students' pre-match preparations in which Barry Loach moves about taping ankles and caring for various tennis ailments. The narrative style of the anecdote and its origins are both taken from Dostoevsky. The narrator twice comments that he will tell the anecdote "in outline form" (Jest 967) and "in outline, it eventually boiled down to this" only (969), yet amusingly takes five pages to 'outline'

Loach's history while abandoning the original narrative thread that originally permitted the Loach digression, which recalls Dostoevsky's narrator's style. In book three, chapter one, the narrator, in discussing Fyodor Karamazov's servants, claims to "have already said enough, however, about Grigory" (92), yet devotes the entire ensuing episode to Grigory, nevertheless. The Loach anecdote, moreover, is intertextually borrowed from the significant "Rebellion" chapter of The Brothers Karamazov where the brothers Ivan and Alyosha reacquaint themselves (5.4.236-246) and that introduces the famous Grand Inquisitor chapter (5.5.246-264). "Rebellion" opens with Ivan's admission that he cannot understand "how it's possible to love one's neighbors" (236) and then relates an anecdote about a saint who embraces and cares for a "a hungry and frozen passerby" who had "asked to be made warm" even though the ragged man was "foul and festering with some terrible disease" (236-237); the saint lies down with him, embraces him, and even breathes into his mouth (236) and takes the man's filth upon himself. The anecdote emphasizes the saint's physical contact with the foul and diseased man. Similarly, in Infinite Jest, Barry Loach is the youngest son in a staunch Roman Catholic family; the mother's "fervent wish" is that one of her children "enter the R.C. clergy" (967). Through a series of mishaps the last brother before Barry himself enters a Jesuit seminary, to the relief of Barry who is studying for a career in "the liniment-and-adhesive ministry of professional athletic training" (967). The elder brother, however, suffers "a sudden and dire spiritual decline" in which his "basic faith in the innate indwelling goodness of men"

withers, causing "a black misanthropic spiritual outlook" (967-968). A "series of personal interviews" between the brothers ensue in which Barry tries to restore the brother's lost faith. The brother, however, "smile[s] sardonically" at Loach's efforts, knowing that Loach's self-interest partially motivates his efforts at restoring the brother's faith:

> but he was not only desperate to preserve his mother's dream and his own indirectly athletic ambitions at the same time, he was actually rather a spiritually upbeat guy who just didn't buy the brother's sudden despair at the apparent absence of compassion and warmth in God's supposed self-mimetic and divine creation, and he managed to engage the brother in some rather heated and high-level debates on spirituality and the soul's potential, not that much unlike Alyosha and Ivan's conversations in the good old Brothers K., though probably not nearly as erudite and literary, and nothing from the older brother even approaching the carcinogenic acerbity of Ivan's Grand Inquisitor scenario. (968-969)

Significantly, the narrator here somewhat self-reflexively, yet indirectly, mentions the very passage from which he has culled this anecdote and refashioned it–from the discussions between Alyosha and Ivan prior to and including the Grand Inquisitor chapter. The narrator takes Dostoevsky's narrator's own anecdote, a long discourse on belief, from the mouth of Ivan and uses it as the basis of Infinite Jest's own disquisition on belief and the "perfectibility of man" (968). Infinite Jest's amateur narrator draws attention to his status as such by even comparing his anecdote with The Brothers Karamazov; he further uses a peculiar archaism to describe the outcome for the older brother: "and then what happened with the spiritually infirm older brother and *whither* he fared and what happens with his vocation never gets resolved" (970, emphasis added). The narrator is a peculiar hybrid of complex vocabulist and Shakespearean Dogberry; he tells a remarkable story,

but frequently falters with malapropisms which seem to signify that the novel is intended to be taken as *spoken* and that the narrator gains and loses narrative momentum as he proceeds. His use of "whither he fared" is, first, grammatically wrong. And 'whither' immediately recalls 'wither' in regard to the brother's spiritual decline, and although his final outcome is unstated, the association with 'wither' implies that he continues to decline. The brothers resolve the dispute through a "Challenge" (970) in which Barry dresses himself in ragged attire, does not shower, and places himself alongside Boston's downtrodden; he is only to ask people "just to touch him. Viz. extend some basic human warmth and contact" (969); if he is successful then the older brother will have his faith in humankind rekindled. The result is that passersby take Loach's request as panhandler's argot and give him money instead of honoring his request; because of his success at receiving donations, the other panhandlers complicate matters by adopting his phrase. Eventually, Loach himself spiritually declines, his "own soul began to sprout little fungal patches of necrotic rot" (970), and becomes one with the downtrodden street people until Mario Incandenza happens to pass by and shake "Loach's own fuliginous hand" which "led through a convoluted but kind of heartwarming and faith-reaffirming series of circumstances to B. Loach, even w/o an official B.A., being given an Asst. Trainer's job at E.T.A." (971). In a complex intertextual twist the Alyosha-figure, Mario (as saint), performs the crucial action that redeems Barry Loach, who is indirectly himself, a figure from Ivan's own evocation (diseased man), and the spiritually infirm older brother, whose

status is suspended recalls Ivan whose status remains unclear at the conclusion of The Brothers Karamazov.

The significant and often-repeated refrain of nihilistic unbelief, "everything is permitted" (5.5.263, 11.9.649), that emerges at the end of the Grand Inquisitor chapter is reflected in the many dialogues between Infinite Jest's spies, Hugh Steeply and Rémy Marathe, in their discourse on American happiness, freedom and free will, and the "confusion of permissions" (Jest 320) that results from the contemporary American "*Anything is going*" attitude (320, author's emphasis and syntax), the reliance on "rational principles alone (then 'anything goes') (Avsey xxiii). Ivan's "Euclidian" conception of the world–he has as he says, "a Euclidian mind, an earthly mind" (5.3.235)–as opposed to the non-Euclidian (or spiritual) mind, indicates the limits of his belief; he cannot reconcile the problem of human suffering, particularly of children, that would enable a non-Euclidian belief system (5.3.235). As a novel devoted, in part, to tennis, the appearance of Euclidian formulations in Infinite Jest is unsurprising, yet there remains a certain Dostoevskean Euclidian subtext to the novel that implies an intertextual echo of Ivan's 'geometric' world-view. Ennet House resident Doony Glynn hallucinates a "flat square coldly Euclidian grid" of the sky "instead of a kindly curved blue dome" for "several subsequent weeks" after ingesting the famous hallucinogen, DMZ (542). On the next page, the narrator interpolates that "Glynn hadn't come right out and said *Euclidian*" (543, author's emphasis), emphasizing through repetition the

significance of the term. That the narrator repeatedly mentions that certain words are his own instead of the actual characters' themselves emphasizes his narrative control, as with the narrator of Dostoevsky's novel; for example, "a lot of these are his own terms" (Jest 590) and "(N.B. The words are my own; the doctor expressed himself in a very learned and special language)" (Karamazov 12.3.672). E.T.A. students have for required reading E.A. Abbott's Flatland (1884), a Victorian mathematical novel about a two-dimensional land populated by various geometrical-shape beings (Jest 282); Orin Incandenza is compared by his uncle Charles Tavis to "a 2-D cutout image of a person [rather] than a bona fide person" (286). In a section on types of depression and "anhedonia"–the term borrowed from William James's The Varieties of Religious Experience (1902) (125)–the narrator gives an example: "the devoted wife and mother finds the thought of her family about as moving, all of a sudden, as a theorem of Euclid" (692). The narrator here goes so far as to quote James who himself quotes a Professor Ribot, who coined the term anhedonia: "the thought of his house, of his home, of his wife, and of his absent children moved him as little . . . as a theorem of Euclid" (qtd. in James 125). That the narrator is intent on emphasizing James's passage and anhedonia as a Euclidian (earthly, unspiritual orientation) is demonstrated by his own citation in one of the novel's many endnotes (1053 n. 280). The incredibly depressed Hal "finds terms like *joie* and *value* to be like so many variables in rarified equations" (694, author's emphasis). The implication of these Euclidian associations is that most of the characters of Infinite Jest have a Ivanesque

Euclidian belief system. They are 'earthbound,' in a "spiritual torpor" (692), spiritually dead, and ignore the spiritual aspects of their lives, the potential for belief in something greater than themselves–that is, they have no belief in anything beyond the "hot narrow imperatives of the Self" (82), which maintains their interactions with others as merely cold intersections with other geometrical beings as in Abbott's Flatland. The continual conflict between reason and faith that characterizes much of The Brothers Karamazov, thus, also informs Infinite Jest but in a modified, contemporary idiom. Infinite Jest substitutes The Brothers Karamazov's religious orthodoxy and nihilism for the more acute problems of millennial American (dis)belief: a jaded, ironic perspective and solipsistic pursuit of individual 'happiness':

> except [coach] Schtitt says *Ach*, but who can imagine this training serving its purpose in an experialist and waste-exporting nation that's forgotten privation and hardship and the discipline which hardship teaches by requiring? A U.S. of modern A. where the State is not a team or code, but a sort of sloppy *intersection* of desires and fears, where the only public consensus a boy must surrender to is the acknowledged primacy of *straight-line* pursuing this *flat* and short-sighted idea of personal happiness. (83, emphasis added)

Coach Schtitt's conception of the contemporary American situation is chillingly Euclidian with its cold intersections, straight and flat pursuits that lead only to a lonely and ultimately illusive conception of happiness: "the happy pleasure of the person alone" (83). For coach Schtitt there must be a *something* to believe in beyond the base desires of the individual subject: "any something. The *what*: this is more unimportant than that there is *something*" (83, author's emphasis), which recalls Wallace's remark that there must be

something–regardless of *what* it is precisely–external to the interests of the immediate subject: "I absolutely believe in something, even though I don't know what it is" ("1458 Words" 42). The Québécois spy Marathe admonishes Steeply, "choose with care. Love of your nation, your country and people, it enlarges the heart. Something bigger than the self" (107). Without belief in something–even now-quaint ideals like fidelity and honor–the implication is that Infinite Jest's characters are submerged in a rational-nihilistic existence that eschews belief in anything but the pursuit of narrow self-interest: "nothing to contain and give the meaning. Lonely" (83)–very much akin to The Brothers Karamazov's cooly rational and spiritually vacant Ivan who strategically pursues his own course and later suffers a mental collapse as a consequence of his spiritual disintegration.

* * *

4. Dream Duty

"But isn't it all the same to you and me whether it's qui pro quo ['one for another,' i.e. 'mistaken identity'] or boundless fantasy?" (Karamazov 5.5.250).

"Some of the memories have to be confabulated or dreamed" (Jest 951).

"We thereby enter the realm of novels" (Karamazov 12.11.730).

