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CONSIDER THE AUDIOBOOK
OR
THE HERMENEUTICS OF CLOSE LISTENING:
LITERARY SOUND STUDIES, CRITICAL THEORY, AND DAVID FOSTER WALLACE'S LITERARY JOURNALISM

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE HUMANITIES PROGRAM
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY
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NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND
APRIL 13, 2018

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GRADUATE STUDIES

This dissertation of Ryan Matthew Marnane titled "Consider the Audiobook, or The Hermeneutics of Close Listening: Literary Sound Studies, Critical Theory, and David Foster Wallace's Literary Journalism" submitted to the Ph.D. Program in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Salve Regina University has been read and approved by the following individuals:

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Assuming we are dealing with an author, is everything he wrote and said, everything he left behind, to be included in his work? This problem is both theoretical and practical.

— Michel Foucault

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Abstract

What difference does it make whether one reads or listens to a narrative? "Consider the Audiobook, or The Hermeneutics of Close Listening" explores the literary, cultural, and political implications surrounding the fastest growing industry in American publishing: audiobooks. It grounds its analysis in Foucault's notion of the author function and Gerard Genette's concept of paratextuality, situating each within the burgeoning and interdisciplinary field of Literary Sound Studies. "Consider the Audiobook" aims to rediscover a new conception of authorship, the book, and what Literature and hermeneutics might mean in a time of increasing re-mediation and adaptation of the printed word. This thesis contributes to conversations current in Literary Sound Studies and Critical Theory, David Foster Wallace Studies, and Literary Journalism Studies.

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INTRODUCTION:
SCOPE, STAKES, TERMS, AND RELEVANCE

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I. SCOPE: BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW OF PROJECT

On a Wednesday morning in late July 2003, David Foster Wallace—MacArthur Grant recipient and author of the celebrated novel *Infinite Jest*—made his way to “the enormous, pungent, and extremely well-marketed Maine Lobster Festival”[1] held every year in the state’s midcoast region. Commissioned by *Gourmet* magazine and published in August 2004, Wallace’s reporting would generate a “record-breaking number of responses that the [*Gourmet* editorial staff] received [from its readers].”[2] That story, “Consider the Lobster,”[3] is one of eleven works of literary journalism Wallace would publish in his lifetime,[4] with all eleven pieces eventually republished in one of three collections of nonfiction: *A Supposedly Fun Thing I’ll Never Do Again: Essays and Arguments* (1997),[5] *Consider the Lobster and*

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[1] David Foster Wallace, “Consider the Lobster,” *Gourmet,* August 2004, 50.

[2] Ruth Reichl, “Letters to Editor,” *Gourmet,* November 2004, 57.

[3] David Foster Wallace, “Consider the Lobster,” *Gourmet,* August 2004, 50-64.

[4] In order of publication:

a) “Ticket to the Fair” (*Harper’s*, July ‘94)
b) “Democracy and Commerce at the US Open” (*Tennis,* Sept.,‘95)
c) “Shipping Out: on the (nearly lethal) comforts of a luxury cruise” (*Harper’s*, Jan., ‘96)
d) “David Lynch Keeps His Head” (*Premiere*, Sept., ‘96)
e) “The String Theory” (*Esquire*, July, ‘96)
f) “Neither Adult Nor Entertainment” (*Premiere*, Sept., ‘98)
g) “The Weasel, Twelve Monkeys and the Shrub” (*Rolling Stone*, April, ‘00)
h) “9/11: The View From the Midwest” (*Rolling Stone*, Oct., ‘01)
i) “Consider the Lobster” (*Gourmet*, Aug., ‘04)
j) “Host” (*The Atlantic*, April, ‘05)
k) “Federer as Religious Experience” (*Play*, Aug., ‘06)

[5] (a) “Ticket to the Fair” republished as “Getting Away from Already Being Pretty Much Away from It All”; (d) “David Lynch Keeps His Head”; (e) “The String Theory” republished as “Tennis Player Michael Joyce’s Professional Artistry as a Paradigm of Certain Stuff about Choice, Freedom, Discipline, Joy, Grotesquerie, and Human Consciousness”; and (c) “Shipping Out: on the (nearly lethal) comforts of a luxury cruise” republished as “A Supposedly Fun Thing I’ll Never Do Again” (David Foster Wallace, *A Supposedly Fun Thing I’ll Never Do Again: Essays and Arguments* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co, 1997).

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Other Essays (2005),[6] and *Both Flesh and Not: Essays* (2012).[7] Of these eleven, four were re-mediated from print to audio and narrated by Wallace himself, three of which included in his 2005 audiobook publication, *Selected Essays from Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*.[8] These four are: "Big Red Son,"[9] "The View From Mrs. Thompson's,"[10] the collection's title narrative, "Consider the Lobster,"[11] and an abridged audio-version of his April 2000 *Rolling Stone* piece on Senator John McCain, aired on NPR's *This American Life* on May 19, 2000 as "Sonny Takes a Fall."[12]

Differentiated from Wallace's other works of nonfiction—such as essays (e.g., "E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction"[13]), reviews (e.g., "How Tracy Austin

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[6] (f) "Neither Adult Nor Entertainment" republished as "Big Red Son"; (g) "The Weasel, Twelve Monkeys and the Shrub" republished as "Up, Simba"; (h) "9/11: The View From the Midwest" republished as "The View From Mrs. Thompson's"; (i) "Consider the Lobster"; (j) and "Host" (David Foster Wallace, *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays* (New York: Little, Brown and Co, 2005).

[7] (k) "Federer as Religious Experience" republished as "Federer Both Flesh and Not" and (b) "Democracy and Commerce at the U.S. Open" (David Foster Wallace, *Both Flesh and Not: Essays* (New York: Little, Brown and Co, 2012).

[8] David Foster Wallace, *Selected Essays from Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Time Warner Audiobooks, 2005).

[9] Originally published as "Neither Adult Nor Entertainment" with *Premiere* in September 1998. David Foster Wallace, "Big Red Sun" in *Selected Essays from Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Time Warner Audiobooks, 2005).

[10] Originally published as "9/11: The View From the Midwest" with *Rolling Stone* in October 2001. David Foster Wallace, "The View From Mrs. Thompson's" in *Selected Essays from Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Time Warner Audiobooks, 2005).

[11] Originally published with *Gourmet* magazine in August 2004. David Foster Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," in *Selected Essays from Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Time Warner Audiobooks, 2005).

[12] Originally published as "The Weasel, Twelve Monkeys and the Shrub" with *Rolling Stone* in April 2000. David Foster Wallace, "Sonny Takes a Fall" *This American Life* episode 160: "Character Assassination," aired on May 19, 2000 (http://tal.fm/160).

[13] David Foster Wallace, "E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction" in *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again: Essays and Arguments* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co, 1997).

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Broke My Heart"[14]), memoirs (e.g., "Derivative Sport in Tornado Alley"[15]) and speeches (e.g., *This is Water*[16])—Wallace's eleven works of literary journalism are, as framed by Wallace scholar and historian of the genre, Joshua Roiland, "stories that have been reported and sourced and then told using a variety of literary devices."[17] A more detailed framing of the genre is found in Roiland's 2015 essay "By Any Other Name: The Case for Literary Journalism":

> Literary journalism is a form of nonfiction writing that adheres to all of the reportorial and truth-telling covenants of conventional journalism, while employing rhetorical and storytelling techniques more commonly associated with fiction. In short, it is journalism as literature.[18]

As outlined by Roiland himself, it is "important to understand that Wallace wrote in the tradition of the literary journalist, because the form and its field of study provide a whole catalogue of approaches to understanding his stories in relation to his reviews, speeches, and essays."[19] Following Roiland's line of thinking, this project's engagement with Wallace's audio-recorded journalism provides new and essential understandings of (and further avenues of exploration toward) his larger body of work.

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[14] David Foster Wallace, "How Tracy Austin Broke My Heart," *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays* (New York: Little, Brown and Co, 2005).

[15] David Foster Wallace, "Derivative Sport in Tornado Alley," *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again: Essays and Arguments* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co, 1997).

[16] David Foster Wallace, *This Is Water: Some Thoughts, Delivered on a Significant Occasion About Living a Compassionate Life*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co, 2009).

[17] Joshua Roiland, "The Fine Print: Uncovering the True Story of David Foster Wallace and the 'Reality Boundary'" in *Literary Journalism Studies* (vol.5, no.2, Fall 2013, 149).

[18] Joshua Roiland, "By Any Other Name: The Case for Literary Journalism," *Literary Journalism Studies* (vol.7, no.2, Fall 2015) 71.

[19] Joshua Roiland, "Getting Away from it All: The Literary Journalism of David Foster Wallace and Nietzsche's Concept of Oblivion," in *The Legacy of David Foster Wallace*, ed. by Cohen, Samuel and Lee Konstantinou (New Amer. Canon. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2012).

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However, as my engagement with Roiland's scholarship functions as this dissertation's entry point into the bourgeoning field of David Foster Wallace Studies, it is important to note upfront that Wallace scholars have largely overlooked his literary journalism and, moreover, have entirely ignored the audio publications thereof. As Clare Hayes-Brady writes in her 2016 publication, *The Unspeakable Failures of David Foster Wallace*, "while critical attention to Wallace's work has of course skyrocketed since his death [in September 2008], the nonfiction remains largely underworked..."[20] In response to this twofold oversight in Wallace Studies—on the one hand, his literary journalism and on the other, his audio publications at large—this dissertation explores the aggregation of the two: Wallace's audio recordings of literary journalism.

With regard to Wallace's more extensive body of work, critical discussions surrounding both fiction and (albeit limited) nonfiction remain principally focused on the printed versions rather than their audio counterparts. This omission is in large part (albeit not exclusively limited to Wallace Studies itself) due to the continued and contentious debate surrounding the legitimacy of audiobooks within Literary Studies at large. It seems that in the midst of the digital revolution the printed book continues to maintain its privileged standing among academics across disciplinary borders, respectively. Yet "the dispute," writes Matthew Rubery in *Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies,* the first scholarly book (2011) to consider the significance of the audiobook, "seems to touch on the fundamental experience of what it means to read a

[20] Clare Hayes-Brady, *The Unspeakable Failures of David Foster Wallace: Language, Identity, and Resistance* (Bloomsbury, 2017), 138.

