

## OzWallace 2017

### Abstracts

**Tore Rye Andersen, Aarhus University**

#### **The First (and Second) Coming of *Infinite Jest***

"It's coming," one of the postcards issued by Wallace's publisher as part of the marketing campaign for *Infinite Jest* boldly proclaimed, but in a certain sense it was already there: Since 1992 a significant proportion of the novel-to-be had already been excerpted in various journals and magazines in a kind of partial, dispersed and unsystematic serialization, so at best the coming promised by the postcard was a Second Coming.

In my paper I will provide what I believe to be the first complete and collated overview of these pre-publication excerpts (existing online bibliographies and the list on the novel's copyright page are incomplete and/or erroneous). Together, the venues in which the excerpts appeared speak of a remarkable diversity in the novel's intended audience, and the collected excerpts themselves provide a surprisingly skewed impression of *Infinite Jest* (by far the majority of the excerpts center on the denizens of Ennett House, whereas the Hal/ETA strand of the novel is barely represented).

I will conclude with a discussion of the ambiguous function of these excerpts that are situated in an undefined zone between self-contained stories and a scattershot paratextual framing meant to prepare readers for the second coming of *Infinite Jest*.

**Bio:** Tore Rye Andersen is Associate Professor and head of the Department of Comparative Literature and Rhetoric at Aarhus University. He is director of the research centre Literature Between Media and editor of the literary journal *Passage*. He is the author of the book *Den nye amerikanske roman/The New American Novel* (2011), and he has published a number of articles on American fiction (with particular focus on David Foster Wallace and Thomas Pynchon) and on the materiality and mediality of literature in literary and media studies journals such *Critique, English Studies, Orbis Litterarum* and *Convergence*.

**Grace Chipperfield, Flinders University**

#### **Das ist komisch: Kafkaesque humour in Wallace's fiction**

In his essay on Kafka's sense of humour, Wallace talks about his frustration in teaching college students to see how Kafka is funny and to see that this funniness is 'bound up with the power of his stories.'<sup>1</sup> Part of the problem, as per Wallace, is that Kafka's humour is 'alien to students whose neural resonances are American' and whose present culture (which he describes as 'adolescent')<sup>2</sup> has them 'trained to see jokes as entertainment and entertainment as reassurance.'<sup>3</sup> This informs students' struggle to 'get' Kafka, since his 'comedy is always also tragedy' and since they fail to see that 'this tragedy [is] always also an immense and reverent joy.'<sup>4</sup> Compare this with trying to teach Wallace's fiction; one teacher had his college students tell him that his Wallace syllabus 'should've

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<sup>1</sup> David Foster Wallace, 'Some Remarks on Kafka's Funniness From Which Probably Not Enough Has Been Removed,' (1999) in *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays* (repr. London: Abacus, 2007) p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> Wallace, 'Some Remarks on Kafka's Funniness,' p. 64 footnote 3.

<sup>3</sup> Wallace, 'Some Remarks on Kafka's Funniness,' p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> Wallace, 'Some Remarks on Kafka's Funniness,' p. 63.

been subtitled: “A Thousand Different Kinds of Sad”.<sup>5</sup> In performing a word search of *Infinite Jest*, the word “joy” ‘comes up 12 times and “sad” comes up 94 times, so [the teacher] could see how [his students] would be left with that impression.’<sup>5</sup> This is in keeping with Wallace’s statement that, with *Infinite Jest*, he ‘wanted to do something sad.’<sup>6</sup>

But I don’t think Wallace’s ‘sad’ was humourless, and I think there are examples of his trying to use Kafka’s tragicomic funniness in his fiction. In my paper I plan to argue that these sorts of jokes are purposive and joyful and an extension of Wallace’s efforts to teach his American readers about a more adult sense of humour and how it may serve them, if not reassure them.

**Bio:** Grace Chipperfield is a PhD candidate in Creative Writing at Flinders University in South Australia. She is researching what it is to be an American citizen and how this relates to adolescence and adulthood in the works of David Foster Wallace. She also teaches in English Literature at Flinders University.

**Mitch Cunningham, Deakin University**

### **Love and the Lynchian Sitcom: The Perils of Psychoanalytic Reading in Wallace**

The relationship between David Foster Wallace’s works and the psychoanalytic theory of mind has been a concern within Wallace scholarship for some time. While scholars have noted the recurrence of Freudian and Lacanian motifs in David Foster Wallace’s works, the author’s complex relationship to psychoanalytic theories of interpretation remains arguably under-theorised. In response, this paper discusses the idea of ‘psychoanalytic reading’ in Wallace’s works, and makes a case for the centrality of Freudian metapsychology to Wallace’s own ideas about the ‘author-reader relationship’ in metafiction. I argue that Wallace’s metafiction is inherently *transference-neurotic*, in that they rely on psychoanalytic forms of repetition and reader-construction to achieve the cathartic effect of “an act of communication between one human being and another” (Wallace 1997: 144). This claim is considered through a critique of the essay ‘David Lynch Keeps His Head’, in which Wallace frames Lynchian cinema as “an expression of certain anxious, obsessive, fetishistic, Oedipally arrested, borderlinish parts of the director’s psyche” (1997: 166). By reading Wallace’s late-period collection *Oblivion* (2004), I contrast Wallace-ian reader-response tropes – identification, critique, narration and negation – with their equivalents in Freudian literary theory, and consider the impact of the transference-neurosis on Wallace’s self-reflexive construction of the psychoanalytic ‘reader’.