At the end of the famous "Grand Inquisitor" episode, in which Ivan relates a "poem" of his own devising in which Christ returns to earth at the time of the Spanish Inquisition and is again humiliated and cast out, Alyosha makes a modest observation

regarding his brother:

> this strange little observation flashed like an arrow through the sad mind of Alyosha, sad and sorrowful at that moment. He waited a minute, looking after his brother. For some reason he suddenly noticed that his brother Ivan somehow swayed as he walked, and that his right shoulder, seen from behind, appeared *lower than his left*. He had never noticed it before. (5.5.264, emphasis added)

Joseph Frank calls this a "subtly discordant note" and concedes that this could be an "optical illusion" on Alyosha's part (Mantle 618), but also notes that, according to traditional "folk beliefs," the "devil is associated with the left side," and that Ivan is, thus, associated with the "the dread spirit" he has "just evoked so approvingly in his Legend" (618). Ivan will later, during Dmitri's trial, somewhat unwittingly identify himself with "folk custom" (12.5.685), emphasizing his sinistral link with the devil. This subtle emphasis on Ivan's left side recalls the inordinate emphasis Infinite Jest places on left-handed–or "*SINISTRAL*" (832, author's emphasis and caps)–things, as discussed in Part Two. Frank further contends that "Ivan's influence is shown to have been harmful even on the level of the plot action" (618) as Alyosha suddenly recalls–and "several times, later in his life, in great perplexity, he wondered" (Karamazov 264)–how he could "so completely forget about his brother Dmitri" when he had "resolved that morning, only a few hours earlier, that he must find him, and would not leave until he did" (264). What is implied here is a certain narratorial 'devilry' on the part of the chatty and playful narrator in which the sinistral emphasis actually alters the course of the narration: the folk belief alters Alyosha's crucial action which potentially leads to the novel's disastrous

conclusion as Alyosha is not present with Dmitri who is soon to be accused of murder. What is further significant is the ways in which Alyosha–the narrator's "hero" (3) and, thus, favorite–becomes aware of circumstances and, consequently, acts and speaks. The narrator goes to great lengths to emphasize that Alyosha's thoughts are instantaneous, do not emerge from previous thinking, as though they are planted or embedded into his consciousness: "this strange little observation flashed like an arrow through the sad mind of Alyosha" and "for some reason he suddenly noticed" (264) and "Alyosha suddenly had *a flash of recollection* that the day before, when he had left his brother and gone out of the gazebo, he had seen, or *there flashed before him*, as it were, *to the left*, near the fence, a low, old green garden bench among the bushes" (5.2.223, emphasis added). He is frequently baffled and puzzled about how he arrived at these, quite often, peculiar thoughts which tend to have a significant impact on the novel's events: "'Pater Seraphicus–he got that name from somewhere–but where?' *flashed* through Alyosha's mind" (264, emphasis added). The significance here–'Pater Seraphicus' ('Seraphic Father') is an allusion to Goethe's Faust (2.5.11918-25) (Pevear 787 n. 37)–is that the sudden introjection of thoughts into Alyosha's mind draws attention to the narrator, who inserts these random thoughts that significantly alter the plot, or *direct* it. Further, Ivan, just before taking his leave of Alyosha, states, "and now you go right, I'll go left" (264), which emphasizes Ivan's atheistic inclination to the devil–and foreshadows his hallucination of the devil later in book eleven, chapter nine. Pevear, in his notes to his

translation of The Brothers Karamazov, observes that "the left is the 'sinister' side, associated with the devil, especially in depictions of the Last Judgment" (787 n. 36). Ivan accentuates his left shoulder; Captain Snegiryov's "mouth became twisted to the left side, his left eye squinted," emphasizing the wretched conditions that he and his family live in and foreshadowing his dramatic rejection of Ivanovna's gift (4.7.211); Smerdyakov has a "squinting left eye" that is synonymous with his smirking (5.6.267, 268). Earlier, during Alyosha's visit to Captain Snegiryov's wretched cottage, the impoverished cottage is described particularly with "the left" side mentioned six times (4.6.197-198) which emphasizes Alyosha's perspective of the cottage, for we see it from his view, as "the depths" (198) for he is called an "angel" throughout the novel, one that delivers messages ("angelos, a messenger") (Pevear xviii); in this regard, Alyosha can be said to be plumbing the depths of human misery, his specific role. Alyosha has been sent by Katerina Ivanova with two hundred roubles for Snegiryov as compensation for Dmitri's ruthless humiliating of Snegiryov by pulling his beard and beating him. Alyosha's perspective of Captain Snegiryov is particularly instructive in discussing the narrator's 'devilry':

> at the table, finishing the fried eggs, sat a gentleman of about forty-five, small, lean, weakly built, with reddish hair, and a thin red beard rather like an old whiskbroom (this comparison, and particularly the word *whiskbroom*, for some reason flashed through Alyosha's mind at first glance, as he later recalled). (198, author's emphasis)

On the next page Snegiryov brings up the "encounter" with Dmitri, the "one concerning the whiskbroom" (199), to which Alyosha responds: "what whiskbroom?" In the

succeeding episode (chapter seven) the reader discovers the significance of 'whiskbroom' as not only a nickname for Snegiryov's ruddy beard, designated by Ilyusha's schoolmates, but also as a disparaging name for Ilyusha himself, again devised by Ilyousha's enemies (205). What is significant is that the narrator sows thoughts–like the baffling word "whiskbroom"–into Alyosha's mind without him possibly being able to understand how or why he has these thoughts, which, first, draws attention to the narrator, and, more importantly, to the artificiality of the entire narrative. Similarly, the wraith-mediator of Infinite Jest interpolates significant words ("ghostwords") (Jest 884) and thoughts into his characters which suggests that the narrator himself makes up the entire story. The most significant congruity, in terms of narrative construction, between The Brothers Karamazov and Infinite Jest is in their narrators' fabulism. We have already noted (Part Two) the ways in which Infinite Jest is twice fabulated–a work of fiction fabulated by a chatty narrator, one, like Dostoevsky's narrator, who conveys the narrative events like an "amateur writer" for Pevear (xv) or an "'amateur' narrator" for Terras (Companion x)–who tells a magnificent and wide-ranging story, one that is, in the narrator's words, putatively a "biography of my hero, Alexei Fyodorovich Karamazov" (3) but that is really a pseudo-biography; the narrator's purpose in relating the complicated events can hardly be considered biographical.

That is, the narrator's claim to biography is itself a fiction within its immediate fictionalized context; coming from the narrator's 'mouth' makes the entire narrative that

is the novel proper twice fictionalized. In other words, The Brothers Karamazov itself can be read as an elaborate joke:

> Dostoevsky was always drawn by the idea of comprehensively encapsulating the spirit of his times, of making a definitive creative assessment of his epoch and, by his own admission, attempting it on no less ambitious a scale than Dante's Divine Comedy. In a structural sense the world he presents is an intricate collage of conflicting views in different perspectives. It is above all a microcosm, devoid of any historical panorama. The location is a *farcically* obscure, *monumentally insignificant* 'one-horse' town *rejoicing* in the name of Skotoprigonyevsk [meaning 'cattle pen' (Frank, Mantle 574)] . . . This *ridiculously unlikely* name, mentioned only once, is immediately followed, to heightened *comic* effect, by the narrator's apology for being obliged to reveal it at all. There is a disconcerting momentary suggestion that *everything is just a big joke*, the author's face dissolving in a clownish grin, and the materializing of the reader's worst fears that he has just been strung along all the time. But this is a story-teller's trick: to relax the grip, only to tighten it again abruptly a split second later. (Avsey xxvii, emphasis added)

Avsey's overall conception of the novel is an astute one, and I think that perhaps he makes only one mistake in his description of Dostoevsky's novel–that the 'author"s face dissolves in a clownish grin, instead of the *narrator's*. It is essential to recall that Dostoevsky's prefatory "From the Author" note is intended by Dostoevsky to be a definite part of the fictional apparatus of the novel itself, and that this narrator is an 'author' in his own right, and that his fabulous conceit of making the entire narrative up–not to mention writing it as *spoken* language: "the style of The Brothers Karamazov is based on the spoken, not the written, word" (Pevear xv)–prevents the entire exercise from devolving into an authorial pose, game, or contempt for the reader. That is to say, because it is the narrator who fictionalizes a fiction (the plot, or events contained within the novel), the

'joke' is only a figurative, not malicious, one. Just as the work is not a "biography," and just as Alyosha is not a "hero," so the narrator's words are not 'true.' The audacity of the enterprise alone–of compiling a narrative to rival Dante's–is impossible to perform without a modest wink and nudge. But this is not to diminish The Brothers Karamazov's power, its authenticity, or, its 'truth'–for everything in the novel is nonetheless true despite being constructed as a fictionalized fiction. It is a peculiar mistake or misconception to confuse Dostoevsky and his narrator (the preface's 'author'), something that even the more highly regarded Dostoevsky scholars like Ignat Avsey and Joseph Frank do. Pevear, however, begins his discussion of the narrator by noting that the "first voice to be heard" is the narrator's, and that "needless to say, he is not Dostoevsky" (xv). Pevear rightly goes on to claim that "the brief note 'From the Author' at the start of the book . . . accomplishes a number of important things by way of introduction, but *above all* it introduces us to the whole *stylistic complex* of the *narrator's voice*" (xv, emphasis added). Pevear then carefully analyzes the preface and meticulously extracts all the telltale stylistic features that identify the narrator–not the writer, Dostoevsky–in it and that, naturally, recur throughout the text. That Dostoevsky made his narrator his mouthpiece for his "most passionately held beliefs and ideas" (Avsey xxiii) does not reduce to Dostoevsky being the controlling narrating voice of the novel. Terras slightly concurs with Pevear by distinguishing between Dostoevsky and his narrator, but remains assured that a second installment of the novel was planned: "the *narrator* points out in his

very preface that this is only the *first of two parts*, with the second to be set thirteen years later" (Companion 109, emphasis added). It would seem, however, that the narrator's disingenuous claim to a sequel is itself part of the fictional apparatus, if not one of the novel's major artifices, its 'joke':

> I would not, in fact, venture into these rather vague and uninteresting explanations but would simply begin without any introduction–if they like it, they'll read it as it is–but the trouble is that while I have just one biography, I have two novels. The main novel is the second one–about the activities of my hero in our time, that is, in our present, current moment. As for the first novel, it already took place thirteen years ago and is even almost not a novel at all but just one moment from my hero's early youth. It is impossible for me to do without this first novel, or much in the second novel will be incomprehensible. Thus my original difficulty becomes even more complicated: for if I, that is, the biographer himself, think that even one novel may, perhaps, be unwarranted for such a humble and indefinite hero, then how will it look if I appear with two; and what can explain such presumption on my part? (3-4)