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book and, therefore, to be a reader of books."[21] While the goose quill did not, in fact, put an end to speech (as Marshall McLuhan famously declared in his 1964 publication of *Understanding Media*) digital media continues to hover above the printed page's privileged standing along with our own understanding of what it means to read and experience literature. However, whereas the quill didn't put an end to speech, the printed book did in fact put an end to a variety of different memorization practices as well as the art form of the illuminated manuscript (e.g., dozens of historical news magazines are ceasing the publication of hardcopies and going to all-online formats); in Sven Birkerts words, from *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age*, "The printed word is part of a vestigial order that we are moving away from—by choice and by social compulsion."[22] While a new format doesn't automatically replace the old, something significant has indeed changed and is unfolding before our very eyes and within our very ears.

This dissertation explores the literary, political, and cultural implications of the fastest growing industry in contemporary American publishing: audiobooks. It examines the relationship between print and audio publications and the reader/listener receptions that differ from one format to the other within the genre of literary journalism. "Consider the Audiobook" sets out to resolve the following guiding questions: What difference does it make whether one reads or listens to a narrative? And how might the notion of authorship and—by way of critical extension—listener-

[21] Matthew Rubery, *The Untold Story of the Talking Book* (Cambridge, Ma, Harvard University Press, 2016), 25.

[22] Sven Birkerts, *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in the Electronic Age* (New York: Faber and Faber, 1994) 118.

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response criticism become contested and conceptualized anew in the wake of the audiobook format's steady growth?[23]

While the dispute between reading and listening is discussed at length throughout this dissertation it is nevertheless helpful to note upfront that the complicated relationship that endures between print and audio receptions is not merely an aesthetic concern but even more so a political one. To put this a bit differently, the affective responses each format produces within their respective audiences are not so easily divided from the political and cultural landscapes in which these narratives are disseminated, received, and experienced. Thus this project explores the relationship between David Foster Wallace's print and audio publications within the genre of literary journalism. In so doing I draw from a wide range of disciplines and theorists: most especially David Foster Wallace Studies, Literary Sound Studies, Literary Journalism Studies, Literary Theory, Gerard Genette's interpretive framework of "paratextuality,"[24] and Michel Foucault's notion of "the author function."[25] In so

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[23] The significance of the above questions intensifies each year as reports continue to show steady growth in this format's sales. According to the 2017 report from the "Association of American Publishers," compared to 2015, audio downloads in the first three quarters of 2016 grew a historic 29.6%. To put this number into some context, the same report shows that paperback sales grew 7.5%, hardback sales grew 4.1%, and eBooks shrank 18.7%. This continued growth is in large part due to both smartphone technology (amplified by on-demand, streaming and downloadable access to audiobooks with platforms such as iTunes and Audible) as well as changing social behaviors. While it's clear that people are listening to audiobooks in increasing numbers, critical scholarship exploring the significance of the surge in both production and reception remains sparse. ("Publisher Book Sales Were $11.13 Billion in the First Three Quarters of 2016," *Association of American Publishers*, Newsroom, February 24th, 2017. http://newsroom.publishers.org/publisher-book-sales-were-1113-billion-in-the-first-three-quarters-of-2016/)

[24] Paratext is the heterogeneous group of practices, discourses, and materials that frame and, by extension, amend any given text: both internal materials (such as cover images, forwards, epigraphs, photos, advertisements, pull-quotes, copyright pages) to external, more distanced materials (such as author interviews, promotional materials, available drafts, letters, and surrounding scholarship). Paratext is, in other words, the varying elements that frame and inform the engagement of an audience with a text, such as, in Genette's words, "the author's name, the title, preface or introduction, or

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doing I argue that close listenings of Wallace's audio publications provide new and innovative ways of thinking about the relationship between print and audio-texts and the affective responses each format produces within their respective audiences, providing new avenues for David Foster Wallace Studies to navigate by exploring Wallace's audio recordings of his literary journalism while also, and more broadly conceived, rediscovering a new conception of authorship, the book, and what hermeneutics might mean in a time of increasing re-mediation and adaptation of the printed word. In so doing contributing scholarship to conversations current in Literary Sound Studies and Critical Theory, Literary Journalism Studies, and David Foster Wallace Studies.

illustrations." Gérard Genette, Jane E. Lewin, and Richard Macksey, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1.

[25] Michel Foucault's notion of the author function comes from his 1969 essay "What Is an Author?" The author function, in Foucault's words, "points to the existence of certain groups of discourse, and refers to the status of this discourse within a society and culture." Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" Trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon. In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*. Ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 123-124.

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II. STAKES: NEED AND SCHOLARLY CONTRIBUTION

"Spoken word recordings," writes Matthew Rubery, "first become possible with the invention of the phonograph by Thomas Edison in 1877."[26] Yet a century and a half later—with audiobook sales in 2016 totaling more than 2 billion dollars—making it the third consecutive year that audiobook sales have expanded by 20%[27]—literary and cultural criticism surrounding the format has generated barely a whimper from academics. Rubery's 2016 publication, *The Untold Story of the Talking Book,* argues that audiobooks deserve to be taken seriously: "For too long audiobooks have been the Rodney Dangerfield of literature," Rubery writes, "they don't get no respect."[28] However, it is this project's stance that audiobooks and their function in contemporary literary studies do not deserve respect solely based off their increasing popularity (if that were the case then focusing simply on the most popular audiobooks would be of principal concern here) but rather deserve serious academic engagement because the ways in which authors—and David Foster Wallace in particular—use the format to challenge and reconstitute previously held notions surrounding authorship, capital-L Literature, and (more broadly conceived) what it might mean to read texts with the ears. This project, in the spirit of Rubery's above claim, does in fact take audiobooks and their cultural significance quite seriously, arguing that scholastic study with the format is not only an appropriate response to the growing production and

[26] Matthew Rubery, "Introduction," *Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies*. (Routledge, 2014), 3.

[27] Audiobook Publishers Association 2016 Report, "ANOTHER BANNER YEAR OF ROBUST GROWTH FOR THE AUDIOBOOK INDUSTRY" (https://www.audiopub.org/uploads/pdf/2016-Sales-Survey-Release.pdf)

[28] Rubery, *Untold Story,* 25.

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recpetion of the format but a necessary engagement with regard to understanding how authorship and reader/listener responses have become contested and conceptualized anew with advancements in reading/listening technologies in tandem with changing social behaviors. That is to say, in short, as modes of accessing literature change (both in print and their audio cohorts) so too do our respective and collective conceptions of authorship.

With the shortage of academic engagement surrounding audiobooks at large it's no surprise that there's been zero attention from David Foster Wallace Studies concerning Wallace's audio publications. With two passing references in Rubery's above texts, each of them addressing Wallace's "copious use of footnotes, to the point that even his footnotes themselves have footnotes….'a nasty problem for audiobooks,'"[29] there's been no additional mention from Literary and Cultural Studies or DFW Studies addressing Wallace's audiobook publications. Accordingly, there's a need to address the novel ways in which Wallace approached the format: "Where do the footnotes go? There's no bottom of the page in an audiobook, obviously."[30]

With this dissertation's focus on the four audio publications of Wallace's literary journalism and the shortage of scholarship surrounding this area of his of bibliography, "Consider the Audiobook" is the first to frame and foster new and innovative ways of thinking about the relationship between not only Wallace's audio and print narratives but audiobooks at large. This dissertation not only provides

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[29] Ibid., 261-262.

[30] David Foster Wallace, "Introduction," *Selected Essays from Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Time Warner Audiobooks, 2005).

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innovative and necessary contributions to conversations current in David Foster Wallace Studies and Literary Sound Studies but also provides a new and creative avenue in which Literary Sound Studies and Critical Theory might intersect elsewhere, beyond David Foster Wallace's audio-recorded literary journalism.

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III. TERMS: METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH QUESTION, AND THESIS

This project, broadly conceived, is a work of literary scholarship and cultural criticism, with the former principally concerned with historicizing and contextualizing the various artifacts and theoretical frameworks in question and the latter (the cultural criticism) focused principally on addressing the contemporary function of audiobook reception and critical theory in light of advancing digital technology and changing social behaviors. The principal questions guiding the trajectory of this dissertation are as follows:

a) What difference does it make whether one reads or listens to a narrative? And how might the physical environment wherein listening transpires affect listeners differently?
b) How does Gerard Genette's notion of paratext operate when applied to audiobooks and—following this line of questioning—how does an audiobook's paratext (or lack thereof) amend Foucault's notion of the author function?
c) What is the relationship between David Foster Wallace's print and audio narratives within the genre of literary journalism (with regard to both production and reception)?

To answer these questions, I begin by framing Literary Sound Studies as an interdisciplinary field of scholarship exploring the historical trajectory and contemporary significance of spoken word recordings. I then unpack how David Foster Wallace Studies has framed and continues to engage with Wallace's collected body of work, highlighting the (a) absence of scholarship addressing his audiobook publications and (b) the scarce scholarship exploring his literary journalism.

Following both literature reviews I explore common foundations in both New Historicism and reader response criticism via Michele Foucault's 1969 essay "What Is an Author?" I use Foucault's notion of the author function in tandem with Gerard Genette's concept of paratextuality as interpretive frameworks for exploring how

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reader/listener-receptions differ from one format to another by showing how paratext informs both Foucault's notion of the author function and, by mere extention, the reader/listener receptions thereof. These engagements with Foucault and Genette provide the interpretive, theoretical framework for this project's culminating chapter that explores and performs close readings and listenings of Wallace's audio-recorded works of literary journalism.

This dissertation's thesis is twofold: on the one hand, I argue that close readings and listenings of David Foster Wallace's audio-recorded literary journalism provide new and essential avenues for David Foster Wallace Studies to explore by providing Wallace's audience opportunities to deepen authorial-reader/listener relationships by way of direct address. On the other hand, and more broadly conceived, I argue that an updated, audiobook-centered notion of Foucault's author function provides the burgeoning field of Literary Sound Studies with a useful framework for thinking about the cultural, literary, and political implications surrounding the fastest growing industry in contemporary American publishing. Moreover, this thesis provides a framework of eco-hermeneutics (or textual ecology), which explores the (a) organ in which any one narrative is situated, the (b) physical environment and actions wherein reading/listening transpires, and the (c) reader's/listener's own experiences and hermeneutical frameworks therein, proposing that an eco-hermeneutical framework be applied to a wide variety of medias teeming with paratext and various author functions, such as multimedia narratives, online academic databases, Twitter postings, YouTube videos, Podcasts, and so on and so forth.

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IV: RELEVANCE TO THE SALVE REGINA UNIVERSITY PH.D. PROGRAM IN THE HUMANITIES

Technology and humanity are not so easily divided—each are a continuum of conversion dependent upon and reconstituted by the other; i.e., humanity creates tools and these tools, then, foster humanity anew. The Ph.D. program in Humanities at Salve Regina University is dedicated to investigating what it means to be human in an age of advanced technology and, moreover, explores how the humanities (and interdisciplinary approaches at large) might foster new and essential understandings of how various technologies effect who we are and what we are becoming.