**Bio:** Mitch Cunningham is a Melbourne-based academic and PhD candidate with Deakin University. His PhD thesis, ‘Performing the Fiction-Writer’s Reader’, investigates psychoanalytic reader-response theories in Wallace’s work and reception. Elements of this research have been presented at the *Infinite Wallace* conference in Paris (2014), and as part of the AAWP panel ‘Ghost Stories, Love Stories, New Stories: Reconfiguring David Foster Wallace for the Australian Academy’ (2015). Related research interests include hermeneutic philosophy, theories of modernity, speculative fiction and the cinema of David Lynch. In his spare time, Mitch writes songs for his fledgling indie-pop band, Martians of Error.

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<sup>5</sup> Bucher, Matt, Dave Laird and Rob Short. “Episode 13: Discussing David Foster Wallace with Rob Short.” Audio blog post. The Great Concavity, 27 Apr. 2015. Web. 25 April 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Laura Miller, ‘The Salon Interview: David Foster Wallace’ (1996) in *Conversations with David Foster Wallace*, ed. by Stephen J. Burn (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012) p. 58.

**Duncan Driver, University of Canberra**

### **Dave the teacher and the short story as a sort of lesson**

This paper will examine the relationship between Wallace's teaching and his writing, arguing that his teaching pedagogy was directly informed by his beliefs about writing and that much of his writing demonstrates the pedagogy of his teaching. It will consist of three parts: part one of the paper will look at course syllabi and other documents as well as student reflections on Wallace's teaching in order to establish that a series of intriguing but contradictory impulses appear to have been present (Wallace's reputation as a rule-bending eccentric but also as a 'pedagogical hard-ass', for example). Part two of the paper seeks to resolve these contradictions by applying the lens of educational theory and a consideration of some of Wallace's beliefs about writing (aspects of goal-oriented and student-centred learning as well as broader Humanist values that stress secular morality and the primary importance of empathy and imagination are likely to be the focus). Part three of the paper suggests that a Humanist, student-centred and goal-oriented regard for Wallace's teaching provides a valuable perspective from which to read his fiction: through an analysis of his short story, "Think" (*Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*), it will be argued that many of the ambiguities and challenges of Wallace's writing can be answered by framing them in terms of what we know about his pedagogical approach.

**Bio:** Dr. Duncan Driver is an Assistant Professor of Education at the University of Canberra. Prior to this, he taught at Gungahlin College, wrote for the *Canberra Times* and lectured in English at the Australian National University. He has published in Australia and the United States on aspects of Shakespeare studies. His most recent publication is the article, "Writer, reader, student, teacher" for *English in Australia*, the peer-reviewed journal of the Australian Association for the Teaching of English.

**Danielle Ely, Columbia-Greene Community College**

### **Women, the Resisting Readers of *Infinite Jest***

A close look at femininity in *Infinite Jest* would necessarily happen at the periphery of the main narratives due to its focus on the masculine. There's no question that *Infinite Jest* prioritizes male characters and male driven narratives. One scholar describes any critique of *Infinite Jest* as being a study of "men among men." Indeed, many accusations of misogyny have been thrown David Foster Wallace's way because of the distinct lack of femininity in *Infinite Jest*.

In LitFestPress' *Normal 2014: Collected Works from the First Annual DFW Conference*, my piece titled "Into the Womb of *Infinite Jest*" addresses these accusations. In the piece, I locate the deadly *Entertainment* as the aspect of the novel that takes misogyny to its darkest ends (the point where "one subjectivity (the masculine) has taken it upon itself to represent the other (the feminine)" because of the misperceived view that she either cannot or should not represent herself). Whether his hatred is directed at one woman in particular, or all, implicit in the film's misogyny is its auteur James O. Incandenza. Furthermore, the *Entertainment* is such an important symbol and key plot device in *Infinite Jest*, that it's easy for readers to get swept up in its gravity and before we know it, we're almost as complicit in its misogyny as the auteur Himself.

Although I find the deadly *Entertainment* *Infinite Jest*'s most egregious example of misogyny, it's no surprise that its message runs rampant throughout the text. Misogyny is sewn-in-to the fabric of *Infinite Jest*'s post-apocalyptic society—along with miscommunication, misrepresentation, corruption, solipsism, unquenchable thirsts for pleasure, and many more undesirable and frightening qualities besides.

But that same rule of thumb need not apply to Wallace. Sure, Wallace authored the text, but let's not forget exactly what kind of fiction *Infinite Jest* is—a *dystopia*, a future to be avoided.

It's no surprise to me when the novel's content follows suit to undermine or undercut a female character's power or agency in some way. In *The Resisting Reader* (1978), feminist theorist Judith Fetterley writes, "Not only does powerlessness describe the content of what is read, but it also characterizes women's experience of reading." In short, "Powerlessness is the subject and powerlessness the experience, and the design insists that [men] speak for us all" (Fetterley, xiii).

In this project, I address the question of the novel's hostility, specifically towards its female readers. I do this by examining formal limitations of the novel, like how mediated our encounters with Avril Incandenza and Joelle Van Dyne are especially. Ultimately, by reinvesting our attention toward *Infinite Jest's* female characters, readers may achieve *empathy* or *identification*. I argue that this achievement is an effective antidote for/way to avoid the dystopian elements of the potential future Wallace presents. Fetterley describes this method of reading simply as "an act of survival."

**Bio:** Danielle S. Ely completed her Master's Thesis called "Into the Womb of Solipsism: The Entertainment as 'Speculum'" in 2011. She has presented instantiations of her thesis at conferences like Sex...or Something Like It in Madrid and the David Foster Wallace Conference. Her complete thesis is available on Proquest and her work can also be found in LitFestPress' Normal 2014 and Normal 2015. She is an adjunct English instructor at Columbia-Greene Community College and Hudson Valley Community College.