The absurdity of the quoted passage alone is enough to highlight the narrator's tongue-in-cheek posture: he would begin without an introduction, yet continues at length regardless, indirectly revealing his chatty manner and unlikely trepidation over such a modest thing, the inclusion of an introduction; he peculiarly draws attention to a proposed second novel at the expense of the one at hand–naturally it is "impossible to do without the first novel" and the reader of the time could hardly be expected to have interest in a second novel when the first one was just being released; that the second novel would be "incomprehensible" without the first one is a comic overstatement; the *faux*-agonizing, false nail-biting posture of worrying about the *second* novel's reception

("how will it look if I appear with two") over the one immediately at hand is comically absurd; indeed, "what can explain such presumption" on the narrator's part? The question itself is left open, but open-ended in a rather obfuscatory manner: "being at a loss to resolve these questions, I am resolved to leave them without any resolution" (4) which possibly indicates–rather indirectly–that the novel itself will be left unresolved. This comic befuddlement over resolving to leave the question unresolved signifies that a second novel, or what Dostoevsky commentators call a sequel, is pure fantasy: part of the fiction that is the novel–there was no intended sequel; rather, the entire preface rather amusingly draws the reader into the present volume with its engaging and chatty, friendly and somewhat 'muddleheaded' deliberations–a term ("muddleheaded") that the narrator immediately designates for Fyodor Karamazov in the first paragraph of the novel, but describes the narrator perfectly. In response to his own unresolvable question, the narrator continues:

> To be sure *the keen-sighted reader* will already have guessed long ago that that is what I've been getting at from the beginning and will be annoyed with me for wasting fruitless words and precious time. To this I give the ready answer: I have been wasting fruitless words and precious time, first, out of politeness, and, second, *out of cunning*. (4, emphasis added)

Now, strangely, the narrator has a "ready answer"–following on the heels of the last sentence's confusion–and plays with the reader, knowing that the reader will potentially be "annoyed" at his prevarication. Yet he claims to annoy the reader out of "politeness," strangely enough, but more importantly "out of cunning" (4). It is this "cunning" that

signifies to the reader that what is to follow is to be taken seriously, yet as a 'serious joke'; only the careful, "keen-sighted" reader will realize that any talk of a sequel is a ruse at the outset of such a mammoth and engaging novel. The further comical jabs at the Russian critics and comically polite agreement that the preface is entirely "superfluous" only underscores the narrator's style, his delight in wordplay, and his status as an amateur narrator. That he is an amateur, however, does not take away from the very powerful events he relates. The narrator claims that the events that he will recount "already took place thirteen years ago" and that what he calls the "main novel," "the second one" is to be set "in our time," "in our present, current moment" (3). Yet there is something again not quite right about this assessment, either, for The Brothers Karamazov–putatively *not* the main novel, according to the narrator–most definitely *is* set in the "present, current moment"; in fact, there is little if anything to signify that this work is set in the past, culturally, historically, and, most importantly, ideologically: "the book thus recounts events that supposedly occurred thirteen years earlier, although no attempt is made to preserve a strict historical coloring" (Frank, Mantle 573).[10] The narrator heavily emphasizes that the present volume was set thirteen years ago, yet goes out of his way to make it a very contemporary work. Frank justifies the narrator's incongruity by claiming that "because he also wished to indicate the future importance of Alyosha, he felt it necessary to say a few words about him *outside the framework* of this first story" (574, emphasis added), yet the preface *is* the story. The narrator's repetitive emphasis on the

second novel's chronological setting seems to be a ruse, for the first novel addresses the chronological and ideological moment that he suggests will be forthcoming in the sequel. That this somewhat dubious narrator even speaks these words, aside from the clumsy expression, alone, is enough to bring them into question, particularly as he is so idiosyncratic and often claims not to have the entire story.

Yet Frank, in his final volume of his Dostoevsky biography, reads the narrator literally: "Ivan's future thus remains unknown, and this uncertainty was no doubt intended to sustain interest for the *next volume*" (Mantle 698-699, emphasis added) and "but now that the *first volume* of The Brothers Karamazov had been completed, [Dostoevsky] threw himself, with his usual assiduity, into the task of gathering material for his revived Diary of a Writer" (707, emphasis added) and "the narrator explains that [Alyosha] will become more important in a second volume (which, regrettably, Dostoevsky never lived even to begin)" (573). That Dostoevsky was so ill upon completion of The Brothers Karamazov and yet threw himself into composing Diary of a Writer (1877) instead of the proposed second volume suggests itself that he had no such intention. This is not to say that Frank is critically naïve, for he does acknowledge the question of whether "this 'author' is Dostoevsky himself or the fictional narrator of his story" (572)–though even *raising* the question in the present presupposes a critical naïveté regarding the distinction between a writer and a fictional persona–preferring to compromise with both views by contending that The Brothers Karamazov has "two types

of narration," "expository" and "dramatic" (572). Indeed, there are these two types of narration, but there is nothing to indicate the presence of "two narrators" (572), as Frank claims; there is only the one, one that is dramatically present in parts and yet recedes like a ghost in others. Frank also contends that "the fictional narrator"–not just "narrator"?–"never presents himself directly" (574), but, again, this is simply inaccurate as the narrator addresses the reader throughout, "somewhat disconcertingly, addresses the reader in the first person," according to Avsey (xxiv). Avsey himself is not immune to conflating Dostoevsky and the narrator when he rightly argues that "the author does not speak in his own name; there is the anonymous, shadowy figure of the narrator" (xxiv), but backtracks here: "but then his [Alyosha's] turn was due to come later in the major novel to which Dostoevsky alludes in his prologue 'From the Author,' but which never saw the light of day, for Dostoevsky died three months after completing The Brothers Karamazov" (xv). All of this, however, raises the point of the intentional fallacy, which Wallace observes in his review essay that Frank "never in four volumes mentions the Intentional Fallacy or tries to head off the objection that his biography commits it all over the place. This is real interesting to me" (25 n. 2). Wallace indirectly praises Frank for this as it gives the biography a "tone" of "maximum restraint and objectivity" (25 n. 2). Part of Frank's conflation of Dostoevsky with the narrator, then, is a wish that Dostoevsky had, indeed, written a sequel, for the novel ends tentatively; the future of its characters remains largely undetermined, something that Infinite Jest has been heavily criticized for

even in a time when readers' expectations are frustrated as a matter of course. This, however, is not an aesthetic flaw. Avsey himself moves, in a single paragraph, from describing the "*narrator's* apology" to the "*author's* face," out of, it would seem, a fear of the novel being, for him, "a big joke," but what I would prefer simply to call twice fabulated. Avsey contends that this is "a story-teller's trick," but this raises the question of precisely who is doing the *telling*. If we assert that it is the narrator's story, as we surely must, then there can be no harm in the narrator fabulating his entire narrative; but if we assert that the note "From the Author" is Dostoevsky himself–which is unlikely in the extreme for then Dostoevsky would have conflated himself with his narrator and fictional characters by calling Alyosha his "hero"–then Avsey's "big joke" possibly takes on a more sinister cast. It is a jest, in a sense, a playful one, but not at the reader's expense–it is not a metafictional collapse that ultimately scorns, or has contempt for, the reader. Rather, it is a fairly obvious strategy that is given away on numerous occasions: through Alyosha's sudden and uncontrollable thoughts–that simply and, at times, quite impossibly "occur," a significant word that the narrator obsessively uses throughout Infinite Jest, mainly for Gately, Infinite Jest's own unlikely 'hero,' the utterly fallible postmodern chivalrous knight (Jest 601-619)–and Alyosha's inability to account for these random thoughts; his puzzlement about the things he does and the things he says, as though they were guided by an external hand; and through the interpolated, almost telepathic, thoughts that he experiences ("whiskbroom," for example). Pevear contends that Alyosha "seems little

more than a reactor to events" (xviii), a reactor to the guiding hand of the narrator just as Don Gately is carried along and influenced by the narrator's dictates in Infinite Jest. That both novels are, in this sense, 'jests' does not, however, diminish their respective veritas: in a peculiar, roundabout fashion, it makes them more credible, more believable, and, finally, more powerful. They tend, in this regard, to take on the aspect of a dream. All is–*as if*–a dream.

In the first scholarly assessment of Infinite Jest, Tom LeClair observes that Wallace's novel "can also be read as a metafictional allegory of . . . aesthetic orphanhood" (33). In fact, like most encyclopedic literature–Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy (1621), Melville's Moby-Dick (1851), and Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow (1973), for examples–Infinite Jest can be read on numerous levels. As I have noted in Part One, Wallace's aesthetic is partially derived from the poetics of Gerard Manley Hopkins, a "touchstone" for Wallace (McCaffery 149); and a great deal of Infinite Jest is devoted to the relationship between contemporary art and contemporary American culture: "the U.S. arts are our guide to inclusion. A how-to" (Jest 694). Both novels, in fact, bear a striking resemblance in the ways in which they use aesthetics to comment on their respective culture's ideologies. That is, both novelists use the genre of the novel, aesthetic tropes, and a metafictional stylistics to comment on the prevalent ideologies of their time that makes them dream-like. Further, both novels make use of dreams and hallucinations and intentionally make the distinction between dreams and hallucinations

vague and ambiguous; they are further complicated by making the distinction between dreams/hallucinations and the narrative *reality* vague and ambiguous. It is my contention that both novels are aesthetic allegories, are fabulated stories of the narrators' design and devising that are not meant to be taken as actual events, and, as such, achieve a new stylistics or aesthetic that allows them to transmit their respective ideological messages–messages that are eschatological and concerned with a type of salvation or redemption of their time. The complexity of each novel alone partly accounts for the reader's sense of a type of 'fantastic' aesthetic. But both novels have such a preponderance of dreams, hallucinations, and feverish characters (many characters suffer from a "brain fever" in The Brothers Karamazov and Gately is, for the most crucial portion of Infinite Jest, "mute and feverishly semiconscious") (828). Zosima's mise en abyme and dream-like biography, Ivan's dream-hallucination of the devil–which he cannot determine to be real or hallucinated–and Dmitri's trial chapters, in which the narrator constructs an aesthetic allegory between the dueling trial lawyers who themselves use aesthetic tropes of the Novel and fiction to defeat the other's arguments, all contribute to make these novels surreal, dream-like narratives that implies that both works are narrator-fabulated. Their stylistics are visionary themselves in their manipulation, but are also visionary in the sense that both novels literally present dream *visions*, and visions of the future by implication. In a letter to the Tsar's tutor, 16 August 1880, Dostoevsky wrote: "I am coming to the end of The Karamazovs. This last part, I

can see and feel this, is so unusual and different from what other people are writing that I definitely do not expect any plaudits from the critics" (qtd. in Avsey xi). Although impossible to say with certainty, we may infer, however, that because of the more-fantastic elements of the latter part of the novel, particularly the trial sequence, that Dostoevsky referred to his own radical stylistic ingenuity as that which is "so unusual and different" from his contemporaries' writing.