While this project remains principally concerned with (a) digital audiobook technology and its resultant (and still emerging) effects on American publishing and listening practices at large, contemporary literary theory, and David Foster Wallace Studies, it nevertheless also addresses the (b) larger philosophical questions surrounding our collective, cultural orientation toward audiobooks and (c) how these orientations situate themselves within both Literary Studies as well as broader questions concerning the human condition's entanglement with technology, and vice versa. But before we get too ahead of ourselves, what exactly *is* technology?

Technology is both a window into viewing the world and also, at times, the very blinds concealing our place within it: to the individual with a hammer, as the saying goes, everything looks like a nail—and to the person with an iPhone in his or her hand everything may in fact look like a potential photo shoot and subsequent status update. The constant here—from primitive tools to digital technology—is that our tools become not simply extensions of ourselves but also change the very ways in which we perceive and engage with the world insofar as technology enframes our

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engagements and thus also amends our ways of understanding the world and our place within it. As Richard Rojcewicz writes in *The Gods and Technology,* "Technology is in essence nothing other than an understanding of what it means to be."[31] Said a bit differently, "[T]he essence of technology," as framed by David Kaplin in *Readings in the Philosophy of Technology*, "is not a tool or device but rather a way of understanding things."[32] This is to say that technology is, at root, a hermeneutic tool of Being itself—both the foundation and precursor to humanity itself. As Marx rightly assumed, and Neil Postman highlights in *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology,* "Technologies create the ways in which people perceive reality,"[33] thus creating the ways in which we understand our relationship to not only the world but also to ourselves.

Moreover, understanding comes into Being by way of story—by way of language. As D. E. Wittkower writes in "A Preliminary Phenomenology of the Audiobook," "Similar to Heidegger's observation that *Dasein* [Being] always finds itself having a mood (*Stimmung*), we may observe that the voice always has some kind of attunement."[34] Yet the implications of such an insight are ambivalent at best. Postman rightly suggests the binary that "every technology is both a burden and a

[31] Rojcewicz, Richard. *The Gods and Technology A Reading of Heidegger*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 56.

[32] Kaplan, David M. *Readings in the Philosophy of Technology*. (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 2.

[33] Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*, New York: Vintage Books, 1993, 21.

[34] D.E. Wittkower, "A Preliminary Phenomenology of the Audiobook," in *Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies*, Ed. Matthew Rubery (Routledge, 2014), 223.

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blessing" at once,[35] including the insight above that digital technology at large (and audiobooks in particular) revolutionize not only how literature is experienced but also change fundamental perceptions (*Gestell*) of the world and the very ontologies explored therein. This "burden and blessing all at one" insight is evident with contemporary device technologies insofar as they each connect us(ers) to the world—via wireless Internet access—yet simultaneously have the all-too-alluring capacity to alienate and estrange users from the very communities they're already in.[36]

It was Postman himself who posited first that any critic of technology must first acknowledge what technology has given humanity: i.e., technology's most significant success is precisely humanity itself.[37] Language, Postman argues, is unambiguously technological. Thus humanity, too, is technological insofar as it depends upon language to know itself.[38] Alasdair MacIntyre shares these sentiments when he writes that humanity is "essentially a story-telling animal,"[39] continuing, "To be the subject of a narrative that runs from one's birth to one's death is […] to be

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[35] Postman, 5.

[36] Professor of Social Studies in Science and Technology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technolgy, Sherry Turkle, in her book, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* investigates this "alienation through connection" at great length. Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*, 2011.

[37] Postman, 5.

[38] This self-referential notion of technology is clearly evident via recognizing technology as both a thing and the systematic treatment of the thing itself. Technology, from *techne*, "skill, craft, and or art" is also the very methods in which we understand our relationship to this world—*tekhnologia,* "a systematic treatment."

[39] Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007. 216.

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accountable for ones actions and experiences which compose a narratable life."[40] This is to note that narrative, and the various forms and contexts in which they are both produced and received, are technological and amend fundamental questions regarding what it might mean to be human. Thus, technology is both the objects of observation and also the very window into viewing what Being in the world constitutes (or might constitute otherwise).

If technology is the method of understanding our place in the world then art and narrative remain representations of said understanding. Humanity creates meaning through the narratives constructed and these narratives remain, by necessity, grounded in the very forms they embody—forms dependent upon and reconstituted by advancements in technology with regard to production, distribution, and reception in all their myriad and discursive manifestations. As Lukás rightly assumed, the truly social element in literature is the form,[41] and literature—as an extension of humanity and humanity as an extension of technology itself—becomes contested and conceptualized anew in tandem with advancements in audiobook technology and changing social behaviors. Form forms us, and thus the interpretive search of meaning comes into view through narrative, and narrative lives not only through but also within form. By exploring the cultural, political, and literary implications surrounding the fastest growing industry in American publishing this dissertation is also, simultaneously, exploring the cultural, political, and literary implications of Being

[40] Ibid., 217.

[41] George Lukás, *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-philosophical essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature* (London: Merlin Press, 1971), 71.

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itself—a Being enframed by the forms, environments, and receptions of narrative itself.

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CHAPTER 1:
AUDIOBOOKS, LITERARY SOUND STUDIES, AND DAVID FOSTER WALLACE (STUDIES)

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

There is no limit to what can be said in the text.
— Julia Kristeva [1]

The library is on fire.
— Michel Foucault [2]

What matter who's speaking?
— Samuel Beckett [3]

If there is to be such a thing as a review of literature then it would seem obvious—to paraphrase Terry Eagleton—that there is something called literature to review in the first place. We can begin, then, by raising the following question: What is literature and, if there is to be such a thing, how to best review it? Would audiobooks—and audio-born narratives as well—be included in a literature review as such?

"Literature," writes Raymond Williams, "is a difficult word, in part because its conventional contemporary meaning appears, at first sight, so simple."[4] There have been various attempts to define literature: i.e., e.g., from the Latin *littera,* meaning "letter of the alphabet."[5] In this sense any written document or use of letters or words

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[1] Julia Kristeva. *Revolution in Poetic Language*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 209.

[2] Michel Foucault, "Fantasia of the Library" Trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*. (Ed. Donald F. Bouchard. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 91-92.

[3] Samuel Beckett, *Texts for Nothing,* Trans. Becket, (London: Calde & Boyars, 1974), 16. Cited in Michel Foucault's "What Is an Author?" in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*. (Ed. Donald F. Bouchard. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 138.

[4] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society.* (New York: Oxford University Press.), 183.

[5] OED, 989.

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can—and arguably should—be constituted as literature. In its contemporary use, though, and more broadly conceived, literature is not simply printed matter of any kind but rather a term that signifies creative and imaginative writing "valued for its superiority and lasting artistic merit."[6] However, the tradition of storytelling was not literature until it was written down, and speech existed long before writing.

There's is no objective, descriptive category in which literature neatly situates itself nor, as Terry Eagleton writes, "will it do to say that literature is just what people whimsically choose to call literature."[7] Because literature, broadly conceived, is contingent upon community-based value judgments and these value judgments' relation to social ideologies. Meaning what *is* and *is not* literary (and capital-L Literature) remains a political question insofar as there exists particular hegemonic systems in place wherein Literature either *is* or *isn't*—including of course Literature as a branch of study in and of itself. Hence "the major shift represented by the modern complex of literature," Williams writes, "is a matter of social and cultural history."[8] While the below literature review is concerned principally with audiobooks and their respective literary merits, another hermeneutical question remains: what exactly does the "book" of audiobook suggest?

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[6] OED, 973.

[7] Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction:* Anniversary Edition. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2008, 14.

[8] Williams, 186.

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"The term audiobook," Charles Bernstein writes in his forward to *Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies*, "is vexatious and that may be its allure."[9] Of early Old English origin (C.1225) a book is a "portable volume consisting of a series of written, printed, or illustrated pages bound together for ease of reading."[10] And the history of the book—charting its origins and continued influences upon humanity—is also simultaneously, in part, a history of the dissemination of ideas via technological advancements. The history of the book shows us that there is no such thing as "the book" insofar as it continues to take on new shapes and profiles—i.e., e.g., audiobooks. Even the almighty Oxford English Dictionary includes audiobook in its entry for "book": i.e., "The modern use of [book] also extends to compositions issued in audio or electronic formats."[11] Since the time of Gutenberg and, later, the invention of movable type and, much later, mass manufacturing as a result of the industrial revolution and, much-much later, the arrival of electronic communication, information processing, and the digital revolution at large, what constitutes a book continues to become contested and conceptualized anew. And like the socially transformative paperback revolution of the 1960s, the audiobook industry is revolutionizing what it means to experience literature amid the digital age, thus prompting the need for

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[9] Bernstein, "Forward" to *Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies*, Ed. Matthew Rubery (Routledge, 2014), xv.

[10] A book is also "a written composition long enough to fill one or more such volumes" as well as "a number of sheets of blank writing paper bound together to form a volume in which notes may be kept" (i.e., notebook) and well as—while chiefly colloquial or nonstandard— "a periodical or magazine" (i.e., comic book) and also—beyond the literary— "book-shaped folding case for holding banknotes, papers, etc." (e.g., pocketbook). The point is a book is not a book is not a book is not a book. OED, 193.

[11] OED, 193.

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Literary and Cultural Studies at large to rethink not only how the discipline conceptualizes and orientates itself to the role of audiobooks but also address questions concerning what authorship and capital-L Literature might mean in a time of increasing re-mediation and adaptations of the printed word.

The LA Review of Books' November of 2016 article by Sabrina Ricci, "The Fate of Reading in a Multimedia Age," questions if Literary Studies ought to redefine what it means to read in response to the growing number of audiobook engagements in recent years: "Audible, the largest producer and distributor of audiobooks in the world," Ricci writes, "is projecting two billion hours of listening for 2016, which is double the one billion hours in 2014."[12] After a fusillade of numbers framing the spike in audiobook sales and engagements, Ricci asks the divisive *sine qua non* question: "Should the definition of 'reading' in the 21st Century be expanded to include listening to audiobooks?"[13] Let me be as clear and unambiguous as I might here: No, the definition of reading in the 21st century should not be expanded to include listening to audiobooks, or at least not in the manner Ricci implies above, which is to frame reading not as an act of interpretation or discernment (in the manner in which a golfer may *read* a green or a detective might *read* clues) but rather as being equal to reading the printed word itself. Under the former pretense (reading as act of interpretive hermeneutics) yes, of course we *read* audiobooks just as much as we may, in fact, read a painting, a film, or the facial expressions of a lover (this is a matter of reading ideas

[12] Sabrina Ricci, "The Fate of Reading in a Multimedia Age," *LA Review of Books*, November 13th, 2016. (accessed 2/22/1017: https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/fate-reading-multimedia-age/)

[13] Ibid.