**Stephen Gaunson, RMIT University**

**"Be a good guy": Hagiography and adaptation in *The End of the Tour***

James Ponsoldt's biopic, *The End of the Tour* (2015), is based on actual accounts of David Lipsky's "Rolling Stone" interview with David Foster Wallace in 1996, to conclude the *Infinite Jest* publicity tour. Although the film has received overwhelming praise from Wallace fans and critics — mostly for its favourable depictions of the author, not to mention Jason Segel's performance — there has also been a less publicised response to it as a turgid and shallow depiction of the complicated and contrarian author. By discussing the ways that the film is purposely constructed to portray Wallace without any critical consideration, this paper will posit how it chooses to accept the populist depiction of him as the dog-loving-kids-loving-McDonald's-loving-genius without any of the deeper complexities that made him such an enigmatic and convoluted cultural personality.

**Bio:** Dr Stephen Gaunson is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Media and Communication at RMIT University (Melbourne), where he mostly teaches and writes on film adaptation and the idea of history on the screen.

**Simon Gluskie, Deakin University**

**Let's play Apocalypse**

My proposed paper will be an analysis of systems of surveillance and methods of control present within Foster-Wallace's *Infinite Jest*. I will undertake a close reading of the "Eschaton" game, using the instance as a framework to comment on varying intricacies of simulation, surveillance and control. Readings from Baudrillard, Bogard and Foucault will be used to support my claims, providing occurrences within the novel with a theoretical context. Once this basis has been established, I will move on to comment on the presence of these systems on a larger scale, both within Foster-

Wallace's work and modern day society.

By identifying Eschaton and the simulation of nuclear war as a system of deterrence, similarities can be seen in other means of simulation. Another focal point within *Infinite Jest* and a section deserving of close reading is that which details an individual's complete and remorseless addiction to the television show MASH. Like nuclear war, television deters action. Baudrillard claims that "TV itself is also a nuclear process of chain reaction, but implosive: it cools and neutralises the meaning of events... the universalisation of a system of deterrence" (1994, p.53). By focusing on this section of Foster-Wallace's novel, elements of control can be analysed on the level of the individual.

*Infinite Jest* moves between locations and characters without mercy. What this provides is a huge mixture of character based frames of reference, as well as varied forms of control that exert force on the characters in question. What this paper will aim to achieve is finding some common ground between simulation, surveillance and control in its myriad of forms.

**Bio:** I am a thirty-year-old teacher/student from Melbourne Australia, currently undertaking my doctoral degree at Deakin University. When the books and coffee cups pile too high, I like to go surfing.

### ***Ben Goodfellow, the Freudian School of Melbourne***

#### **Speech, Catastrophe and Creation – DFW reveals a little of what Lacan was on about**

The verse of David Foster Wallace is a compulsive, creative explosion; few who approach his work with bravery and sincerity can escape its provocations. Like a James Joyce of the Americas, Wallace calls to mind Nietzsche's "I am not a man, I am dynamite!" as he confronts, baffles and thrills so forcefully there must be more at play. Indeed, a film, a symphony, a novel can only stir that relentlessly if it reveals a metaphysical truth or two. As my mind was chiselled into more complex forms with each page of *Infinite Jest* I recognised similar sensations provoked by concepts of Jacques Lacan, the psychoanalyst whose re-reading of Freud planted gelignite beneath the psychoanalytic establishment of his day. In Melbourne, where arose the first group of English-speaking analysts to take direction from Lacan and Freud, it is apt we consider the intersection of DFW and this French provocateur. This paper examines how the universality of alienation and DFW's unique depiction of modernity's dystopic absurdity find not mere synergy but perhaps redemption through the listening, the teaching and the creation of which Lacan was an agent par excellence.

**Bio:** Dr Ben Goodfellow an infant, child and general psychiatrist in public and private practice. He is a member of the Freudian School of Melbourne, in formation as a psychoanalyst. Ben reveres various geniuses across time and genre though is a disciple of none.

### ***Shelley Grieve-Zerkel, Ohio State University***

#### **"Thanks everybody and I hope you like it": Uses of Puppetry in Mario's *ONANTiad***

Mario's transformation of his father's *ONANTiad* from a hygienically fraught love triangle to a warped O.N.A.N. origin story is well reflected in Mario's choice of medium: as a puppet show, the reworked *ONANTiad* fulfills the customary roles of material performance—entertainment, education, advertising, and ritual—and draws upon the tradition of political or radical puppetry to protest loss of sovereignty and environmental degradation.

In this presentation, the process of designing and constructing *ONANTiad* puppets and an operable puppet stage functions as a form of close reading, and reinforces how *The ONANTiad* illustrates the structure and themes of *Infinite Jest* as a whole. The puppets, as a form of fan art, also demonstrate the potential of that genre for addressing stereotypes. Drawing upon the work of John Bell on puppetry, Brian McHale's history of *mise en abyme*, and the reflections of Anna Wilson and others on fan fiction, this puppetry rendition of Mario's "ONANTiad Jr." characters and set illustrates how the act of physically rendering—and interacting with—an "imaginary" work enriches our understanding of *Infinite Jest*.

**Bio:** Shelley Grieve-Zerkel is a nondegree student in literature at The Ohio State University, where she also received an M.A. in Communications. A native of central Illinois, where Wallace grew up, she loves his sense of place and finds him hilarious. An Info Designer for IBM, Shelley is delighted to be in Australia.