In the trial sequence, the narrator is relentlessly intrusive and full of caveats regarding his inability to recount the events (12.1.656); that he curiously missed much of what transpired and "still others" that he "forgot to remember" (659); that his descriptions are "partly superfluous" and vague, "all that must have been so" and "I did write down in full, at least some parts of them" (12.2.662); he inconsistently claims that Grigory was "questioned so much that I cannot even recall it all" (664), yet continues to quote the defense attorney's questioning verbatim; observes trivial details: "it should be noted, a great many people declared that she was remarkably good-looking at that moment" (12.4.679); that he chooses to quote verbatim the highly amusing but utterly irrelevant questioning of the Moscow doctor over whether he had given an apple or bag of nuts to Dmitri as a boy (12.3.674); and the attorneys' closing statements are absurdly quoted at length and in, what would appear as, in toto, yet the narrator claims that he will not provide the speeches in detail but will "only take some parts of [them], some of the most salient points" (12.10.728). The courtroom proceedings are so heavily

mediated, contradictory and comical that the impression one has is of being on the receiving end of a spoken story, which the novel is on an elementary level, but one in which the events related did not necessarily occur. The presiding judge's "attitude" is said to be "rather indifferent and abstract, as, by the way, it perhaps ought to have been" (12.1.659), although the reader is left speculating how the judge "ought" to feel this way, unless the events are themselves narrator-fabulated. The peculiar emphasis on language throughout the proceedings, instead of evidence, reaffirms this, perhaps, intuitive impression of fabulism: Dmitri continually blurts out words, like "Bernard!" (12.2.668), which Terras notes is part of Dmitri's "private language" (Companion 404), and claims after one of his exclamations, rather confusedly, "it just came out!" (661) which implies the narrator's complicity; Grigory "speaks in his own peculiar language" (664); a witness is said to have "introduced a terrible quantity of Polish words into his phrases" (670); Dr Herzenstube's phrases "came out in German fashion" (12.3.671), he cannot find simple words to complete his sentences (672), and prizes his "potato-thick and always happily self-satisfied German wit" (674). Everything is "suddenly recall[ed]" (12.4.679), thoughts "flash" through characters' minds (12.1.660, 12.4.677), ideas "lodged" in their heads (12.3.671) as though surreally occurring. The attorneys use aesthetic tropes in calling each others' accounts "fantastic," a "novelistic suggestion," and a "novel" (726-727, 730, 731, 732, 734, 749, 750), which implies that there is an aesthetic subtext to the novel, one that is perhaps addressed to Dostoevsky's contemporaries, like Chernyshevsky and

Turgenev, with whose literary-socialistic ideologies he had jousted with for much of his literary career. The narrator, through the defense attorney, speaks of the town's prejudicial treatment of Dmitri in determining his guilt beforehand, and remarks that "an offended moral and, even more so, aesthetic sense is sometimes implacable" (726), which is possible to read as a subtext addressed to both Dostoevsky's critics and contemporaries–who, like Turgenev, viewed him as a "latter-day de Sade" (Avsey xi).

In a chapter on Dostoevsky's early "aesthetics of transcendence" of the 1860s, Joseph Frank writes:

> Dostoevsky thus once again vigorously rejects any notion that the artist has his own angle of vision; what he offers is inevitably a product of his subjectivity; but its value is not simply a function of the peculiarities of his temperament. Dostoevsky insists both on the importance of an artist's personal contribution (what he calls, in relation to himself, 'fantasy'), as well as on the necessity for such 'fantasy' to be oriented toward the society of its time, that is, 'realism.' It is precisely as such a *'fantastic realism'* that he will later define his own artistic quintessence. (Liberation 93, emphasis added)

Terras similarly argues that "art and the art of the novel are one of the subjects of The Brothers Karamazov" and further observes that "the question of the relationship of art to morality and to reality receives some careful attention" (Companion 108). It is in the mouth of the tormented Dmitri–whom Terras considers to be the novel's "poet" (422)–that The Brothers Karamazov's most crucial aesthetic allegory is stated, in the ideal of the Madonna and Sodom (3.3.100-108). In the first of Dmitri's three delirious monologues, he observes that "beauty is a fearful and terrible thing" (108) because "it's

undefinable," and that where "the shores converge, here all contradictions live together" (108). Dmitri's outburst is an ecstatic and inspired commentary on the proximity of both human beauty and terror or horror that reside in the same place, the human heart. The great riddle and mystery, for him, is how

> some man, even with a lofty heart and the highest mind, should start from the ideal of the Madonna and end with the ideal of Sodom. It's even more fearful when someone who already has the ideal of Sodom in his soul does not deny the ideal of the Madonna either . . . . What's shame for the mind is beauty all over for the heart. Can there be beauty in Sodom? . . . did you know that secret? The terrible thing is that beauty is not only fearful but also mysterious. Here the devil is struggling with God, and the battlefield is the human heart. (108)

Terras rightly writes that this portion "must be seen in part as a comment directed at the novel itself" (Companion 108). Dimitri further notes that even in Alyosha, "an angel," the "same insect lives and stirs up a storm in your blood" (108). Dimitri contends that the two seemingly opposed and contradictory forces of beauty and horror reside, at once, in the human breast, that they converge on the shores of the human heart. There is no separation: good and evil proclivities remain conjoined within the human will, and the implication is that we choose what we give ourselves over to. A human being is never completely good or evil, but those forces exist together at once in a contest of wills.

Wallace appropriates Dostoevsky's aesthetic in Infinite Jest and elsewhere. The entire novel is obsessively descriptive of dreams, nightmares, and hallucinations, and the stylistics of the novel itself emphasize the dream-like quality of the novel and its events. It is frequently difficult to extract the actions of characters from their dreams, to note the

termination of dream sequences and the continuation of the plot. The narrator is purposefully vague in this aspect, the "dream-of-dream-type ambiguity" (830): "Gately begins to conclude it's not impossible that the garden-variety wraith on the heart monitor, though not conventionally real, could be a sort of epiphanyish visitation" (Jest 833), and:

> then [Gately] considered that this was the only dream he could recall where even in the dream he knew that it was a dream, much less lay there considering the fact that he was considering the up-front dream quality of the dream he was dreaming. It quickly got so multilevelled and confusing that his eyes rolled back in his head. (830)

Early in the novel Hal narrates that "I am coming to see that the sensation of the worst nightmares, a sensation that can be felt asleep or awake, is identical to those worst dreams' form itself: the sudden intra-dream realization that the nightmares' very essence and center has been with you all along, even awake: it's just been . . . *overlooked*" (61, author's elision and emphasis). This exposition on the indistinguishability of dreams from regular consciousness recalls both Ivan's inability to distinguish the visitation of the devil from a dream, hallucination, or reality: "'It's as if I'm awake in my sleep . . . I walk, talk, and see, yet I'm asleep'" (11.10.654). Ennet House staffer's work a night shift called "Dream Duty" in which they stay up all night to be available for the nightmare-afflicted residents (Jest 272). In one of the more notable stylistic moments of the text, two of Gately's dreams are merged in a single paragraph:

> Somebody overhead asked somebody else if they were ready, and somebody commented on the size of Gately's head and gripped Gately's head, and then he felt an upward movement deep inside that was so personal and horrible he woke up. Only one of his eyes would open because the floor's

> impact had shut the other one up plump and tight as a sausage. His whole front side of him was cold from lying on the wet floor. Facklemann around somewhere behind him was mumbling something that consisted totally of *g*'s. (974, author's emphasis)

The passage is significant in two ways. First, "if they were ready" recalls the gunshot episode's concluding line ("'Ready'") (619) where the residents prepare to lift the wounded Gately. Second, the sentence beginning "Only one of his eyes," signifies Gately's dream transition to another dream, a dream of a flashback from Gately's drug-addicted youth that concludes the novel itself. The stylistic consequence of the novel's many dream segments signifies that the entire narrative is itself a dream, that it is dreamed up, so to speak, by the narrator. Incandenza's film, "'The Medusa v. the Odalisque'" (396-397) indirectly recalls Dimitri's ideals of the Madonna and Sodom and the battle of representation that faces the artist in depicting both the good and evil proclivities of the human subject in art. Incandenza's film is a heavily metafictional film of a play in which two mythological figures fight each other on stage; both figures' appearance respectively turns viewers into either stone (Medusa) or a gem (Odalisque), with the result that the play's audience within the film eventually catch glimpses of either of the two combatants and are ossified. The film's appearance in the novel is a strategic commentary on the ends of contemporary metafictional art, but the intertextual reference to Dimitri's aesthetic discourse also partially signifies that we are at all times *both* good and bad, that the horrid Medusa and the attractive Odalisque reside within us simultaneously at all times. Wallace elaborates this point in great detail in his essay on

film-maker, David Lynch. For Wallace, Lynch is a "weird hybrid blend of classical Expressionist and contemporary postmodernist, an artist whose own 'internal impressions and moods' are (*like ours*) an olla podrida of neurogenic predisposition and phylogenic myth and psychotic schema and pop-cultural iconography" (Supposedly 199, emphasis added). Infinite Jest further recalls Dostoevsky's aesthetic of what Joseph Frank calls "fantastic realism" (Liberation 93) in the wraith's discourse on film-making, and his aesthetic of "radical realism" (836) in which the wraith, when animate, endeavored to represent all actors' voices, peripheral and prominent ones alike. Although the wraith speaks here of his own filmic aesthetic, the crucial subtext here is that each person is, in an aesthetic trope, an individual film: "every member of which was the central and articulate protagonist of his own entertainment" (835-836). The narrator's aesthetic trope masks the real content of the wraith's discourse, that each and every American lives in a universe of one, each living his or her own dream-entertainment in real, lived life, and that, as such, every person lives potentially solipsistic, isolated from others. Wallace's primary goal throughout his fiction and essays is to communicate–"art, after all, is supposed to be a kind of communication" (Supposedly 199)–and emphasize a sense of this isolation in readers, an isolation that he finds to be continually reenforced by both the commercial American arts and the more avant-garde productions. Dostoevsky's narrator pursues a similar course. In "The Mysterious Visitor" sub-chapter of Father Zosima's biography, the narrator (through the mediation of the Visitor, Zosima, and Alyosha)

describes an eschatological vision of the individual, the "period of *isolation*":