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rather than reading letters). Even Mortimer Adler's 1940 publication of *How to Read a Book* begins by noting that the *Oxford English Dictionary* has listed upwards of twenty-one meanings for "read,"[14] with its first entry being "to consider, interpret, discern."[15]

Let me once more be decidedly transparent: listening and reading are two entirely different modes of literary engagement and neither one should collapse into the other (we read with the eyes and listen with the ears). However, as detailed below, this position—that reading a narrative and listening to one remains two entirely different phenomena—does not imply that listening is inferior to reading or vice versa but instead recognizes their respective, unambiguous differences with regard to both production and reception. And while historians and literary critics alike have written extensively about the centuries-long transition from oral to print culture, this chapter explores the much later technological shift in narrative practices from print to audio and the critical and scholarly engagements (or lack thereof) in the wake of increasing re-mediation and adaptations of the printed word.

One might rightly assume—following arguments above—that I have an imbalance of terms in the above equation: i.e., if reading is in fact *not* listening wouldn't that also mean that audiobooks aren't books at all but rather records? I.e., if they're both literature (print books and audiobooks) shouldn't we also say they're both read? My response here is twofold: On the one hand I maintain that (a) audiobooks are

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[14] Mortimer J. Adler, "The Meaning of 'Reading,'" in *How to Read a Book: A Guide to Self-*Education (London: Jarrolds, 1940,) 25-41, 26. As cited by Rubery.

[15] "read, v.." OED Online. March 2017. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.ez-salve.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/158851?rskey=GL10oL&result=3&isAdvanced=false (accessed April 1, 2017).

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in fact literature—or carry the potential to become literary in their receptions—under the same premise that certain forms of music, film, and drama are literary, too. On the other hand I argue that (b) audiobooks are both listened to (with the ears) and read (with the mind) in a similar manner that the blind, too, experience literature by way of both physical feeling (with the fingers) and reading (with the mind). This is not to argue that audiobooks are literary in same manner that traditional books are (just as brail isn't, either)—if that were the case then Literary Studies could simply apply the same methods of analysis to audiobooks as it does for traditional books; this application is clearly not possible, because audiobooks and print books differ not only in their respective mediums but also with regard to their narrative forms and discursive receptions, thus the need to expand not only what Literature means but also expand the very methods of Literary Studies itself, hence fusing Sound Studies and Literary Studies together under the interdisciplinary framework of Literary Sound Studies. Moreover, I'd also argue that Literary Sound Studies must also extend the above argument—that audiobooks can be profoundly literary—to the notion that music has to the potential to be framed as literary, too, insofar as we read a film's narrative just as one might read a Bob Dylan album (as the Swiss certainly have).

The literature review that follows—engaging with and framing both David Foster Wallace's bibliography as well as the burgeoning field Literary Sound Studies itself—functions on two particular levels: on the one hand, they each introduce readers not yet acquainted with either (or both) fields of study and also provide new and essential avenues for active scholars to learn from and build off of within each respective discipline. On the other hand, the literature reviews lay down necessary

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foundations for subsequent chapters to best apply Gerard Genette's concept of paratext and Michel Foucault's notion of the author function to Wallace's audio-recorded literary journalism.

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1.2 LITERARY SOUND STUDIES

> *There are not many ways of writing "tonight." But Stanislavsky used to ask his young actors to pronounce and stress it fifty different ways while the audience wrote down the different shades of feeling and meaning expressed.*
>
> — Marshal McLuhan [16]

> *Centuries removed from the ways of our progenitors smugly evolved past the tribal storytelling of the oral tradition, partaking again of the pleasers of that ancient mode. Everything in creation has changed but the triad endures: the voice, the story, the listener.*
>
> — Sven Birkerts [17]

It's important to begin this chapter with a brief note about terminology. I use the term "audio-text" quite broadly in subsequent sections referring to any audio recordings that uses spoken-word language to convey meaning; this would encompass all kinds of podcasts, audiobooks, comedy albums, speeches, and any other audio recordings of literary texts. The term "audiobook," however, refers to texts that the author(s) composed and published as a written text (for the eyes) and have also—either in conjunction with print publication or sometime thereafter—undergone re-mediation from print to audio (for the ears), a practice dating back to the late 19th century when the first spoken word recordings were made possible with Thomas Edison's invention of the phonograph in 1877. Nevertheless, with its century-long practice (and despite its growing popularity) "the audiobook," writes Rubery, "has struggled to gain acceptance among the humanities as a legitimate aesthetic form."[18] The absence of critical discussion from the literary community surrounding not only audiobooks but also audio-texts at large marks "a clear indication of its marginal

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[16] Marshal McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge, Mass, MIT Press, 1994), 79.

[17] Sven Birkerts, *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in the Electronic Age* (New York: Faber and Faber, 1994), 143.

[18] Rubery, "Introduction," 10.

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status."[19] Moreover, I use the term "context" and "paratext" in two distinctive ways: context is the broader of the two terms and refers to the circumstances forming (a) the background of literary engagement including environment and setting as well as (b) the various frameworks in which a work of literature is situated (e.g, a print collection or anthology, magazine, HTML, audiobook, etc.). Paratext, however, is within the broader umbrealla of context and refers specifically to the materials that frame the literature itself (e.g., author biographies, advertisements, images, introductory remarks and forwards, etc.). You can think of paratext always existing within a particular, discursive context: e.g., Wallace's August 2004 publication of "Consider the Lobster" is contextualized within (a) *Gourmet* magazine and (b) the various environments and settings wherein readers read. Moreover, the context is amended by various paratextual materials such as pictures of festival attendees, images, the editor's note discussing the assignment, and surrounding advertisements and articles.

This section's survey of literature in and surrounding the burgeoning field of Literary Sound Studies relies heavily on Matthew Rubery's 2011 publication of *Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies*. While there nevertheless remain myriad avenues for the field of Literary Sound Studies to navigate this section and project at large grounds itself in exploring the literature that puts literary and critical theory into discussion with audiobooks themselves.

Serious academic study of sound (beyond literature) and its cultural implications has deeper origins beyond the Rubery collection, of course, turning next to Walter J. Ong's 1982 publication of *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of*

[19] Ibid.

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the Word—one of the first works of cultural criticism that focuses on the relationship between orality and writing—which remains a keystone fixture in the beginnings of the interdisciplinary field of Sound Studies itself and, by way of extension, Literary Sound Studies as well.

Ong is to adaptation studies what Marshal McLuhan is to media theory—inseparable. That is to say, in short, they're both big deals. Beginning with a broad understanding of how Ong historicizes his own study, he writes, "Language is overwhelmingly oral"[20] and places television and recorded film into what he calls the "secondary orality":

> Secondary orality is both remarkably like and remarkably unlike primary orality. Like primary orality, secondary orality has generated a strong group sense, for listening to spoken words forms hearers into a group, a true audience, just as reading written or printed texts turns individuals in on themselves.[21]

While language has been overwhelmingly oral, the main difference between Ong's secondary orality and what preceded it remains a matter of how peoples accessed language and meaning. Prior to the printed word, the world was overwhelmingly oral. Yet throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, as a result of Mass literacy and manufacturing, Western civilization grounded its oral traditions in material documents as the principle vehicle of historical and cultural knowledge. As a result, knowledge and the institutions that governed the material conditions thereof became unambiguously political, and Ong's "secondary orality" attempts to frame the

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[20] Walter J. Ong. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. Methuen: New York, 1982, 7.

[21] Ong, 134.

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difference within the new media of late 20th century as a way to break through and subvert these very systems.

As we shall see below, 21st century orality—grounded principally in on-demand audio-files and the Internet at large—further subverts power structures yet also, simultaneously, fosters daunting possibilities wherein meaning and significance of a work and the knowledge within it becomes contested amid the information-glut crises we find ourselves enmeshed within.

Whereas Sound Studies explores the role played by sound in the formation of culture through film and music and radio, Literary Sound Studies explores the literary implications of this aural culture and the orientation that electronic literature (e.g., podcasts and audiobooks along with varying multimedia hypertext narratives) has within this culture and, moreover, how culture positions itself toward electronic sound literature, too. This fusion of critical theory and audiobook engagements remains minimal in comparison to the overwhelming amount of literature exploring audio-texts and disabilities studies, for example, with research exploring audio-texts use in speech pathology and pedagogy wherein the literature clearly suggests that audiobook listening in tandem with close reading practices increases student learning and reading comprehension (most widely evident with students struggling with learning disabilities such as dyslexia[22]). Nevertheless, this project focuses on literature that

[22] See for example or Anna Milani, Maria Luisa Lorusso, and Massimo Molteni's "The Effects of Audiobooks on the Psychosocial Adjustment of Pre-Adolescents and Adolescents with Dyslexia," in *Dyslexia* 16, no. 1 (February 1, 2010): 87-97; or Jeff Allred's "Novel Hacks: New Approaches to Teaching the Novel Genre" in *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy* (2013 Spring-2014 Winter; 24 (1-2): 121-137; or Aaron Friedland's "Does Reading-While-Listening Enhance Students' Reading Fluency? Preliminary Results from School Experiments in Rural Uganda" in the *Journal Of Education And Practice*, 8, no. 7: 82-95; or Lotta C. Larson's "E-Books and

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frames Literary Sound Studies as a field of interdisciplinary literature exploring the relationship between critical literary analysis and audio-texts at large.

Rubery's introduction to *Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies* culminates with his "Reading With Our Ears" section, wherein he frames (and briefly responds to) to popular complaints heard by audiobook critics: "When audiobooks are discussed," Rubery writes, "it is usually to compare them unfavorably to the experience of reading printed books or to rehash the controversy over their legitimacy through reports framed by such skeptical titles such as 'Can We Really Read with Our Ears?'"[23] The aforementioned complaints, as framed by Rubery, are as follows:

a) Listening to an audiobook is a passive activity.
b) Audiobooks do not require the same level of concentration as printed books.
c) Audiobooks distort the original narratives through abridgment.
d) The pace of the audiobook is removed from the reader's control.
e) Reading aloud is for children.
f) The audiobook speaker interferes with the reader's reception of the text.
g) Audiobooks lack form.
h) Audiobooks appeal only to the ear, not the eye.[24]

The last of the above eight—"appealing to the ear, not the eye"—requires a critical eye toward that which does not literally exist: the pageless nature of the audiobook and the varying environments in which one listens. The discursive contexts in which one listens presents us with "the format's most distinctive and least explored dimensions: its phenomenology."[25] Rubery continues:

Audiobooks: Extending the Digital Reading Experience" in *Reading Teacher*, 69, no. 2 (September 1, 2015): 169-177.