**Tasha Haines, Deakin University**

### **Something New That Matters: Hybridising Manoeuvres in *The Pale King***

This paper discusses the prominent hybridising manoeuvres in *The Pale King* (2011) by David Foster Wallace, as an exemplification of *something new that matters* in the post- postmodern<sup>1</sup> literary context, Wallace distills a poetics of *sincere irony* in tangent with his own psychic archive, which becomes in collusion, a liminal hybrid force.

This exploration of hybridity explores how *The Pale King* metonymically performs its "vocational memoir" (T.P.K, p. 70), in solastalgic<sup>2</sup> revelations of anxiety via its authorial protagonists (Wallace's various sweaty, bored, beguiled, or astral-traveling selves at the I.R.S.), and in the relationship between the text, its "factoids", and the copious neurotic and caveating footnotes.

Typical to post-postmodern writing, is the operation of author as subject, filter, or lens; Wallace's self-embeddedness or entrapment in the text (going arborescently deep into footnotes), renders the work unreliably 'true' and compels the reader into a state of suspended belief as she submits to a variegated tedium interrupted by Wallace's occasional side-swiping declarations (*its all true*), in completing-and-complicating the writer-reader circuit.

*The Pale King* employs (collaboratively with editor Michael Pietsch) a cross-genred identity as it dabbles in auto-fiction while being primarily occupied with an un-didactic auto-theory in construction of a 'map' of the (anthropogenic/capitalistic) predicament, while never proposing solutions or arrivals.

The discussion shows how this un-finished memoir, with its posthumous slippage between solo and collaborative practice and its modes of contradiction and possibility, exemplifies a hybrid retrieval-and-invention of *something new that matters*, post- postmodernly.

<sup>1</sup> The moniker 'post-postmodernism' connects to a lineage of modernisms and is therefore arguably the best place-holding term for what occurs 'now' as a result of simultaneously embodying even disjunctive ideologies and practices within hybrid embodiments of genre collaboration or collapse.

<sup>2</sup> Solastalgia = existential distress caused by the impact of living with environmental damage (inescapable) in the anthropocene; it contrasts with nostalgia (of escapism). Solastalgia is a neologism coined by Glenn Albrecht in 2003.

**Bio:** Tasha Haines is a Wellington NZ based interdisciplinary writer and artist. She is writing a PhD via Deakin University, looking at redemptive hybrid forms in literary post- postmodernity. She has a master's degree in fine arts (photomontage) from Elam at Auckland University. Tasha taught visual arts and research subjects at a polytechnic in Wellington and a university in Melbourne for ten years, after which she managed a dealer art gallery and wrote book reviews.

**Clare Hayes-Brady, University College Dublin**

### **I am in here: David Foster Wallace and the body as object**

Wallace's writing is full of bodies, often in grotesque situations of pain, addiction or stress. From LaVache's Leg in *The Broom of the System* to Cusk's sweaty self-consciousness in *The Pale King*, the body is a site of contested identity, a physical inscription of the mind-body problem. Wallace's engagement with the body through his work situates the body as both locus of subjectivity and focus of objectification, and through examining his close attention to embodied subjectivity it is possible to elucidate aspects of his career-long preoccupation with solipsism and human connection.

Through close readings of a number of characters and scenes, this paper works towards an outline of Wallace's poetics and ethics of embodiment. In the course of this intervention, the paper draws on existing scholarship on Wallace and language, gender and philosophy, arguing that Wallace's continued, problematic engagement with the body throughout his writing speaks also to a post-Kantian desire to locate the self both in opposition to and in cooperation with the unknowable other. Developing this argument to touch on questions of mind/body dualism, I argue that Wallace uses the body – often the female body, often in pain – to dramatise coherent alterity. By the same token, in his writing of the body, Wallace engages in a struggle to imagine a whole and fully-contained self, a self that has no need of an other, but this imaginative process is troubled by the forces of late capitalism in the form of drugs, labour, entertainment and violence. Taking this line of argument, the paper argues that the body of Wallace's work is a site of epistemological and phenomenological crisis that engages with the deepest and most sustained questions of his craft.

**Bio:** Clare Hayes-Brady is a lecturer in American Literature at University College Dublin and the author of *The Unspeakable Failures of David Foster Wallace*, published by Bloomsbury Academic (2016), out now in paperback!

Dr Hayes-Brady's PhD focused on communication in the work of David Foster Wallace. Other research interests include the interaction of literature with film; transatlantic cultural heritage; performative sexuality (both normative and queer), resistant gender modes and the history of burlesque; digital humanities and modes of transmission; adolescence in contemporary fiction, and dystopian narrative.

**David Hering, University of Liverpool**

### **David and Dutch: Wallace, Reagan and the 1980s**

The revelation that David Foster Wallace voted for Ronald Reagan caused surprise among Wallace's readers, many of whom had seen *Infinite Jest's* Johnny Gentle as an excoriating parody of Reagan's persona and politics. While this may be true in part, Wallace's connection to Reagan is more complicated than it might first appear, and has its roots not only in politics but also in sport, regionalism and the visual arts – some of the major themes in Wallace's writing. This fascination reached a crescendo with the story 'Wickedness', which features an elderly Reagan. While 'Wickedness' remains unpublished, Wallace's third novel *The Pale King* is strongly engaged with Reagan's economic vision for America in the 1980s. In this paper, I explore the multifaceted

connections between Wallace and Reagan in the context of the appearance of presidential figures in postmodern fiction, Wallace's own political conservatism and the image of the American presidency in his writing.