> For all men in our age are separated into units, each seeks seclusion in his own hole, each withdraws from the others, hides himself, and hides what he has, and ends by pushing himself away from people and pushing people away from himself. He accumulates wealth in solitude, thinking: how strong, how secure I am now; and does not see, madman as he is, that the more he accumulates, the more he sinks into suicidal impotence. For he is accustomed to relying only on himself, he has separated his unit from the whole, he has accustomed his soul to not believing in people's help, in people or in mankind, and now only trembles lest his money and acquired privileges perish. Everywhere now the human mind has begun laughably not to understand that a man's true security lies not in his own solitary effort, but in the general wholeness of humanity. But there must needs come a term to this horrible isolation, and everyone will all at once realize how unnaturally they have separated themselves from one another. Such will be the spirit of the time. (6.2.303-304, author's emphasis)

What Dostoevsky's narrator annunciates as an eschatological nightmare vision of his time is reflected in the eschatological vision of Wallace's narrator, where all characters are Euclidian in their belief system; pursue only economic fulfillment through highly individualistic means; and their entertainment and art upholds the solitary existence that both novels move to aggravate in their respective readers. Infinite Jest's characters repeatedly transpose the American motto, E Pluribus Unum ('out of many, one') into the solipsistic "E Unibus Pluram" (1007 n. 110) ('from one, many') which indicates the extent to which they have given themselves to their own highly individualistic quest for happiness. Ivan's Grand Inquisitor remarks that "the mystery of man's being is not only in living, but in what one lives for" (5.5.254), which is further echoed in Hal's solipsistic musings:

> it now lately sometimes seemed like a kind of black miracle to me that people could actually care deeply about a subject or pursuit, and could go on caring this way for years on end. Could dedicate their entire lives to it. It seemed admirable and at the same time pathetic. God or Satan, politics or grammar, topology or philately–the object seemed incidental to this will to give oneself away, utterly. To games or needles, to some other person. Something pathetic about it. A flight-from in the form of a plunging-into. Flight from exactly what? These rooms blandly filled with excrement and meat? To what purpose? (Jest 900)

While Dostoevsky and Wallace differ in their sources of belief, they remain united as authors of belief, and both of their major novels express the essential nature of the individual struggling for belief in something larger than the self. Both are concerned with the eschatology of the individual subject–individual human beings among other individual beings–and fashion their novels as aesthetic allegories, or dreams and visions–a "dream-logic" (Supposedly 200)–of the eschatology of the human individual which "seek[s] to ascertain the fate or condition, temporary or eternal, of individual souls, and how far the issues of the future depend on the present life" (Toner n.p.).

Notes

1 For a selection of current literary criticism that considers apocalyptic and eschatological themes, see Eric C. Brown, "The Allegory of Small Things: Insect Eschatology in Spencer's Muiopotmos," Studies in Philology 99.3 (2002): 247-267; Eileen S. Jankowski, "Chaucer's 'Second Nun's Tale' and the Apocalyptic Imagination," The Chaucer Review 36.2 (2001): 128-148–incidentally, Jankowski relies heavily on Emmerson and Herzman for her application of the apocalyptic imagination; Peter Larkin, "Relations of Scarcity: Ecology and Eschatology in 'The Ruined Cottage,'" Studies in Romanticism 39.3 (2000): 347-364; Edward J. Ingebretsen, "'If it had to Perish Twice': Robert Frost and the Aesthetics of Apocalypse" Thought 67 (1992): 31-46; John W. Velz, "'Some Shall be Pardon'd, and Some Punished': Medieval Dramatic Eschatology in Shakespeare," Comparative Drama 26 (1992/1993): 312-329; Robin Howells, "Esch-sca(r)-tology: Rudy Wiebe's 'An Indication of Burning,'" The Journal of Commonwealth Literature 27.1 (1992): 87-95; Lisa Kiser, "Eschatological Poetics in Chaucer's 'House of Fame,'" Modern Language Quarterly 49 (1988): 99-119; Robert E. DiAntonio, "Biblical Correspondences and Eschatological Questioning in the Metafiction of Murilo Rubiao," World Literature Today 62 (1988): 62-66; Geoffrey Aggeler, "The Eschatological Crux in The Spanish Tragedy" Journal of English and Germanic Philology 86 (1987): 319-331; Chris R. Hassel, "Last Words and Last Things: St. John, Apocalypse, and Eschatology in Richard III," Shakespeare Studies 18 (1986): 25-40; John F. Desmond, "Flannery O'Connor and the History Behind the History," Modern Age 27 (1983): 290-296.

2 It is essential to note that although "Feodor's Guide" was not published until April 1996, an earlier draft of the essay, "Joseph Frank's Dostoevsky," was scheduled to be included in Wallace's collection of essays, A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again (1997). For whatever reasons, the essay was cut from that project, however. I am fortunate enough to acquire an off-print of the galley proofs of this draft of the essay. As expected, it is clearly a rough draft and does not come close to its more polished counterpart, "Feodor's Guide." There are interesting moments, however, that I will return to in the course of this chapter. Further, this essay is dated as completed in 1995 which suggests that Wallace had immersed himself in a deep study of both Frank's biography and Dostoevsky's works prior to, or in conjunction with, his composition and completion of Infinite Jest. According to Steven Moore's "The First Draft Version of Infinite Jest," a recent essay that compares the original manuscript with the published version of Infinite Jest, Wallace had "completed a working draft" of the novel by the fall of 1993 (Moore 1). It is important to note, however, that most of the endnotes for the published version "were added later" (2) and that although much was cut from the manuscript, Wallace also added much to the final version, which possibly suggests that

the Frank/Dostoevsky became more urgent as the novel moved closer to its final, published version. Wallace is known to be a heavily editorial writer, one, by his own admission, who re-writes passages repeatedly. Moore further notes that Wallace "made numerous corrections for the paperback edition of 1997" (par. 8), which further emphasizes his continual editing of his own work.

3 Neal Pollack represents the epitome of self-conscious, ironic authorial posing in contemporary American fiction. Pollack spoofs nearly every conventional literary genre, including literary journalism, while placing his authorial persona in all of his set pieces, making himself, as in the case of Mark Leyner, the subject of his own work. See The Neal Pollack Anthology of American Literature: The Collected Writings of Neal Pollack (New York: McSweeney's, 2002). And for an example of solipsistic fiction par excellence, see Henry Rollins's aptly titled Solipsist (Los Angeles: 2.13.61 Books, 1998) in which the narrator of this anti-novel revels in his contemporary nihilism with such statements as "misanthropy never felt this good" (13) and "I sit alone for hours getting used to nothing. I have nothing to prove to them. I represent nothing. I am the ambassador of nothing" (15). Rollins's 166-page monologue is a strangely self-conscious rant, and one that devolves into a peculiar cry for help.

4 Wallace originally concluded this piece with: "Frank's books are a *cosmogony* of one of them" ("Joseph Frank's Dostoevsky," emphasis added). Wallace's original word-choice underscores the very eschatological aesthetic premises out of which Dostoevsky formulated his works, and that Dostoevsky's fictive universe is composed of both beginnings and endings. Cosmogony emphasizes the full scope of both artists' range and their intention of dramatizing the human universe and, for Wallace, "*what it is to be a human being*" ("Feodor's Guide" 21, author's emphasis).

5 It is worth noting that Wallace rather slyly quotes from The Idiot while implying that the contemporary cultural reception of a contemporary novelist writing with the same moral rigor today would be perceived as somewhat idiotic itself, and that the appearance of such a writer would be as culturally askew as the introduction of Prince Myshkin to the elite society of St Petersburgh in Dostoevsky's novel.

Further, Wallace's selected passage from The Idiot is "part of a 10-page monologue by somebody trying to decide whether to commit suicide" ("Feodor's Guide" 24). However, Wallace has himself published a short story, "Good Old Neon," spoken in the first person by a character who has recently committed suicide. Although not quite the same as the Dostoevsky context, it is worth noting that Wallace only castigates the contemporary literati by implicating himself as well or when he has taken steps toward remedying the specific problem he diagnoses. See "Good Old Neon," Conjunctions 37 (2001): 105-140.

6 Wallace is not the first American novelist to attempt a reimagining of Dostoevsky's famous novel. David James Duncan's The Brothers K (1992) attempts a similar, though much more overt, assimilation of Dostoevsky's novel into contemporary American culture.

7 It is worth noting that Dostoevsky translator and scholar, W.J. Leatherbarrow has observed that "without the translations of Dostoevsky . . . it is difficult to believe that the contemporary English novel could have become the thing it is" (qtd. in Avsey xxiii). Thus, Dostoevsky can be said to have powerfully influenced both the European and British novel, and upholds his continued influence, by extension, on the American novel, though, perhaps, to a lesser degree.

8 For my discussion of Dostoevsky, I have consulted the three major translations of The Brothers Karamazov, the editions by Garnett-Matlaw, Ignat Avsey, and Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. In his comparison of the Garnett translation with the Pevear and Volokhonsky edition, Victor Terras writes that the question of the 'better' translation should be left to the reader (Reading 162), but notes that "Pevear's translation serves the scholarly reader better, as it brings him or her closer to Dostoevsky's craftsmanship" and that the Garnett version is "somewhat old-fashioned," "falling short of the prodigious energy of his [Dostoevsky's] dialogue" (162). Nevertheless, I have consulted all three editions, but cite the Pevear and Volokhonsky edition throughout this discussion. Quotations from The Brothers Karamazov are parenthetically cited by book, chapter, and page number.

9 Among the many allusions to fellow novelist Don DeLillo, the mysterious DMZ recalls White Noise's drug, Dylar, which purportedly removes the fear of death. See White Noise (New York: Penguin, 1985).

10 Infinite Jest is set approximately eighteen years after its year of publication, 1996, according to Wallace. The novel's chronology, however, is complex and confusing, and even "seems to have given Wallace quite a bit of trouble" (Moore 2). Various theories have been posited as to which year the "subsidized" year, "Year of Glad" (the narrative's present), corresponds with in regular calendar years. Tom LeClair guesses at "about 2015" (31), which is close enough, though I believe 2014 to be more accurate. Regardless, Infinite Jest's time-setting interestingly parallels The Brothers Karamazov in the sense that while although The Brothers Karamazov is supposedly set in the past, it nevertheless deals with contemporary ideologies as though it were set in Dostoevsky's present; similarly, Infinite Jest is set in the future, but has little in the way of futuristic signifiers that would identify it as a futuristic work and, in fact, addresses the particular cultural and ideological issues of the present moment.

Conclusion

The Art of Moral Fiction: A Coda

"*Tu cognosce tuam salvanda in plebe figuram* ('Recognize thine own figure in the people that are to be saved')"–Bishop Avitus of Vienne (qtd. in Auerbach, Drama 46-47).