[23] Rubery, "Introduction," 10.

[24] Ibid., 10-18.

[25] Ibid., 15.

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> It is well known that audiences frequently listen to audiobooks as a secondary activity in accompaniment to other activities such as jogging through the park or driving to the office. Unlike the coordinated experience of reading a printed book, there is a complete disjunction between the aural and visual senses in such scenarios.[26]

Little has been written about the phenomenology of audio-text receptions. Even Sven Birkerts, who remains overtly critical regarding the audiobook's potential impact on the decline of print reading amid the electronic age, nevertheless also recognizes the peculiar promise that audiobook engagements can foster with regard to profoundly literary experiences:

> Reading is different from listening, yes, but in listening's limitations I have found unexpected pleasures. When you read, both eye and ear are engaged; when you listen, the eye is free. Slight though the freedom may seem, it can declare itself resoundingly. The listener can attain a peculiar exaltation—a vivid sense of doubleness, of standing poised on a wire between two different realities.[27]

In light of Birkerts's line of thinking, Rubery writes that "The curious impact that synchronized or discordant visual environments might have on the listening experience for which we currently lack an adequate vocabulary."[28] And just as one finds it difficult to read with people talking around them (the ears interfering with the eyes), Literary Sound Studies rightly positions itself to question whether there's an equally problematic reversal of sorts: can the eyes interfere with the ears? Especially when, as noted above, "the usual scene of audiobook listening [remains] while

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Sven Birkerts, *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in the Electronic Age* (New York: Faber and Faber, 1994), 150.

[28] Rubery, "Introduction," 15.

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commuting or performing housework."[29] In the words of David Sedaris, author and celebrated narrator of his published audiobooks:

> I love audiobooks, in part because I'm lazy and in part because I'm not. Rather than sitting still and moving my eyes over a page, I like to roam around and do stuff—iron, say, or defrost my freezer. I take walks, I soak in the tub, I turn up the volume and vacuum.[30]

With Sedaris's comment in mind (and all humor aside), "audiobooks are proving themselves to be essential in performing everyday tasks."[31] So who are these listeners? And what are the conditions in which they listen?

1.2.1 A LISTENING PUBLIC

"Although the audiobook was originally designed for the blind and infirm," writes Birkerts, "it is now targeted to Americans who commute."[32] At the time of this writing (2017), twenty-three years past Birkert's 1994 publication—wherein he rightfully argued and questioned that "as life gets more complex, people are likely to read less and listen more. The medium shapes the message and the message bears directly on who we are; it forms us. Listening is not reading, but what *is* it?"[33]—audiobooks have become the fastest growing industry in American publishing, with

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[29] K.C. Harrison, "Taking Books, Toni Morrison, and the Transformation of Narrative Authority," in *Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies*, Ed. Matthew Rubery (Routledge, 2014), 154.

[30] David Sedaris, "What David Sedaris Read this Year," *New Yorker*, December 11, 2009, https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/what-david-sedaris-read-this-year

[31] Harrison, 154.

[32] Birkerts, 143.

[33] Ibid., 145.

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digital downloads fueling the explosion.[34] Luckily for Birkerts, while e-book sales continue to drop and audiobook sales continue to rise, print nevertheless remains the dominant form in publishing, with "physical and downloaded audiobooks [selling] 81 million units in 2015, representing [just] 3% of the total 2.5 billion trade books sold."[35] While three percent of a multi-billion dollar industry is by no means a small dent, it's nevertheless important to note that print remains the leading medium of sales within the book industry. Notwithstanding, audiobook sales continue to rise in large part due to smartphone technology and on-demand access to literally countless titles, with Audible producing upwards of 10,000 titles a year.[36] Ally Marotti at the *Chicago Tribune* reports that audiobooks "almost doubled their share of units sold, increasing from 1.7 percent in 2013 to 3.3 percent in 2016."[37] A 2016 study by the Edison Research group found that "the percentage of American who have listened to an audiobook continues to grow, and now stands at 34% of Americans 12+ (up from 21% in 2015)."[38] Furthermore, not only are more Americans listening to audiobooks but the number of audiobooks consumed by listeners continues to increase, too. "According to *The Infinite Dial*," an Edison Report reports, "audiobook consumers listened to an

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[34] Jennifer Maloney, "The Fastest-Growing Format in Publishing: Audiobooks," *The Washington Post*, July 21, 2016. https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-fastest-growing-format-in-publishing-audiobooks-1469139910

[35] Ibid.

[36] Kaufman, Leslie "Actors Today Don't Just Read for the Part. Reading IS the Part". *The New York Times,* June 29, 2013. Retrieved 24 December 2017.

[37] Ally Marotti, "As e-book sales fall and audiobooks rise, print still dominates for local booksellers," *Chicago Tribune*, January 7, 2017.

[38] Edison Research, "The Audiobook Consumer Report 2016," August 3, 2016. https://www.wsj.com/article_email/the-fastest-growing-format-in-publishing-audiobooks-1469139910-lMyQjAxMTA2OTI0NTEyMTUwWj, full report found here: http://www.edisonresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/The-Audiobook-Consumer-2016.pdf

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average of 5.8 audiobooks in the year preceding the study…for 2016, that figure is now 6.7 audiobooks listened to in the past year."[39] In short, people are listening—but who are they? And, following Birkerts's line of questioning, what exactly *is* listening? And yet still, how much do commuting and the social conditions of late-capitalism have to do with it?

The continued growth of audiobook engagements with American consumers is not only a result of newly emerging digital technologies but also, one can surmise from the above cited Edison Report, an increase in multitasking and a decrease in sustained leisure activities has significant contributions to the format's success. The "top reasons people chose audiobooks," reports *Publishers Weekly*'s Jim Millat, are "that [people] can do other things while listening, and the portability of the content."[40] This growth in audiobook consumption is part of a larger technological and societal shift in how we not only think about narrative but how we perceive the world at large, a shift that requires Literary and Cultural Studies to reassess what it means to not only read but also produce literature within a particular market, within a particular societal ideology, a particular mode of Being itself.

1.2.2 MATERIAL CONDITIONS

Audiobooks and listener engagements do not exist in a vacuum (even when the volume is turned up) but instead operate and are situated amid the current and

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Jim Millot, "Audiobook Sales Up Again in 2016, Posting Double-Digit Gains" *Publisher's Weekly*, June 07, 2017 (https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/audio-books/article/73917-audiobooks-posted-double-digit-gains-in-sales-output.html)

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precarious phase of late-capitalism. They exist, like all literature, within a particular market of exchange and production. The continued growth in audiobooks sales is due in large part to both smartphone technology and on-demand, downloadable access to audio-files as well as changing social behaviors (with the two not so easily divided). In the words of Terry Eagleton:

> Social relations between humans are bound up with the way society produces and acquires material life. These are productive forces, what Marx calls "the economic structure of society" or, "economic base." From the economic base or infrastructure emerges a "superstructure"—laws and politics—a state whose essential feature and function is to legitimate the power of the social class which owns the means of production.

While lacking in visible form (the audio file itself, that is) audiobooks nevertheless have material conditions necessary for the possibility of the listening experience. While each experience—and the necessary preparations therein—may differ, a "typical preparation," Wittkower writes, "might include obtaining an audiobook on CD or through download, adding the audio files to a digital library on a desktop computer, adding the files within a playlist synced to an MP3 player, and updating the MP3 audio library."[41] Moreover, the material conditions of listening will invariably include integrations with secondary variables, such as listening to an audiobook through car speakers while driving, or on one's headphones while exercising, or, say, performing domestic chores around the house, and so forth. [42]Alienating as it can be, "The usual scene of audiobook listening," writes K.C. Harrison, "—while commuting or performing housework—would seem to oppose the potential for audiobooks to

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[41] Wittkower, 216.

[42] Ibid.

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foster communities of readers. But it may be precisely the fact of isolated listening that makes an aurally imagined community so appealing."[43] This notion of imagined communities is a subjunctive mood—something that remains on the horizon of what might be rather than in the present moment of what is (the indicative). This brings us back to Ong's "secondary orality" as a vehicle for "true audiences" insofar as audio-recordings generate a strong group sense rather than, like reading, "turn[ing] individuals in on themselves."[44] It's a continuum of potential community. And the supposed appeal of imagined audiobook-centered community fosters a potential community wherein one can be both present and absent simultaneously through multitasking and audiobook listening. This is something an imagined print-book community cannot foster insofar as reading—the active engagement with a text—requires one be fully emerged in the text itself. This "full-emersion in the text" of course includes a host of other variables such as background noise and music, yet the defining difference between the audiobook and its print counterpart is that a listener can have an audiobook playing in the background whereas reading is by necessity foregrounded. This is to note, once again, that "audiobooks," as Harrison argues, "have proved to be essential in performing the tasks of daily life."[45]

Audiobooks situate themselves as cherished escapes from the demands of domestic labor in tandem with the soul-crushing realities of neoliberalism—i.e., audiobooks remain entwined with navigating the monotonous, day-to-day trenches of

[43] Harrison, 154.

[44] Ong, 134.

[45] Harrison, 154.

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increased commuting hours while simultaneously garnering a semblance of intellectual engagement. Whereas reading print requires us to move our focus away from work, audiobooks allow us to remain working while still reading; they enable us to be distracted from our work; they're not necessarily what Marx would call an opiate of the masses (because these tasks certainly predate the audiobook) but both audiobooks and podcasts, for that matter, have "naturalized" those tasks in ways that academics have yet to fully address. By way of example, see Deborah Jacob's 2014 piece for *Forbes Magazine,* "Listening To Audiobooks While You Do Something Else Is The Ultimate In Multitasking":

> [B]y listening to books while I do other things, I have reclaimed time that would otherwise be lost in today's 24/7 work world. I can read this way on my iPhone while walking to the subway; forget my discomfort standing in the rush hour crush; plug the device into the kitchen radio during the time it takes to cook and clean up; and even slip the iPhone into a pants pocket when I'm doing other chores around the house."[46]

Jacob's proselytization of the audiobook's efficiency remains a feature of the platform and industry-wide success, not a bug. D.E. Wittkower's "A Preliminary Phenomenology of the Audiobook," while principally guided by asking two questions—(1) "What is it like to listen to an audiobook?" and (2) "What are we listening to when we listen to an audiobook?"[47]— explores the material conditions within and around the audiobook phenomena within the context of Jacob's praises:

> Listening is neither isolated nor all-consuming; in fact, if we are to understand the experience of listening to an audiobook, we should not assume that the

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[46] Deborah Jacob, *Forbes Magazine*, "Listening To Audiobooks While You Do Something Else Is The Ultimate In Multitasking," https://www.forbes.com/sites/deborahljacobs/2014/06/25/summer-reading-listening-to-audiobooks-while-you-do-something-else-is-the-ultimate-in-multitasking/

[47] Wittkower, 216.