**Bio:** David Hering is a Lecturer at the University of Liverpool, UK where he teaches and researches contemporary literature, and co-directs the Centre for New and International Writing. He has published and written extensively on the work of Wallace: he is the editor of *Consider David Foster Wallace: Critical Essays* (2010) and the author of *David Foster Wallace: Fiction and Form* (2016), for which publication he received a Harry Ransom Centre/Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship for the purposes of researching Wallace's archive. His essays on Wallace have also appeared in *David Foster Wallace: Critical Insights* (2015) and *The Cambridge Companion to David Foster Wallace* (forthcoming). His writing has also appeared in publications including *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, *Orbit* and *Critical Engagements*.

**Tajja Isen, University of Toronto**

### **Legal Fictions and the Abyss of Total Noise: Wallace and the Problem of Genre**

The porousness of the boundary between fiction and reality has been approached by Wallace Studies from a variety of angles: David Hering's reading of *The Pale King's* "Author Here" sections as importing Wallace's nonfiction persona; Marshall Boswell's reading of same as an affirmation of fiction's potential. This boundary is also one with which Wallace himself was concerned, not merely as a device of metafiction but as a means of generic classification. In response to a fan letter, he professed to thinking "in terms of fiction versus nonfiction," a clean division he complicates elsewhere, as in his introduction to *The Best American Essays 2007*.

Drawing on archival research from the Harry Ransom Center, my paper will explore Wallace's ambivalence toward cordoning off fiction from nonfiction. I will compare his ambivalence to the concept of the "legal fiction"—which Boswell invokes but does not examine for its doctrinal meaning—arguing that the term offers a useful analogue for thinking through texts that straddle the border between the fictive and the real. Situating my discussion in a legal context, I will argue that, like Wallace's description of nonfiction, law uses the legal fiction to cut through an "abyss [of] Total Noise," rendering experience legible (2).

**Bio:** Tajja Isen is a J.D./M.A. candidate in Law and English Literature at the University of Toronto. Her thesis, "Race, Law and Literature: Towards a New Form of Legal Fiction," examines how contemporary African-American writing figures the law's contingency and non-sovereignty, providing a new and more productive model for exploring both problems of justice and questions of interdisciplinarity.

**Oliver Jach**

### **Three Cheers for Cause and Effect: The Impact of Foster Wallace on The Self**

I have an idea for a creative, almost sociological paper that would look at the impact reading Foster Wallace has had on my life. Reading him relatively obsessively from 19 to my current age of 24 I feel that he has determined many aspects of my life, from impressing upon me a moral rigor, to teaching me about depression and suicide, to influencing the way I look at drugs, myself and the role of the artist. I would like to tease these influences out with anecdotes from my own life that illustrate how reading him has had certain run-on effects in my own life. My approach will be creative and close to storytelling but I think within this there are some serious questions that will interest academics as



well as long-time readers of Foster Wallace. For example, how much can we attribute a book, or series of books, to decisions we make in our lives? Are there shared ways of thinking that Foster Wallace fans become socialized into adopting through reading? I understand that this line of thinking is not in line with the tradition of literature studies but I find it fascinating nonetheless.

**Bio:** Oliver Jach is the lead singer and guitarist of the Melbourne band The Fainters. His sister bought him a copy of *Infinite Jest* at 19 and he's had a little Foster Wallace in his head ever since. After doing a Bachelor of Arts in creative writing and literature he considered doing his Honours thesis on *The Pale King*, before choosing to place his faith in a lofty career as a librarian, lofty career still forthcoming. Up to this point, the most academic article he has written is on 'The Musical Techniques of Sparklehorse', which was published in a small DIY journal.

**Bill Lattanzi**

### ***Cartographic Reconfiguration: A Brief Tour of Infinite Jest's Boston with excursions into Wallace's "Good Old USA," Or, the Ordinary Places Wallace Turned into Art***

"I like to sort of mess with maps a little bit," Wallace told an interviewer in 1996. Building on the occasional walking tours I've led of Wallace's Boston, this virtual tour, stuffed with photographs, images and maps, will walk step-by-step through Wallace's streets. Along the way, we'll consider the ways that mapping served Wallace, both as a focal point for his ideas, and as a tool to organize and transform his sometimes overwhelming personal experiences into the order of art. Touching on the full breadth of Wallace's output, we'll consider how mapping allows Wallace to weave traditional biographical elements into the complex, tangled layers of his post-modern work, from *Broom of the System* on through to the *Pale King*. Tracing the places that were significant in Wallace's life even reveals a surprisingly important influence from Australia.

**Bio:** Bill Lattanzi is an independent writer and video editor/producer in Boston. In 2013, for scholar Adam Kelly, he created the first organized walking tour of Wallace's Boston. That, in turn, has connected him with the larger Wallace community. He presented at the first two Wallace conferences in Illinois, and the *Infinite Wallace* conference in Paris. His essay on Wallace, *Messing with Maps*, appeared in the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, and he remains active in all things Wallace. Education: Boston University, Masters, playwriting. Connecticut College, BA, philosophy. Fellowships: MIT 2011-12, U of Kansas, 2012-3. Teaching: Brandeis, Bentley, M.I.T.

**James Ley**

### **Kierkegaard's influence on Camus is underrated**

The starting point for this paper will be Richard Rorty's distinction, set out in his book *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, between systemic and edifying philosophers. It will argue that Wallace, like Rorty, aligned himself unambiguously with the latter tradition, but that his allegiance to this pragmatic and ironic philosophical tradition problematises the common view of Wallace as a vanquisher of postmodern irony. The paper will argue that Wallace's interest in questions of religion, belief and sincerity – widely recognised as major themes in his writing – and the preoccupation with metaphysics that is evident throughout his work (using Wallace's own working definition of 'metaphysics': 'What exactly are the relations between mental constructs and real world objects') need to be understood in the context of the literary turn Rorty proposes at the conclusion of his book and the essentially anti-Cartesian orientation of Rorty's arguments. It will suggest that this basic philosophical problem is central to Wallace's work, the foundation of his understanding of the ultimate purpose and value of fiction, but that it is also in conflict with his universalising instincts,

and that his inability to resolve this philosophical conundrum is the source of the existential despair that is so often dramatised in his fiction.