"Nothing sickens me like seeing on-screen some of the very parts of myself I've gone to the movies to try to forget about"–David Foster Wallace (Supposedly 167).

In addition to Wallace's stylistic ingenuity–he has been labeled a "language surrealist" by the newly founded literary journal, The Believer–cogent and humane satire, and powerful thematic, philosophical, and ideological engagement, he is also a *moral* artist. Once more, I use the term moral without recourse to any specific organized, institutional religious system, though Wallace's aesthetic-metaphysic naturally grounds belief as essential to his entire enterprise. It is mainly in the popular journalistic forums that Wallace's moral vision is recognized or, at least, commented upon. Infinite Jest's "most engaging plot," according to The Globe and Mail's Doug Saunders, "concerns the search for faith–some intelligent atheist's search for faith, at least" (C3). Publishers Weekly declared in 1999 that Infinite Jest had "already done as much as any single book

this decade to change the sound and aims of American fiction" while dubbing Wallace "one of his generation's most revered experimenters" (Stein 52). It is, perhaps, ironic that Wallace is celebrated as a leading literary "experimenter" and at the fore of the avant garde movement in American letters. While Wallace maintains a strong commitment to remaining current about contemporary literary practices–by reading poststructuralist theory and the avant garde writings of the Dalkey Archive Press and FC2 Press, among others–he does not, as I have previously noted, consider himself to be performing anything "terribly sophisticated" in his own work (McCaffery 137). However, in the aftermath of postmodernism which Wallace clearly feels we have moved beyond and which is supported by recent scholarly works, such as Robert Rebein's Hicks, Tribes, and Dirty Realists: American Fiction After Postmodernism (2001), Wallace's fiction has the paradoxical 'feel' of highly experimental work, though, if anything, it tends to recall past canonized works and celebrated literary practitioners such as G.M. Hopkins, Fyodor Dostoevsky, T.S. Eliot, and William Gaddis, among others. In this sense, Tom LeClair is accurate in claiming that Infinite Jest extends the "characteristics of its predecessors" (31); what is celebrated as avant garde and experimental in Wallace's fiction is, however, better understood as a *return* to the past, to the tradition, a revision of past successful literary practices and an appropriation of certain artists' aesthetic stances. This is not to say that Wallace's 'appropriation' is simply a miming of others' literary aesthetics; on the contrary, what emerges from Wallace's absorption of others' aesthetics is a new and

vibrant aesthetic of his own.

All of Wallace's putative postmodern literary techniques have their origin in Modernist aesthetics, if we are to assign a general literary period of resemblance to his work. The celebrated fragmenting of his texts–through chronological jumbling, footnotes and endnotes, eccentric punctuation, multiple narrators, reflected speech (or free indirect discourse), dubious narration, encyclopedic information, mimetic representation, and the dramatizing of core human problems–makes his work more akin to Dostoevsky, Henry James, and Gaddis than to his own contemporaries like Mark Leyner and Neal Pollack. His underlying concern for simply trying to reach the reader, to entertain and confront, marks a literary aesthetic that returns to traditional composition rather than a devotion to what has become commonplace in postmodern literature. It is significant that Infinite Jest's author-proxy figure, James Incandenza (the wraith), encapsulates Wallace's own aesthetic of, first, "radical realism" (Jest 836), second, an anti-rebellious return (the wraith equates return) to Modernist aesthetics, and, finally, that the author-figure is alive in a literary theoretical context, but that is dead to and for the reader, sacrificed for the reader's benefit. Moreover, Incandenza, while animate, is repeatedly known as an *apres-garde*, instead of avant-garde, film-maker, which emphasizes his aesthetic return to the past (his 'following') instead of the contemporary ironic self-conscious aesthetic quest for novelty. For Wallace, writing fiction has little to do with schools or movements or "canonical distinctions" (McCaffery 139), but everything to do with dramatizing real-life,

contemporary American situations, ideologies, and concerns:

> it depends whether you're talking little-r realistic or big-R. If you mean is my stuff in the Howells/Wharton/Updike school of U.S. Realism, clearly not. But to me the whole binary of realistic vs. unrealistic fiction is a canonical distinction set up by people with a vested interest in the big-R tradition. A way to marginalize stuff that isn't soothing and conservative. Even the goofiest avant-garde agenda, if it's got integrity, is never, 'Let's eschew all realism,' but more, 'Let's try to countenance and render real aspects of real experiences that have previously been excluded from art.' . . . I guess my point is that 'realistic' doesn't have a univocal definition. (139-140)

We could say, then, that Wallace's aesthetic, if we are to classify it, might best be called "radical realism" (Jest 836)–a rendering of a jumbled and fragmented millennial America that finds its correlative in the textual fragmentation of Wallace's work. Wallace's fiction is at once violent and moving, despair-inspiring and comical; it is both at once. Taking a cursory glance at the contemporary advertising assault that daily bombards the average American in terms of Internet pop-up ads, spam email, newspaper, magazine, leaflet, billboard, television, and radio advertising, it is not difficult to understand Wallace's sense that the constant pitch to sell to average people fosters an existential "despair" (Supposedly 289) as they seek cover from this barrage. Art, for Wallace, is the last sanctum that holds out promise and hope, that does not seek to sell or manipulate; but when contemporary postmodern fiction returns to the very techniques that were inaugurated by the early, founding postmodernists–ironically dramatizing the crass nature of American consumerism, most notably begun by Gaddis in The Recognitions–and which techniques have been adapted by television and the commercial arts, as Wallace

observes, that literary art loses its vital status as a gift, a "living transaction between humans" (142): "this is the reason why even a really beautiful, ingenious, powerful ad (of which there are a lot) can never be any kind of real art: an ad has no status as gift, i.e. it's never really *for* the person it's directed at" (Supposedly 289, author's emphasis). Serious contemporary fiction no longer holds out hope, for Wallace, but upholds the contemporary isolating situation, mainly, because it has remained fixated in the postmodern ironic state, a state that the commercial arts dominate and that contemporary fiction writers look toward for inspiration and insight into our postmodern environment. The result is that postmodern fiction resembles the commercial arts in its content and aims "in this age when ironic self-consciousness is the one and only universally recognized badge of sophistication" (Supposedly 199).

It is, thus, quite ironic that Wallace's aesthetic should be hailed as either highly experimental or mordantly postmodern; it is neither, but because his 'methodology,' or aesthetic, is anachronistic, it is now so foreign to both producers and consumers of serious fiction that his aesthetic seems both visionary and avant garde. It is always instructive to recall Wallace's own words on such matters, for he always ensures that he first practices the agenda that he bids others to follow. We may say, then, that Wallace and his work can be classified as part of the 'agenda' of the "next real literary rebels," the "*anti*-rebels" (Supposedly 81), who rebel against the particularly contemporary American Weltschmerz of "rebellion as fashion" ("Hail" 16), that he calls for in "E Unibus Pluram," the rebels

who rebel against "self-consciousness and hip fatigue," "who have the childish gall actually to endorse and instantiate single-entendre principles," and "who treat of plain old untrendy human troubles and emotions in U.S. life with reverence and conviction" (81). In the current American culture of the ubiquitous "yawn, the rolled eyes, the cool smile, the nudged ribs, the parody of gifted ironists," and, perhaps, the most common and feared of all, the declaration of "'Oh how *banal*'" (81), in this cultural morass, Wallace's works are, indeed, avant garde and highly experimental as they risk censure from the literary establishment by going against all extant literary trends and standard responses.

A recent Globe and Mail roundtable discussion with "four of the country's most prominent authors under 30" (1), Sheila Heti, Lee Henderson, Emily Schultz, and Kevin Chong, proved revealing, underscoring that the current afflictions and challenges facing American fiction writers also challenge their Canadian counterparts. Panel moderator Alison Gzowski asked, "is there anything you guys feel you can't write about? Are any topics off-limits?" Emily Schultz replied, "I'm not sure we have that many taboos anymore," and Sheila Heti, author of The Middle Stories (2001) and contributor to Eggers's McSweeney's, responded with: "I don't know. A certain kind of *sincerity*, perhaps" (Gzowski 3, emphasis added). Both answers link with what Wallace has attempted to target with his fiction and criticism over the past decade: the problem of fashionable literary rebellion, a contemporary world-view that informs nearly all contemporary fiction, and the extreme difficulty that writers now face in addressing

seemingly quaint ideals with sincerity. That these two Canadian authors immediately expressed Wallace's two primary concerns, however, is further noteworthy as Heti later in the discussion mentions her preference for the "evocative simplicity" of certain American writers such as "Paula Fox, Paul Bowles, Flannery O'Connor, and Henry James" instead of "David Foster Wallace" (7). Heti tends to see the current American trend toward large works of fiction, what Tom LeClair calls "prodigious fiction," as hegemonic, remarking that "that country's writing has become oppressive and domineering" (7). This is, of course, arguable, yet what is central here is the enormous influence that Wallace's vision has now gained, and that his vision has begun to affect Canadian as well as American writers; Wallace's moral vision of art and its effects has entered contemporary aesthetic discourse. The roundtable discussion produced other, germane comments that reflect Wallace's broad reach and influence. Lee Henderson remarks that Americans are "better writers than we are" (7), and laments contemporary Canadian fiction's continual "obsession with historical novels," calling the genre "almost entirely pretentious" (3). Henderson supports his bleak but plausible view of Canadian historical fiction with this sharp yet reasonable point: "how the hell does this have anything at all to do with what's going on right now?" which echoes Wallace's view regarding references to pop-culture in works of fiction: "in terms of the world I live in and try to write about, it's inescapable. Avoiding any reference to the pop would mean either being retrograde about what's 'permissible' in serious art or else writing about some other world" (McCaffery 148). In

Henderson's and Wallace's estimation, contemporary artists are obliged to report on the contemporary human condition in which the artists themselves live, partake of, communicate in. We may assume Henderson's point to be that the easy recourse to, or reliance on, the historical novel is an abdication of the novelist's responsibility to comment on the contemporary era's malaise. Gzowski's question regarding writing "self-consciously" further connects to Wallace's concern with fiction writers displaying an ideological engagement in their writing: "do you write at all self-consciously–we're talking about identity politics now–as women, or Kevin [Chong] as a Chinese-Canadian, or Lee [Henderson] as a straight white guy?" (4). Henderson responds by noting that what Gzowski calls self-conscious identity politics contributes to "generational differences" that "dates" writing (5). He continues: "there was definitely something going on in the seventies and such where feminism became an incredibly important thing for a certain kind of writer to speak about. And that's cool, but it dates the work–you read some of even Atwood's early stuff and it feels like seventies writing" (5). Henderson's reflection on the previous generation's fiction as "dated" perhaps bespeaks a certain naïveté as all literary works are subject to dating, but his underlying premise that contemporary fiction writers must forge their own aesthetic independently of the novelists of the sixties and seventies is apt and further recalls Wallace's contention that ' the click is something that can't just be bequeathed from our postmodern ancestors to their descendants. No question that some of the early postmodernists . . . did magnificent work, but you can't

pass the click from one generation to another like a baton" (McCaffery 147). Most notable, perhaps, is Kevin Chong's reply to Gzowski's question about identity politics:

> I think there's ideology in a lot of novels. Dostoevsky, he writes about positivism, and with Turgenev there's nihilism, and with Tolstoy there's the whole idea of being Christian. And somehow I think they've survived because those ideologies have just been set in a human sort of story. Some writers like to deal with the big issues of their day. At the same time, the human condition will always be the biggest issue, and sometimes the ideology works because it's subservient to writing about consciousness and how we think and how we live, and how the world feels and smells. (5)

Chong here conflates politics and ideology. For Chong, these novels have survived because they are primarily concerned with "a human sort of story" not because of their ideological engagement, which he dissociates from what he calls "the human condition" (5). Yet, as we have noted in Wallace's reading of Dostoevsky, crafting authentic and important fiction itself requires some form of ideological engagement, for ideology, or belief, is an essential aspect of human life and an aspect of human life that is once more becoming prominent in contemporary North American literature.