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> convergence of intermixed and simultaneous activities has no bearing on the phenomenology of listening, or that coincident activities would not have different effects on the experience.[48]

While Wittkower's work largely concerns itself with framing audiobooks as a "temporal object of experience" and remain "directly relevant to phenomenological discussions of aural experiences,"[49] his work exploring the material conditions of listening—an act that often goes unattributed when thinking about sound—but also explores the influences that various environments have on the listening experience itself. Just as "the written word is put into motion, so to speak, by the action of the reader,"[50] one might argue that audiobooks put our complicities of increased number of commuters and their longer commutes into motion, too. Viva la audio revolution!

What we're talking about here is approaching audiobooks as potential to foster imagined community just as much as individual moments of resistance. The notion of "imagined community" is a key concept in Radio Studies and refers to the sense of belonging to a defined community that has no physicality you can point to. It is rather, being an active participant and member in an idea—a dialogic perspective—and experience that transcends space and time. It is what Radio Studies schools have called "co-presence," being both within and outside simultaneously while listening. Again, the difference between reading in a crowded, noisy café and listening while driving differ in one fundamental sense: The café noise becomes background to the

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[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid., 216.

[50] Ibid., 220.

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foreground of reading, whereas listening becomes the background to the foreground of other activities (like driving, for example).

> Regardless of how the social environment is experienced by the listener, it is clear that the listener is in some kind of disconnection with the social environment, experiencing it within a context not available to others in that environment. If the content for being-with-others is supplied via earbuds, whatever experience of community the listener has must be a kind of false or imaginary community—a public space interpreted as a private and interior event.[51]

There are "three kinds of community within the seemingly solitary and solitude-seeking act of listening to an audiobook in public," Wittkower writes. They are (1) "a real but nonlocal community which is formed around the aesthetic work; (2) a local but imaginary community within the listener's privately contextualized experience of others; and (3) a real and local but inexperienced community of aurally unavailable mere presence-alongside-others."[52]

1.2.3 "WELCOME, NONREADERS"

Compare and contrast the following opening remarks from David Foster Wallace's 2005 audio version of *Consider the Lobster* and Jon Stewart's audio version of his 2010 publication of *America:*

> Wallace: "A note for the listener: This is David Foster Wallace…"[53]
> Stewart: "Welcome, nonreader…"[54]

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[51] Ibid., 229.

[52] Ibid., 229-230.

[53] David Foster Wallace, *Selected Essays from Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Time Warner Audiobooks, 2005).

[54] Jon Stewart, *America (the audiobook): A Citizen's Guide to Democracy Inaction* (Hachette Audio, Playaway Digital Audio, Findaway World, LLC, 2010).

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While both Wallace and Stewart directly address their audiobook audiences in fundamentally different ways, each agree: we don't read audiobooks. But is Stewart's above opening pleasantry the most useful way to think about the form's reception? That is, is it useful to contrast the audiobook's reception from listeners to what they are not (i.e., "nonreaders") rather than what they are (i.e., listeners)? Rubery, referencing Stewart's opening lines to *America* in his own introduction to *Audiobooks*, asks a similar question: "Is an audiobook listener really a 'nonreader'? Literary critics have been curiously silent on the topic of audiobooks despite the fundamental questions this format raises about the act of reading."[55] K.C. Harrison, in the essay "Talking Books, Toni Morrison, and the Transformation of Narrative Authority," picks up this line of inquiry by emphasizing the multiplicity of meaning with not only the hermeneutics of reading but also the differing hermeneutics of close listening, a listener-centered reader-response criticism:

> Rather than identifying meaning with an ideal reading that resides within the fixed pages of a book, understanding how meanings arise from the varying conditions of performance and reception in the case of the audiobook illuminates avenues for interpreting print literature that includes a diverse range of audience responses.[56]

Harrison notes that Sarah Kozloff's argument—that "audiobooks create a stronger bond than printed books between storyteller and listener by 'envoicing' the narrator'"[57]—should also be taken seriously insofar as "many listeners particularly

[55] Rubery, "Introduction," 1.

[56] Harrison, 143.

[57] Harrison, 145.

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enjoy hearing authors perform their own works"[58] (*a la* Davis Sedaris). While the merits of authorial-reader vs. authorial-listener relations are profound and profoundly contentious, one thing is for sure: listening is *not* reading.

1.2.4 DOUBLED DOUBLING: "A NOTE FOR THE LISTENER: THIS IS DAVID FOSTER WALLACE"

> *The "doubling of authorship" is a shared characteristic of the production of unabridged literary works for audio as well as of literary translation. The role and presence of the voicing narrator looms as large for listeners as does the presence of the translator for readers of literary works in translation.*
>
> — Sara Knox [59]

Elaborating on James Jesson's insights—that audiobooks, like the radio treatments that are their precursor, complicate authorial identity by instituting a doubling of authorship[60]—Sara Knox suggests that "the movement of a novel from the printed page to pageless audio might best be understood as both a re-mediation of a form and a translation of the *voice* of the text."[61] This connection between a narrator envoicing a text and a listener receiving that text is what Sara Knox calls "a doubled doubling": there's the (a) doubling of authorship (the narrating of a book) and the (b) divided consciousness of listening itself, wherein "a listener meets each reading as a distinct textual encounter, both in terms of the personality of the reader and the

[58] Ibid.

[59] Knox, "Hearing Hardy, Talking Tolstoy: The Audiobook Narrator's Voice and Reader Experience," in *Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies*, Ed. Matthew Rubery (Routledge, 2014), 133.

[60] James Jesson, "A Library on the Air: Literary Dramatization and Orson Wells's *Mercury Theatre*, in *Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies*, Ed. Matthew Rubery (Routledge, 2014), 44-60.

[61] Knox, 128.

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auditory space of listening."[62] This is an ecological, listener-centered approached to audio hermeneutics via the "doubled doubling" framework from Knox insofar as istener and narrator are both co-producers in the meaning making process of audiobook hermeneutics. Reading and listening are both fundamentally hermeneutic in their very structures.

In "Soundtracking the Novel: Willy Vlautin's *Northline* as Filmic Audiobook," Justin St. Clair explores the changes in recording technology and how they've facilitated the emergence of hybrid audiobooks, "literary works that necessitate multimodal engagement, requiring the audience to both read *and* listen."[63] While the doubling effect within Sound Studies is well documented it remains uniquely suited for exploring Wallace's literary journalism because he was awash with discursive (often theatrically driven) riffs, blurring the lines between narrator and meta-narrator often situated as footnotes: "The visual expressions and confirmation of his nonlinear thinking," writes Ira B. Nadel, continuing that "footnotes or endnotes demonstrate the active intellectual and creative energy of Wallace on and off the page while also exhibiting the double consciousness of the text."[64] The doubling here—with Wallace—becomes a doubled doubling via inviting the reader to enter into the discussion with him. This is what Timothy Jacobs calls the "participatory aesthetic"[65] of Wallace's writing. It is the distinction between a monologic (single author/ity) or

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[62] Ibid., 139.

[63] Justin St. Clair, "Soundtracking the Novel: Willy Vlautin's *Northline* as Filmic Audiobook," in *Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies*, Ed. Matthew Rubery (Routledge, 2014), 92.

[64] Ira B Nadel, "Consider the Footnote," *Legacy of DFW,* 219.

[65] As cited by Kelly, 16.

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dialogic approach (shared author/ity). And Wallace clearly favored the latter (especially with regard to his literary journalism):

> Everything [Wallace] wrote was unfinished, because it was offered as one side of a bargain: he would extend his readers' sense of the possible, and all he asked was that they populate his fictional world to make it feel less lonely. It made everything he wrote into a work in progress. But then, as a character in one of Tennessee Williams's plays points out: "Humanity is just a work in progress."[66]

In a 1993 interview with Larry McCaffery, Wallace explores this participatory, dialogic aesthetic of his published work and seems to nod toward a constant flux of uncertainty and unfinishedness of his writing. This is his keystone dialogic approach to his literary journalism for readers and listeners alike, presenting his case for a reader-response ethic via a quantum mechanics analogy:

> [S]erious science butters its bread with the fact that the separation of subject/observer and object/experiment is impossible. Observing quantum phenomenon's been proven to alter the phenomenon. We still think in terms of a story "changing" the reader's emotions, cerebrations, maybe even her life. We're not keen on the idea of the story sharing its valence with the reader. But the reader's own life "outside" the story changes the story. You could argue that it affects only "her reaction to the story" or "her take on the story." But these things are the story. […] Once I'm done with the [text], I'm basically dead, and probably the text's dead; it becomes simply language, and language lives not just in but through the reader. The reader becomes God, for all textual purposes.[67]

Often left for the sciences to grapple with, the observer-effect—denoting the inexorable influences human observation has on any one particular phenomenon—has much to offer the hermeneutical and always relational exchange between the

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[66] Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, "David Foster Wallace's *The Pale King*: Can it still be a masterpiece?" (*The Telegraph*, 8:00AM BST 10 April, 2011.)

[67] David Foster Wallace, "Interview with Larry McCaffery," *Review of Contemporary Fiction,* Summer, 1993, featured in *Conversations With David Foster Wallace,* Ed. by Stephen J. Burn. (Jackson, Miss: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 40.

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reader/listener (the observer) and the text (the observed). The social sciences also identify and work with the observer-effect in field research, for the presence of the anthropologist or sociologist, for example, like that of the scientist and reader/listener, *will*—without any real question or debate—alter that which is being observed. This project proposes the observer-effect as an axiomatic framework for exploring contemporary literary hermeneutics of close listening, with emphasis given to both the environments in which listening takes place (the physicality of reading location) in tandem with the context in which any one particular narrative is situated (the text itself). For *listening* to a story from a downloaded audio-file presents new environments wherein the literary experience might transpire (i.e., e.g., stuck in rush-hour traffic), provides scholarship with a broad range of questions not yet sufficiently addressed in Literary and Cultural Studies communities.