**Bio:** James Ley is an essayist and literary critic whose writing has appeared in numerous publications, including *Australian Book Review*, *Australian Literary Studies*, *Island*, *the Age*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and the *Times Literary Supplement*. In 2014, he was awarded the Geraldine Pascall Prize for Australian Critic of the Year. He is the author of *The Critic in the Modern World: Public Criticism from Samuel Johnson to James Wood* (Bloomsbury, 2014) and Contributing Editor at the *Sydney Review of Books*.

**Brigid Magner, RMIT University**

### **'A point of savage reference': Desert geographies in *The Broom of the System***

In *The Broom of the System*, the Great Ohio Desert is explicitly designed to counteract suburban complacency, to remind residents that their state was 'hewn out of the wilderness'. The former Governor of the State, Raymond Zusatz, describes it as a 'place to fear and love. A blasted region...An Other for Ohio's Self'. With its black sand, lake full of black fish and guided tours to blasted interior wastes, the G.O.D offers a 'sinister' zone for people to wander, at a price.

Deserts in literature are often existential wastelands which provoke internal crises for protagonists, forcing them to consider the degree to which their seemingly fixed identities are actually fluid and contingent. In *Broom*, the desert is the location for an ill-advised search for missing rest home residents, Rick Vigorous' descent into madness and the dissolution of his relationship with Lenore Beadsman. During this tumultuous scene — in which Rick handcuffs himself to Lenore in an explicit reference to Frank Norris' iconic novel *McTeague* (1899) — any profound insights expressed by the characters are swiftly undercut by complaints about the 'touristiness' and overcrowdedness of this fake landscape. This paper argues that the G.O.D — with its ironic acronym — functions in *Broom* as a critique of the commodification of the spirituality typically associated with deserts.

**Bio:** Brigid Magner is a Senior Lecturer in Literary Studies and founding member of the non/fictionLab research group at RMIT University. She is the book reviews editor of the *Literary Geographies* journal. Her current projects include *Reading/Writing the Mallee* and *On the Trail: Reading Literary Places in Australia*.

**Thomas Renkert, Heidelberg University, and Sebastian Krug**

### **Un/Following David Foster Wallace: A Theological Exploration Into His Work**

One of the major latent issues accompanying the research on David Foster Wallace is the tacit question as to why his work speaks to so many people on a deeply personal, or even existential level — and continue to do so. The usual answers include references to Wallace's prescient view on our present and his endeavours on figuring out "how to live" in it, his "post-ironical" foray into a "new sincerity", as well as his emphasis on practical "mindfulness".

But those may not be the only reasons for his appeal. Without any speculation on his personal beliefs and practices, the paper at hand argues that in his texts, Wallace develops genuine concepts of (Christian) theology that go beyond general notions of attentiveness and morality. We discuss these aspects by way of a cross-section through his work with a particular focus on hamartiology (sin), ecclesiology (church), and soteriology (salvation).

In the first part, we demonstrate how Wallace's depictions of consciousness and self-reference resemble biblical notions of sin, showing conceptual similarities with the theologies of Paul, Luther, Kierkegaard, and others.

The second part focuses on Wallace's solutions to the problems of consciousness involving a notion of "community" influenced by Pragmatist and Wittgensteinian thought. We contrast these ideas with concepts of "church", leading to an outline of the Wallacian idea of salvation and grace as a result of (non-)verbal exchanges and social dynamics.

Finally, we discuss the role of Wallace himself as author, author-persona, narrator, and protagonist within and beyond the levels of "text" for the purpose of establishing a true exchange on these very issues with his audience as an imagined community.

### **Technical Note:**

David Foster Wallace's theological arguments point beyond the text towards a non-verbal conclusion aiming at a communal and egalitarian practice of discourse. We want to illustrate this very point by publishing our essay in a certain way. The text at hand will be publicly available in the weeks leading up to OzWallace on the MIT-developed open access publishing platform [www.pubpub.org](http://www.pubpub.org) in order for anybody to comment and discuss it before, during, or after the conference. It will also be featured in the new academic journal "Cursor\_ Journal for Explorative Theology".

The text itself will employ some interactive features on a rhetorical level in order to promote participation and discourse.

**Bios:** Thomas Renkert, Th.D., is a theologian teaching Diakonia (Christian Social Services) at Heidelberg University, Germany. He has published a number of articles. His dissertation focuses on Wolfhart Pannenberg's Eschatology, his current postdoctoral work is on the concept of enacted testimony as a fundamental function of ecclesiology.

Sebastian Krug, M.D., is a medical doctor completing a specialist training in psychiatry and psychotherapy, currently at the Nordwest Hospital Frankfurt, Germany. His dissertation is a qualitative-empirical analysis on burnout and resilience within the occupational group of protestant ministers.

**Philip Sayers, University of Toronto**

### **Authors, Accountants, Students, and Cowboys in David Foster Wallace's *The Pale King***

A number of scholars in the first decade of Wallace Studies have paid close attention to Wallace's engagement with critical theory—in particular, with the theoretical stakes of authorship as they played out in the aftermath of French poststructuralism. In this paper, I examine instead the very *practical* questions related to authorship: what kinds of work, I ask, does a writer perform? How does that labour change over the course of a text's composition: from research, to drafting, to editing, through to publication and promotion? And what other kinds of work, by people other than the credited author (an editor, for example), go into a published work?