That Wallace has been able to produce works such as Infinite Jest and surprising essays like "Hail the Returning Dragon, Clothed in New Fire," an essay that speaks frankly of the AIDS/HIV epidemic and contemporary American sexuality, attests both to the power of his arguments and his courage to speak with a conviction that risks disapproval and easy dismissal. In this essay, Wallace makes such un-ironic statements as, "AIDS's gift to us lies in its loud reminder that there's nothing casual about sex at all," "real sexuality is about our struggles to connect with one another, to erect bridges across

the chasms that separates selves," and "we are beginning to realize that highly charged sex can take place in all sorts of ways we'd forgotten or neglected–through non-genital touching, or over the phone, or via the mail; in a conversational nuance; in a body's posture, a certain pressure in a held hand" (17). While critics have claimed this essay to be an exemplar of Wallace's parodic and satirical writing, I would contend the opposite: that his direct sincerity often confuses his readership, and that his sophisticated analysis, gift for humour and observation, and vivid imagination cause readers to assume, in our contemporary environment–"postmodern irony's become our environment" (McCaffery 148)–that he could not possibly be sincere in his claims. Yet he is, as an "*anti*-rebel." In his essay on David Lynch, Wallace offers insight into what is quite possibly the governing aesthetic from which he operates; upon seeing Lynch's Blue Velvet (1986), Wallace writes of its impression on him: "this was what was epiphanic for us about Blue Velvet in grad school, when we saw it: the movie helped us realize that first-rate experimentalism was a way not to 'transcend' or 'rebel against' the truth but actually to *honor* it" (Supposedly 201, author's emphasis).

That Wallace has now, seven years after the publication of Infinite Jest, established a strong and wide reputation as a vital moral artist is, at times, attested to indirectly. In a peculiar recent review essay for The Boston Review, "New Pioneers of the American Short Story," Tom Bissell, a regular contributor to Harper's magazine among other publications, names Wallace has a leader, or standard-bearer, in the field of

contemporary American fiction-writing. What is peculiar about his review of Elizabeth Crane's When the Messenger is Hot (2003) and Marshall Boswell's Trouble with Girls (2003) is that Bissell makes constant reference to Wallace in a book review that ostensibly bears little immediate relation to Wallace or his work. Bissell observes that the two authors reviewed tend to write in what he calls the "absurdo-realism" style "practiced by writers such as David Foster Wallace, Lorrie Moore, and George Saunders" (par. 4). But while discussing Crane and Boswell, Bissell digresses into a discussion of Wallace's early legacy:

> Speaking of Wallace, is it now safe to say that, among writers of a certain age and inclination, [that] he is the single most influential writer currently working? With the 1,000-page shadow of Infinite Jest looming over his career, it is sometimes forgotten that nearly half of his books are short-story collections (including his upcoming volume). The self-consciousness, the footnotes (which Wallace might now choose to leave to his disciples), the staggeringly sharp eye and the remarkable ability to write for pages and pages *only* of detail–all are part of the way many of us write and think about writing now. One can see this in the journal McSweeney's (which shares Wallace's spirit but not always *the relentlessness of his moral engagement.* (par. 4, second emphasis added)

The segue on Wallace is, perhaps, not as peculiar as first noted, however, when we realize that this new generation of fiction writers has now absorbed Wallace's style and manipulated it for its own literary purposes. Bissell argues that one of Crane's stories falls short and resembles a "waxen version of something that only Wallace could have made come alive" (par. 4). Later, in discussing Boswell–who not only mimes Wallace's style but has a forthcoming critical work on him, as well–Bissell contends that Boswell's stories

contain "a hilariously paralyzing Wallacean self-consciousness" (par. 7), and, in conclusion, observes that both Crane and Boswell have used "David Foster Wallace as a partial guide" (par. 13). Bissell's diagnosis is fascinating for he, perhaps unwittingly, observes a new movement in contemporary American short fiction, one that has been established by Wallace and is now mimed by his contemporaries. It is, perhaps, ironic that Wallace, who has publically claimed Dostoevksy to be "a star to steer by" ("Joseph Frank's Dostoevsky") and a "hologram" ("Fyodor's Guide" 25) for writing serious fiction that morally engages readers, should now be considered a "guide" to writing fiction with a relentless "moral engagement" (Bissell par. 4). It is also further ironic that Wallace should now be considered the founder of a late-millennial American aesthetic by both critics and literary artists, although Wallace himself claims that "'schools' of fiction are for crank-turners. The founder of a movement is never part of the movement" (McCaffery 144). Nevertheless, acknowledgment of Wallace's achievement by such figures in contemporary American fiction as Don DeLillo and Richard Powers (Burn 76), indicates that Wallace's efforts to engage his readership and challenge his contemporaries morally has been, and continue to be, successful. Zadie Smith, emerging author of the best-selling White Teeth (2000) and The Autograph Man (2002), admits that "Wallace is proving to be the kind of writer I was sort of hoping didn't exist–a visionary, a craftsman, a comedian, and as serious as it is possible to be without writing a religious text" (qtd. in Burn 76). From all accounts it seems fair now, even though Wallace's oeuvre can hardly

be said to be complete, to conclude that Wallace's position as a major figure in American letters is well-established, and that his attempts to delight and instruct morally, following the bright lights of G.M. Hopkins and Fyodor Dostoevsky before him, are now coming to fruition, and that Wallace himself has become and continues to be a "hologram" for future generations of American writers.

Works Cited

Abbott, Edwin A. 1884. Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions. New York: Dover, 1992.

Abrams, M.H. "The Deconstructive Angel." Critical Inquiry 3.3 (1977): 425-438.

Aldridge, John. Talents and Technicians: Literary Chic and the New Assembly-Line Fiction. New York: Scribner, 1992.

"Apocalypse." 1969. The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols. Eds. Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant. Trans. John Buchanan-Brown. New York: Penguin, 1996.

Auerbach, Erich. 1953. Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature. Trans. Willard R. Trask. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003.

—. "Figura." Scenes from the Drama of European Literature. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984. 11-76.

Avsey, Ignat. "Introduction." The Karamazov Brothers. Trans. Ignat Avsey. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994.

Backhouse, Janet. 'The Lindisfarne Gospels': A Masterpiece of Book Painting. London: British Library, 1995.

Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." Image, Music, Text. Trans. Stephen Heath. New York: Hill, 1977. 142-148.

Bissell, Tom. "A Comet's Tale: On the Science of Apocalypse." Harper's Feb. 2003: 33-47.

—. "New Pioneers of the American Short Story." Boston Review Apr./May 2003. < http://bostonreview.mit.edu/BR28.2/bissell.html > 21 May 2003.

Bloom, Harold. Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human. New York: Riverhead, 1998.

Bowers, Fredson. Textual and Literary Criticism. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1959.

Brecht, Bertolt. The Trial of Lucullus. Trans. H.R. Hays. New York: New Directions, 1943.

Brooke-Rose, Christine. A Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in Narrative and Structure, Especially of the Fantastic. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981.

Brown, Norman O. Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History. New York: Vintage, 1959.

—. Love's Body. Berkeley: U of California P, 1966.

Bruni, Frank. "The Grunge American Novel." The New York Times Magazine. 24 March 1996. <http://www.smallbytes.net/~bobkat/jest6.html>.

Burke, Kenneth. 1941. "Semantic and Poetic Meaning." The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1984. 138-167.

Burke, Seán. The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida. Edinburgh: U of Edinburgh P, 1992.

Burn, Stephen. David Foster Wallace's 'Infinite Jest': A Reader's Guide. New York: Continuum P, 2003.

Cavell, Stanley. Letter to the author. 26 January 2002.

Cioffi, Frank Louis. "'An Anguish Become Thing': Narrative as Performance in David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest." Narrative 8.2 (2000): 161-181.

Cortázar, Julio. Hopscotch. Trans. Gregory Rabassa. New York: Pantheon, 1966.

Costello, Mark. "Fighting to Write: A Short Reminiscence of D.F. Wallace." The Review of Contemporary Fiction 13.3 (1993): 235-236.

Dahlberg, Edward. Can These Bones Live. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1960.

Derrida, Jacques. Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge, 1994.

—. Of Grammatology: Corrected Edition. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1997.

—. "Signature Event Context." Margins--Of Philosophy. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982.

—. "The Art of Mémoires." Mémoires for Paul deMan. Trans. Cecile Lindsay, Jonathan Culler and Eduardo Cadava. New York: Columbia UP, 19886. 45-88.

—. "No Apocalypse, Not Now (full speed ahead, seven missiles, seven missives)." Diacritics 14.2 (1984): 20-31.

Donahue, Anne Marie. "Infinite Text: Tennis, 12-Step, and Terrorism in a Big Book of Life and Laughs." The Boston Phoenix. 21 March 1996. <http://www.smallbytes.net/~bobkat/boston.html>.

Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 1880. The Brothers Karamazov: A Novel in Four Parts with Epilogue. Trans. and Annotated Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Farrar, 1990.

Eliot, T.S. 1922. The Waste Land. Collected Poems: 1909-1962. London: Faber, 1974.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Circles." Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson: An Organic Anthology. Ed. Stephen E. Whicher. Boston: Houghton, 1957. 168-178.