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1.3 INTERPOLATION: TEXTUAL ECOLOGY

Look around you. And listen.

Ecology, broadly conceived, is the study of interconnected coexistence between living and non-living entities. By way of example, an examination of a flower requires that one inspect not only the development and aesthetics of the flower as it is but also take into account the biotic-community in which said flower exists, the flower's context: from worms tilling soil amongst its roots to bees cross-pollinating for perpetual propagation, the flower is but one variable in a much larger and interconnected system of coexistences. The study of existence is—with flowers as with texts alike—without any real question or debate also always the study of coexistence.

To fully understand textual ecology—both the mediums in which narratives are situated (e.g., book, magazine, audio, etc.) as well as the very environments in which these texts are encountered (e.g., classroom, café, train, etc.)—one must also explore how the medium modifies the environment and vice versa (e.g., you don't read a book while driving but you can certainly listen to one). And with the continued emergence of new reading and listening technologies the environments in which we find ourselves in the midst of literary encounters have now taken on new hermeneutical ontologies. There's a dialectical tension between a narrative and its textual ecology: a tension which includes but is not limited to (a) the organ in which any one text is situated, (b) the physical environment and actions wherein listening transpires, and (c) the listener's own experiences and hermeneutical frameworks therein. The difference comes not with environment alone but with its movement as

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well—whether transportation or jogging or domestic chores are part of the literary experience will affect the content's reception.

The biotic community of ideas within (and outside of) narrative influences the exchanges between author, reader/listener, text, and the varying environs in which they all meet—this is the hermeneutics of close listening: an eco-centered hermeneutical approach to audio-text listener-responses. Hermeneutics—broadly conceived—is the process of understanding. More specifically—and more traditionally for that matter—hermeneutics is the process of interpreting texts. In the spirit of Hans-Georg Gadamer hermeneutics, this project remains "a philosophical effort to account for understanding as an ontological—the ontological—process of man"[68] and thus a framework for understanding our collective understandings of Being-in-the-world is always on some fundamental level a hermeneutical endeavor (a hermeneutic phenomenology in the spirit of Heidegger). Just as Gadamer was attempting to recapture something that is both natural (interpretation and understanding) as well applying this natural condition to discursive and culturally driven social relations (texts and their interpretive communities), this project applies an eco-centered hermeneutical framework to both audio-texts and their changing social and cultural relations as a working dialectic.

The hermeneutics of close listening grounds itself in the above textual ecology (or eco-hermeneutics) wherein the dialectical tension includes (but is not limited to) the (a) organ in which a given text is situated, the (b) physical environment wherein

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[68] Palmer, Richard (1969). *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press), 163.

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listening transpires, and the (c) listener's own interpretive frameworks therein. This is a listener-response centered approached to textual ecology and audiobooks and—unlike print—lack visual form (i.e., the digitalized on-demand audiobook), thus paratextual structures when applied to audiobooks pose serious questions regarding listener-receptions and the author function that succeeding sections tease out in greater detail.

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1.4 DAVID FOSTER WALLACE (STUDIES)

> *Since the death of David Foster Wallace in September 2008 at the age of forty-six, his reputation as one the most significant writers of his era has become firmly established.*
>
> — Adam Kelly [69]

> *The problem isn't that today's readership is "dumb," I don't think. Just that TV and commercial-art culture's trained it to be sort of lazy and childish in its expectations. But it makes trying to engage today's readers both imaginatively and intellectually unprecedentedly hard.*
>
> — David Foster Wallace [70]

> *People who've never read a word [Wallace] wrote know his style, the so-called quirks, a bag of typographical tricks ripped from the eighteenth-century comic novel and recontextualized: the footnotes and skeptical parentheticals, clauses that compulsively double back, feeling for weaknesses in themselves. It's true these match the idiosyncrasies of his manner of speech and thought. (We know this especially well now that all those YouTube videos of him at readings and in interviews have become familiar—oddly so: For someone who clearly squirmed under the eye of scrutiny like a stuck bug, Wallace submitted and subjected himself to so much of it. He had more author photos than any of his peers. He was nothing if not a torn person.)*
>
> — John Jeremiah Sullivan [71]

David Foster Wallace was born on February 21, 1962 and took his own life on September 12, 2008. He was 46 years old. At the time of his death, Wallace was the author of two novels,[72] three collections of short stories,[73] five works of nonfiction,[74] guest editor of *The Best American Essays 2007*, and authored dozens of other works of fiction and nonfiction published in a wide variety of organs. In other words, "it's fair

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[69] Adam Kelly, "The Death of the Author and the Birth of a Discipline," *Irish Journal of American Studies*, Online 2 (Summer 2010), 2.

[70] Wallace, "Interview with Larry McCaffery," 21-22.

[71] John Jeremiah Sullivan, "Too Much Information," *GQ*, March 31, 2011. https://www.gq.com/story/david-foster-wallace-the-pale-king-john-jeremiah-sullivan

[72] *The Broom of The System,* 1987; *Infinite Jest,* 1996.

[73] *Girl with Curious Hair,* 1989; *Brief Interviews With Hideous Men,* 1999; *Oblivion: Stories,* 2004.

[74] *Signifying Rappers: Rap and Race in the Urban Present* [co-authored with Mark Costello], 1990; *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again: Essays and Arguments,* 1997; *Everything and More: A Complex History of ∞,* 2003; *Consider The Lobster: Essays,* 2005; *McCain's Promise: Aboard the Straight Talk Express with John McCain and a Whole Bunch of Actual Reporters, Thinking About Hope,* 2008.

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to say that Wallace has shown himself to be capable of tackling any subject or genre he chooses," writes David Eggers, continuing that "[Wallace's] versatility and his attention to detail—of the physical world and also the nuances of feeling and consciousness—have made him one of the most influential writers the United States has produced in the last twenty years."[75] Eggers is certainly not alone in his proclamation of Wallace's literary scope; John Jeremiah Sullivan's audio introduction to *David Foster Wallace: In His Own Words*[76]— a collection of in-studio recordings, selected radio interviews, and public readings published by Hachette Audio in May 2014—begins with Sullivan exploring the influence Wallace's body of work has had on multiple prose forms: "[Wallace] is considered by his admirers, and even by many of those critiques who did not love his style," Sullivan says, "to be one of the most important writers of the decades that hinged around the turn of the millennium."[77]

Posthumous publications, too, are adding additional impacts on readers, listeners, and scholars alike. Since Wallace's death—beginning with his 2005 commencement address at Kenyon College, published with Little, Brown in 2009 as *This is Water: Some Thoughts, Delivered on a Significant Occasion, about Living a Compassionate Life*[78]—posthumous publications continue to emerge, deepening an

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[75] David Eggers, "To try extra hard to exercise patience, politeness, and imagination," in *David Foster Wallace: The Last Interview and Other Conversations*. Brooklyn, NY Melville House, 2012), 69.

[76] David Foster Wallace*, David Foster Wallace: In His Own Words* (New York: Hachette Audio, 2014).

[77] John Jeremiah Sullivan, "Introduction," *David Foster Wallace: In his own words*. (New York: Hachette Audio, 2014).

[78] David Foster Wallace, *This is Water: Some Thoughts, Delivered on a Significant Occasion, about Living a Compassionate Life*, 2009.

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already verbose body of work Wallace produced by the time of his abrupt death in '08. In addition to the abridged publication of his commencement address, *This is Water*, there have been six monograph-length publications bearing Wallace's name as author, including one novel (*The Pale King: An Unfinished Novel*, 2011),[79] a collection of essays (*Both Flesh and Not: Essays*, 2012),[80] his undergraduate senior thesis (*Fate, Time, and Language: An Essay on Free Will,* 2010),[81] the aforementioned audiobook collection of all in-studio recorded readings by Wallace himself (*David Foster Wallace: In His Own Words,* 2014),[82] a career spanning anthology including published writings, teaching materials (syllabi, assignments, worksheets), and personal email correspondences with his mother, Sally Wallace (*The David Foster Wallace Reader*, 2014),[83] and a short collection of Wallace's writing on tennis (*String Theory: David Foster Wallace on Tennis*, 2016.).[84] Listing Wallace's extensive posthumous publications reveal the discursive evolution of his body of work and the influence these publications have on scholarship: for when documents like Wallace's teaching syllabi and personal correspondences share bindings with his most acclaimed essays and short stories, scholarship can easily conflate primary and secondary texts. While Wallace criticism and scholarship tend to treat his interviews and personal

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[79] *The Pale King: An Unfinished Novel*, 2011.

[80] *Both Flesh and Not: Essays*, 2012.

[81] *Fate, Time, and Language: An Essay on Free Will*, 2010.

[82] *David Foster Wallace: In His Own Words*, 2014.

[83] *The David Foster Wallace Reader*, 2014.

[84] *String Theory: David Foster Wallace on Tennis*, 2016.

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correspondences as frameworks for reading into his published works of fiction and nonfiction, I argue that Wallace's audiobooks function as not only useful secondary sources but also primary texts in and of themselves—it's all just a matter of what readers and listeners and scholars interests are.

Since Wallace's death, there have been upwards of 150 scholarly articles published in anthologies or journals and 16 monographs solely dedicated to Wallace's writing.[85] The Harry Ransom Center Archive at the University of Texas at Austin acquired Wallace's papers in 2009 and has since become a fixture within Wallace Studies research, with the four most recent monograph publications (at the time of this writing) each noting the importance of the HRC in their acknowledgment sections.[86] There have been 10 Wallace conferences organized since his death, beginning with the University of Liverpool's "Consider David Foster Wallace" in 2009 and the first Wallace conference in Australia, "OzWallace," which took place in Melbourne in September 2017. Between these two bookends there is the University of Illinois's annual "David Foster Wallace Conference" (2014-2018), New York University's "Footnotes" (2010) and "David Foster Wallace and the Ethics of Writing" (2015) conferences and dedicated Wallace panels at both the MLA and ALA 2017 conferences. Moreover, the ingurgitation of the "International David Foster Wallace

[85] See, for example, "Bibliography of Secondary Criticism" by the Glasgow David Foster Wallace Research Group, found at https://davidfosterwallaceresearch.wordpress.com/.