In order to answer these questions (following what David Hering has referred to as the "archival turn" in Wallace Studies) I draw on the two weeks I spent as a Dissertation Fellow at the Harry Ransom Center, examining the Center's collection of *Pale King* materials. I focus in particular on the several metaphors that Wallace employs in these materials and in the published book in order to

describe the work of writing: the writer as accountant, the writer as student, and the writer as cowboy.

**Bio:** Philip Sayers is a PhD candidate at the University of Toronto, in the Department of English and the Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies. His dissertation work focuses on contemporary literature and critical theory, and the ways in which writers and theorists continue to grapple with the legacy of "The Death of the Author" and the twentieth-century debates around authorship.

**Corinne Scheiner, Colorado College**

### **The Construction of the Self in David Foster Wallace's Fiction**

In *Infinite Jest*, James Orin Incandenza lectures his then 10-year old son on topics ranging from Marlon Brando to how to be a great tennis player. Yet, James Sr.'s speech establishes a sense of coherence in his repeated statements regarding the nature of the self: "Son, you're a body, son" (159). During the speech he also instructs James Jr. about how he should treat objects "with senses on Full" (161). James Sr.'s conception of the self and its relation to the world echoes that of Michel Serres. In *Les Cinq sens*, Serres critiques the dominance of language (and the sciences) as the primary mode through which we interact with and make sense of the world and ourselves. Serres argues for a return to a mode of sensory perception where the senses are "mingled" and work together. I argue Wallace's depiction of the senses and their role in (re)constructing a plural, ephemeral self, participates in on-going philosophical debates about the hegemony of vision. Moreover, I examine how Wallace's fiction "[uses] the textuality, the *work* of critique to articulate and practice what might be called 'countervisions': not only critical and strategically subversive observations, but also historically new ways of seeing" (Levin 7).

### **Works Cited**

Levin, David. *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision*. Berkeley: U of California Press, 1993. Serres, Michel. *Les Cinq sens*. Paris: Grasset, 1985. Wallace, David Foster. *Infinite Jest*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1996.

**Bio:** Corinne Scheiner is Maytag Professor of Comparative Literature and Judson M. Bemis Professor of Humanities at Colorado College. Her research and publications focus on translation studies, Samuel Beckett, Vladimir Nabokov, and the practice and teaching of Comparative Literature. Her current project is on phenomenology, particularly the work of Michel Serres, and David Foster Wallace's fiction. She also teaches a course on Wallace's fiction and nonfiction.

**Nathan Seppelt**

### **The Ghost in the Machine Learning: Teaching artificial intelligence to write like David Foster Wallace, and what that means for the idea of "authorship"**

Artificial intelligence applications are just reaching the stage where they can produce natural language as well as a human with a reasonably poor writing ability, so it's only natural that the machines are ready to start trying to imitate David Foster Wallace's distinctive style.

I begin this presentation by outlining what's involved in teaching (or trying to) artificial intelligence to imitate a specific author's style, the advantages AIs have in understanding "style" and the approaches I'm taking with my own DFW-bot.

Following the technical and theoretical nitty-gritty, I finish by exploring the implications of having AI compose texts on the nature of authorship, the relationships between authors and readers – and the roles and limitations of empathy in such relationships – and how these are complicated by the signified absences of the author-source (Wallace) and the author-programmer.

**Bio:** Nat Seppelt is an independent scholar & artist based in Adelaide, Australia. Nat has no official academic affiliation (nor, arguably, inclination) but still manages to obsess over David Foster Wallace and questions about just how, as humans, we're supposed to navigate the webs of language & technology that mediate our 21st century world. When he's not reading, writing, or drawing Nat works as a Content Strategist for a digital agency.

**Danny Sheaf, Murdoch University**

### **Identity as Self-image in the fiction of David Foster Wallace**

In this paper I will suggest that the fiction of David Foster Wallace can be read as a critical engagement with a particular kind of contemporary individualism which I claim to be bound up with the concept of 'identity' as we now understand it. In his fiction, Wallace presents a contemporary world where human beings are reduced to solipsistic monads – essentially alienated from the world – whose thinking is caught-up in the endless project of self-creation. With a focus on Wallace's later fiction, including his final (unfinished) novel, *The Pale King*, and the short story "Good Old Neon", I will argue that these texts offer a critique of contemporary alienation with a particular focus on our understanding of 'identity' as *something* to be cultivated and expressed. Following Wallace's—both fictional and non-fictional—discussion of television and advertising, I will suggest that the contemporary individual has adopted the practice and logic of advertising whereby one's 'personal identity' is constantly shaped and re-shaped as if it were a corporate brand. For Wallace's characters, and, I suggest, the contemporary individual, this particular kind of 'self-creation' has become the real impetus of our lives, a project that Wallace's fiction exposes as hollow and solipsistic.

**Bio:** Danny Sheaf is currently a PhD candidate at Murdoch University (Perth, Australia). His research interests include a philosophical engagement with the fiction of David Foster Wallace. In particular, Danny's research draws on several thinkers from the phenomenological tradition including Martin Heidegger and Jan Patocka in order to grapple with the problems of contemporary culture illuminated by Wallace's fiction. Danny's first published work "David Foster Wallace, Martin Heidegger and Postmodern Irony" appeared in *Normal 2016* which, drawing on Wallace's second novel *Infinite Jest*, outlined Danny's phenomenologically influenced critique of postmodern irony.