Fiddes, Paul. The Promised End: Eschatology in Theology and Literature. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.

Fine, Elizabeth C. and Jean Haskell Speer. Performance, Culture, and Identity. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1992.

Frank, Joseph Dostoevsky: The Mantle of the Prophet, 1871-1881. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2002.

—. Dostoevsky: The Miraculous Years, 1865-1871. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995.

—. Dostoevsky: The Stir of Liberation, 1860-1865. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986.

—. Dostoevsky: The Years of Ordeal, 1850-1859. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983.

—. Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt, 1821-1849. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1976.

Franklyn, Julian and John Tanner. An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Heraldry. New York: Pergamon P, 1969.

Friar, Stephen, ed. A Dictionary of Heraldry. New York: Harmony, 1987.

Frye, Northrop. Words with Power: Being a Second Study of 'The Bible and Literature'. New York: Viking P, 1990.

—. Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957.

—. The Double Vision: Language and Meaning in Religion. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1991.

—. The Great Code: The Bible and Literature. New York: Harcourt, 1982.

—. The Educated Imagination. Toronto: Stoddart, 1963.

—. "Literature as Therapy." Northrop Frye Newsletter 3.2 (1991): 29.

Garber, Marjorie. Shakespeare's Ghost Writers: Literature as Uncanny Causality. New York: Metheun, 1987.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 1960. Truth and Method. Second, Revised Edition. Trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. New York: Continuum P, 2000.

—. "Destruktion and Deconstruction." Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter. Eds. Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer. Albany: SUNY P, 1989.

Gaddis, William. 1955. The Recognitions. Penguin, 1993.

Girard, René. Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure. Trans. Yvonne Freccero. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1965.

Gzowski, Alison. "Rewriting our Sense of Self." The Globe and Mail [Toronto] 28 June 2003: R8.

Harris, Mark. 1956. Bang the Drum Slowly. New York: Dell, 1973.

Hawthorn, Jeremy, ed. Preface. Narrative: From Malory to Motion Pictures. Baltimore: Arnold, 1985. vii-xvi.

Hegel, G.W.F. Phenomenology of Spirit. Trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977.

Hopkins, Gerard Manley. The Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Eds. Humphry House and Graham Storey. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1959.

—. The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges. Ed. C.C. Abbott. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1955.

—. The Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins with Richard Watson Dixon. Ed. C.C. Abbott. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1955.

—. Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins including his Correspondence with Coventry Patmore. Ed. C.C. Abbott. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1956.

—. The Later Poetic Manuscripts of Gerard Manley Hopkins in Facsimile. Ed. Norman H. MacKenzie. New York: Garland, 1991.

—. Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Ed. W.H. Gardner. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1960.

Hulme, T.E. "A Tory Philosophy." The Collected Writings of T.E. Hulme. Ed. Karen Csengeri. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994.

Iser, Wolfgang. The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976.

James, William. 1903. The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature. New York: Mentor, 1958.

Joyce, James. 1922. Ulysses. Eds. Hans Walter Gabler, Wolfhard Steppe, and Claus Melchior. New York: Penguin, 1986.

Kakutani, Michiko. "A Country Dying of Laughter. In 1,079 Pages." The New York Times 13 Feb. 1996: B2.

Kael, Pauline. "Spoofing and Schtik [sic]." Atlantic. December (1965): 84-85.

Kallendorf, Hilaire. "Intertextual Madness in Hamlet: The Ghost's Fragmented

Performativity." Renaissance and Reformation 22.4 (1998): 69-87.

Kermode, Frank. The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1966.

—."Cornelius and Voltemand: Doubles in Hamlet." Forms of Attention. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1985.

Kolakowski, Leszek. Modernity on Endless Trial. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990.

Lacan, Jacques. The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis. Trans. Alan Sheridan. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. New York: Penguin, 1984.

LeClair, Tom. "The Prodigious Fiction of Richard Powers, William Vollmann and David Foster Wallace." Critique 38.1 (1996): 12-37.

Lentricchia, Frank. After the New Criticism. Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1980.

Levenson, Michael H. A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of Literary Doctrine, 1908-1922. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984.

Leyner, Mark. 1990. My Cousin, My Gastroenterologist. New York: Vintage, 1993.

Limon, John. Writing After War: American War Fiction from Realism to Postmodernism. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994.

Marshall, Cynthia. Last Things and Last Plays: Shakespearean Eschatology. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1991.

Maryles, Daisy. "Ahead, not Behind." Publishers [sic] Weekly. 15 July 2002. <http://publishersweekly.reviewsnews.com/index.asp?layout=articleArchive&articleId=CA233481&display=searchResults&stt=001&publication=publishersweekly >.

McLuhan, Marshall. The Medium and the Light: Reflections on Religion. Eds. Eric McLuhan and Jacek Szklarek. Toronto: Stoddart, 1999.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1962. Phenomenology of Perception. Trans. Colin Smith. New York: Routledge, 2001.

—. The Visible and the Invisible. Ed. Claude Lefort. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1968.

Meyer Kinereth, and Rachel Salmon. "The Poetry of Conversion as Language Act: Gerard Manley Hopkins and T. S. Eliot." Guilt and Critical Discourse. Ed. Eugene Hollahan. New York: AMS P, 1993. 233-61.

Moore, Steven. "The First Draft Version of Infinite Jest." 10 May 2002. < http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/8175/ij_first.htm >.

Morris, David. "Lived Time and Absolute Knowing: Habit and Addiction from Infinite Jest to the Phenomenology of Spirit." Clio 30.4 (2001): 375-415.

Passaro, Vince. "Unlikely Stories: The Quiet Renaissance of American Short Fiction." Harper's Aug. 1999: 80-89.

Pevear, Richard. "Introduction." The Brothers Karamazov. Trans. and Annotated Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1990.

Phelan, James. "Why Narrators Can Be Focalizers–and Why It Matters." New Perspectives on Narrative Perspective. Eds. Willie van Peer and Seymour Chatman. Albany: SUNY P, 2001. 51-64.

Pinsker, Sanford. "Contemporary American Fiction Through University Press Filters." The Georgia Review 55.2 (2001): 374-381.

Ricoeur, Paul. "Appropriation." Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation. Ed. and Trans. John B. Thompson. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981.

Rollins, Henry. Solipsist. Los Angeles: 2.13.61 P, 1998.

Ryle, Gilbert. 1949. The Concept of Mind. Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1984.

Saunders, Doug. "The Importance of Not Being Earnest." The Globe and Mail [Toronto] 29 Apr. 1997: C3.

Searle, John. "Reiterating the Differences: A Reply to Jacques Derrida." Glyph 1 (1977): 198-208.

Shakespeare, William. Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. The Complette Works of Shakespeare. Ed. David Bevington. New York: Harper, 1992.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Translator's Preface." Of Grammatology: Corrected Edition. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1997. ix-lxxxvii.

Stein, Lorin. "David Foster Wallace: In the Company of Creeps." Publishers [sic] Weekly 3 May 1999: 52-53.

Stendhal. 1830. The Red and the Black. Trans. and Ed. Catherine Slater. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991.

Terras, Victor. Reading Dostoevsky. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1998.

—. A Karamazov Companion: Commentary on the Genesis, Language, and Style of Dostoevsky's Novel. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1981.

Tolstoy, Leo. "The Death of Ivan Ilych." Continental Literature. 2 vols. Trans. Aylmer Maude. Eds. Dorothy Van Ghent and Joseph S. Brown. New York: Lippincott, 1968. 1698-1741.

Toner, P.J. "Eschatology." New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia. 9 September 2002 < http://www.newadvent.org/ >.

Wallace, David Foster. Infinite Jest. Boston: Little, 1996.

—. Brief Interviews with Hideous Men. Boston: Little, 1999.

—. A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again. Boston: Little, 1997.

—. 1987. The Broom of the System. New York: Avon, 1997.

—. Girl with Curious Hair. New York: Norton, 1989.

—. "Tense Present: Democracy, English, and the Wars over Usage." Harper's Apr. 2001: 39-58.

—. "Quite a Bit Longer Thing in Progress." Conjunctions 20 (1993): 223-275.

—. "Laughing with Kafka." Harper's July 1998: 23, 26-27.

—. Letter to the author. 28 March 2000.

—. "Joseph Frank's Dostoevsky." Unpublished essay, 1995.

—. "Feodor's Guide." War of the Words: Twenty Years of Writing on Contemporary Literature. Ed. Joy Press. New York: Three Rivers P, 2001.

—. "The Indexical Book Review." Rain Taxi Review of Books 6.1 (2001): 22-24.

—. "The Empty Plenum: David Markson's Wittgenstein's Mistress." Review of Contemporary Fiction 10.2 (1990): 217-239.

—. "Hail the Returning Dragon, Clothed in New Fire." 'Shiny Adidas Tracksuits and the Death of Camp' and Other Essays from 'Might' Magazine. Ed. Dave Eggers. New York: Berkley Boulevard, 1998. 14-17.

—. "1458 Words." Speak Magazine Spring (1996): 41-42.

—. "E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction." A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again. Boston: Little, Brown, 1997. 21-82.

—. "Greatly Exaggerated." A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again. Boston: Little, Brown, 1997. 138-145.

—. "An Interview with David Foster Wallace." By Larry McCaffery. Review of Contemporary Fiction 13.2 (1993): 127-150.

—. "Live Online with David Foster Wallace." Word E-Zine 17 May 1996. <http://www.smallbytes.net/~bobkat/jest11a.html>.

—. "QPB Talks to David Foster Wallace." By David Stanton. Quality Paperback Book Club Review. September 1996.<http://www.smallbytes.net/~bobkat/jest9.html>.

—. Interview with David Foster Wallace. By Laura Miller. Salon Mar. 1996. 8 March 1996 <http://www.salon.com/09/features/wallace1.html>.

—. Interview with David Foster Wallace. By Charlie Rose. The Charlie Rose Show. PBS. 27 March 1997. <http://www.smallbytes.net/~bobkat/rose.html >.

—. Interview with David Foster Wallace. By David Wiley. Minnesota Daily Feb. 1997. 27

February 1997 <http://www.smallbytes.net/~bobkat/jestwiley2.html>.

Wasiolek, Edward. "The Brothers Karamazov: Idea and Technique." The Brothers Karamazov: Backgrounds and Sources and Essays in Criticism. Trans. Constance Garnett and Ralph Matlaw. Ed. Ralph Matlaw. New York: Norton, 1976. 813-821.

Weber, Samuel, ed. "Program." Glyph: Johns Hopkins Textual Studies 1 (1977): vii.

Williams, Tennessee, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. New York: New Directions, 1955.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. Philosophical Investigations. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell, 1953.