**Rachel Short, RMIT University**

### **David Foster Wallace and Queer Theory – a criticism**

Women have begun to criticise the men who suggest they read Foster Wallace. Foster Wallace's stories include characters who present as trans, lesbian, gay, with disabilities, and all that comes in between. Rachel Short will look into whether or not he came across as inclusive or offensive.

Do women give Foster Wallace less credit than he deserves because we are sick of straight men explaining it all? Should women want to read Foster Wallace more than men want to tell them to read him?

Problematising the idea of Wallace as a 'man's author', Short will interrogate whether Wallace intended his writing specifically for straight white men. Applying Queer Theory to Foster Wallace's work and criticising his portrayal of minorities is easy, but what is more difficult is analysing the ideas that he had, and coming to a conclusion on exactly why his characters were presented this way.

Examining the various collections of Foster Wallace's work from *Infinite Jest* to *The Girl with Curious Hair*, Rachel will explore Foster Wallace's ranging perspectives on characters that fit under the Queer spectrum, expanding on the ideas of those who came before her, including Queer Theorists such as Vincent Haddad, Matthew Alexander, Stephen Abblitt, Nicholas Cowley & Quinn Eades.

**Bio:** Rachel Short is a writer and editor from Melbourne. She has worked among media and publishing for almost a decade and is about to complete her first Bachelor degree in Creative Writing at RMIT. A self-confessed (Helen) Garnerphile, she follows works of creative non-fiction and the essay, closely, and is working on a collection of short stories called *Ten Men*. This will be her first out-of-class presentation on David Foster Wallace, and hopefully not her last.

**Aisling Smith, Monash University**

### **Shame Narratives in *The Pale King***

Shame has been underexplored in relation to Wallace and yet is prominent across his writing. This affect is especially pronounced in *The Pale King*, which is the focus of my paper. I argue that the plot arcs of two important characters, Chris Fogle and David Cusk, can be read as shame narratives. Fogle allows Wallace to explore the way shame influences memory and Cusk leads to a discussion of shame as embodied. This paper is influenced by affect theory and incorporates the writings of Silvan Tomkins, Eve Sedgwick and Elspeth Probyn. I conclude that focusing on shame narratives in *The Pale King* adds to our understanding of this final novel and Wallace's broader oeuvre. Shame, at heart, is about selfhood. It derives its power from the way people interact with one another: the tension between subject and object. Its potency, ubiquity and capacity to generate empathy make it an important addition to the way we think about Wallace. It opens a vulnerable space which Wallace believed was essential to both fiction and life. Shame, of all affects, is about what it means to be human and finding a place for the self before the eye of the other.

**Bio:** Aisling Smith is a PhD candidate in Literary Studies at Monash University. Her dissertation is being written while in receipt of the Cecile Parrish Memorial Scholarship for Research Excellence, and explores the works of David Foster Wallace through affect theory. She is Co-Editor-in-Chief of *Colloquy: text, theory, critique* and is also an editor of the 2017 Monash *Verge* Anthology.

**Lucas Thompson, University of Sydney**

### **Searching for Wallace's Sincere New Rebels**

Who exactly are Wallace's literary and intellectual heirs? Several scholars have taken up this question, offering a range of potential candidates, including such writers as George Saunders, Richard Powers, Jeffrey Eugenides, and Dave Eggers. Other possible inheritors of his legacy include Zadie Smith, Teddy Wayne, Jennifer Egan, Tom Bissell, Adam Levin, Jonathan Lethem, Jonathan Franzen, Joshua Ferris, Joshua Cohen, and John Jeremiah Sullivan. To be sure, these and other writers do indeed exhibit some important stylistic, intellectual, and thematic affinities with Wallace, though in this paper I want to move beyond questions of purely literary legacy to think more broadly about the "sincere... new rebels" that Wallace predicts in his famous 1993 manifesto "E Unibus Pluram."

My perhaps unexpected proposal for the artist whose work can most usefully be thought of as fulfilling Wallace's vision is Nathan Fielder, whose cult-classic Comedy Central series *Nathan for You* is a paragon of Wallace's version of sincere art. Despite taking an entirely counter-intuitive path to sincerity, *Nathan for You* embodies several key aspects of Wallace's artistic ideal. My argument is that what Fielder's project ultimately reveals is that the most exaggerated and grotesque forms of reality-television manipulation can paradoxically open up new spaces of sincere communication and affect. In other words, by pushing late-capitalist forms of manipulation and hyper-performativity to extreme ends, one eventually loops back around to more genuine forms of communication. The show's genius lies in its Wallace-like evocation of touching, sincere, and surprisingly intimate moments in which the contrivances and limitations of the genre are mysteriously transcended. By situating *Nathan for You* as a unique approach to the same questions surrounding sincerity and fraudulence that Wallace's work was explicitly engaged with, I hope to reveal an unlikely embodiment of Wallace's artistic project.

**Bio:** Lucas Thompson is a Research Fellow at the United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney, Australia. His first book, *Global Wallace: David Foster Wallace and World Literature*, was published by Bloomsbury USA in December, 2016. He has published articles in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, *Journal of American Studies*, *The Cormac McCarthy Journal*, and *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*. Forthcoming book chapters appear in *The Cambridge Companion to David Foster Wallace*, *MLA Approaches to Teaching: David Foster Wallace*, and *MLA Approaches to Teaching: Jewish American Fiction*. His reviews have appeared in *US Studies Online*, *The European Legacy*, and *Philament*, and he has also written for *The LA Review of Books*.