[86] They are: Claire Hayes-Brady's *The Unspeakable Failures of David Foster Wallace: Language, Identity, and Resistance* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016); David Hering's *David Foster Wallace: Fiction and Form* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016); Lucas Thompson's *Global Wallace: David Foster Wallace and World Literature* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016; and most recently, Jeffrey Severs' *David Foster Wallace's Balancing Books: Fictions of Value* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

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Society" (2016) and the "Journal of David Foster Wallace Studies" (2018) aim to increase the already voluminous body of work surrounding the late author. With the explosion of scholarship addressing Wallace's work there nevertheless remains an oversight of scholarly engagement with Wallace's nonfiction, not to mention zero attention given to his audio publications. And to best frame this oversight and contextualize my own contributions to the feild, I begin by exploring the various stages of Wallace scholarship with the help of Adam Kelly's 2010 essay, "The Death of the Author and the Birth of a Discipline," and Walter Benjamin's notion of immanent criticism.

1.4.1 DEATH OF AN AUTHOR

Kelly's "three-waves of Wallace studies" framework is useful for thinking about not only the evolution of Wallace Studies as an academic discipline but also for exploring how scholarship changes with advancements in reading technologies and their effects on how Foucault's notion of author function operates amid the digital milieu. Moreover, Water Benjamin's notion of immanent criticism—where the "meaning and significance of a text are not determined by the author at the moment of writing, but are contested and conceptualized anew as it enters subsequent contexts, as it is subject to reading and criticism through time"[87]—is helpful for making sense of the continued and discursive evolution of Wallace's body of work as well as the scholarship that addresses his oeuvre. Not only do posthumous publications (from

[87] Graeme Gilloch. *Walter Benjamin, Critical Constellations*. (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2002), 2.

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unfinished novels to personal correspondences) reconstitute the previous works of literature published in Wallace's lifetime but scholarship, too, alters how readers think about and engage with his work. The recognition that texts are read and reread up against each other—both primary and secondary texts—is necessary for seeing the significance of how audio publications can and ought to be read up against their printed counterparts.[88]

Following my framing of Kelly's three waves of DFW Studies, I argue that we have entered a new stream of scholarship within Wallace Studies, one that grounds itself in the Harry Ransom Center Archive as paratext as well as the very phenomenon of David Foster Wallace Studies itself. That is to say that scholars are now turning to the topic of DFW Studies as a field of investigation with emphasis on both the evolution of academic scholarship as well as how Wallace's body of work is discussed outside the academy in a variety of public settings (e.g., *The Great Concavity Podcast*[89] and Internet-based readings groups such as "Infinite Summer"[90]). Wallace is, Kelly writes, "the first major writer to live and die in the Internet age"[91] and as such, in accordance to Kelly's arguments, one ought to equally consider both Internet-based fan-sites along with scholarly publications when thinking about David Foster Wallace Studies as a discipline. Just as scholars continue to use Wallace's archival materials (e.g., personal correspondences, drafts, annotated texts) to frame,

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[88] "Assuming we are dealing with an author," Foucault writes, "is everything he wrote and said, everything he left behind, to be included in his work?" (Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 118-119).

[89] https://greatconcavity.podbean.com/

[90] http://infinitesummer.org/

[91] Kelly, 2.

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contextualize, and unpack his published works, this dissertation uses both archived materials to frame his engagement with audiobooks and vice versa, his audiobooks as a way to reframe his more extensive bibliography.

1.4.2 WAVES OF SCHOLARSHIP

I use Adam Kelly's 2010 essay "The Death of the Author and the Birth of a Discipline"[92] to frame David Foster Wallace Studies for two distinct reasons: On the one hand, Kelly's essay was the first comprehensive overview of scholarship of Wallace's work to be published after his death, ranging from Kelly's use of journal and monograph publications to focusing on academic conferences and Internet fan-sites.[93] Secondly, Kelly's ability to frame the three waves of Wallace Studies (from early 1990s-2008) is both fruitful for thinking about Wallace's work in academic context during Wallace's life while also being immensely fertile for thinking about the discursive contexts in which DFW Studies has undergone after his death.

The first wave of Wallace studies focuses on his published works before the turn of the century only, with the central theme of early critics' understanding Wallace's work "in terms of its emphasis on science and information systems and its intersections with American postmodernism."[94] While emphasizing science and information systems is not how Wallace critics would frame his work years later it

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[92] Ibid.

[93] In addition to aforementioned podcast and reading group, both Matt Bucher's "Wallace-1" email list and Nick Maniatis' "The Howling Fantods" fan-site have each become part of the more extensive scholarly discussion, with Wallace's biographer, D. T. Max, in his acknowledgement section of *Every Ghost Story is a Love Story*, thanking both Matt and Nick for their help with his own research.

[94] Kelly, 6.

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nevertheless remains the crux of how scholars received his first few publications at the time. "But following this first wave of critical responses," Kelly writes, "Wallace's own articulation of his project soon began to have a large impact on the scholarship surrounding his work." This second wave commenced with A.O. Scott's career-overview piece for *The New York Review of Books* in 2000, "who first proclaimed," Kelly writes, that "[Wallace's interviews and nonfiction have] critical importance for understanding [his own] work."[95] Scott is referring to the 1993 essay "E Unibus Pluram" and 1993 interview with Larry McCaffery (both published in *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*). The clear difference, or marker of movement from one wave to the next, was that scholars were using Wallace's own work—both his nonfiction as well as interviews—as hermeneutical guides for reading his published works of fiction.

The shift from scholars' close reading of Wallace's work to intertextual reading of his collected works is first evidenced in 2003 with the publication of both Marshall Boswell's *Understanding David Foster Wallace* as well as Stephen Burn's *Infinite Jest: A Reader's Guide*, each "containing lengthy discussions of 'E Unibus Pluram' in their opening chapters."[96] Boswell's opening chapter uses A.O. Scott's essay as a springboard for engaging with the essay-interview nexus of second wave Wallace Studies. Kelly notes the turn that not only Wallace studies have taken in recent years but also the various turns within the discipline of Literary Theory itself, a field of criticism that "initially arose as a method of reading 'against the grain,' with

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[95] Kelly, 7.

[96] Kelly, 7.

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the aim of exploring a text's unconscious (whether political, psychological, gendered etc.)"[97] Yet in the midst of Wallace's career—and arguably in large part because of Wallace's work—theory "moved from a position of peripheral challenge to one of conventional centrality in academic discourse."[98] This move to the interview-essay nexus in Wallace Studies changed how scholars engaged with Wallace's body of work: instead of using theory, which was "initially viewed as the conclusive destruction of intention"[99] (a la Barthes's "Death of The Author") to deconstruct any one particular narrative of Wallace's, Wallace problematized this practice by presenting readers with narratives that engaged with the very theory used to extinguish authorial-presence and thus making Wallace's presence—if not already present within the main text—always implied with the critic's secondary readings. This perspective is mirrored when A.O. Scott famously called Wallace's work "meta ironic. That is… irony [turned] back on itself,"[100] and did so by way of engaging with the discourses of the theory itself (along with direct address) because, as Scott argues, Wallace could "speak the language of the critic, and challenged the language on its own turf"[101] in ways that were equal if not better versed than the critics themselves.

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[97] Kelly, 11.

[98] Kelly, 11.

[99] Kelly, 12.

[100] A.O. Scott, "The Panic of Influence." In *New York Review of Books* 47, no.2 (February 10, 2000): 40.

[101] Kelly, 12.

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Being able to speak the language of the critic is what Lee Konstantinou calls the "writer-critic":[102] Wallace—along with contemporaries Zadie Smith, David Eggers, Mark Z. Danielewski, Jennifer Egan, Tao Lin, Colson Whitehead, et al.—are a part of what Nicholas Dames has called the "Theory Generation" of contemporary American authors. "The Theory Generation," Dames argues (as cited by Konstantinou), is made of up individuals who "studied the liberal arts in an American college anytime after the 1980s [who were] educated in critical theory, and have subsequently attempted to confront its troubling implications—for many novelists, through their fiction."[103] Attend any one of the many Wallace-focused academic conference and you'll see the wide breath of scholarly engagement surrounding his work's connection to critical theory. E.g., of the papers presented at both the Liverpool "Consider David Foster Wallace" and New York University "Footnotes" conferences in 2009, Kelly writes:

> The majority of the papers focused on Wallace's relation to philosophers and theorists, including George Berkeley, Gilles Deleuze, Paul de Man, Jacques Derrida, René Descartes, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Martin Heidegger, William James, Fredric Jameson, Iris Murdoch, Martha Nussbaum, Paul Ricoeur, Richard Rorty, Gilbert Ryle, Jean Paul-Sartre and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Most noteworthy about these papers, moreover, was the way theorists and thinkers were not read as providing external explanations, as it were, for aspects of Wallace's texts. Instead, presenters demonstrated a marked tendency to utilize theory in a way that emphasized Wallace's assimilation and response to it, with the often explicit assumption that Wallace was himself versed in all these figures and engaging in implicit dialogue with them in his fiction.

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[102] Lee Konstantinou, *Cool Characters: Irony and American Fiction.* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press), 2016, 6.

[103] Ibid., 6.

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Kelly himself—perhaps without fully understanding the ironies of framing second wave Wallace studies as such—participates in this close reading of Wallace's essays to frame this wave by citing from Wallace's first published essay, "Fictional Futures and the Conspicuously Young" (*Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 1988): "The contemporary artist," Wallace writes, "can simply no longer afford to regard the work of critics or theorists or philosophers—no matter how stratospheric—as divorced from his own concerns."[104] The artist must, Wallace argues, keep the critic in mind when producing art because the critic will, in turn, reconstitute the art itself, evidenced by Wallace's career-long engagement with direct address within both print and audio publications.

While second wave Wallace Studies is best framed by the essay-interview nexus, third wave of Wallace Studies, according to Kelly—citing Tysdal, Giles, and Freudenthal—is scholarships' engagement with Wallace's literary ethics, which is a two-fold affair: on the one hand, there's an inversion of critical attention toward Wallace's body of work. I.e., rather than using his essays and interviews as filters for thinking about his novels and short stories, scholars began "reading Wallace's fiction as a straightforward allegory of [the] theoretical claims" found in his literary criticism. Kelly sees this as suggestive that "Wallace's nonfiction need not simply be read in the shadow of his fiction."[105]

While focusing on the philosophical output from Wallace, Kelly cites Josh Roiland, Paul Jenner, and Christopher Ribbit for their scholarship exploring Wallace's

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[104] Kelly, 12.

[105] Kelly, 18.

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literary journalism in the context of the history of the genre as well as a key component of Wallace's body of work for understanding his politics. Scholarship addressing the significance of Wallace's literary journalism—both within his own body of work as well as Literary Studies at large—remains insubstantial. Kelly does not address this gap in Wallace Studies in "Death of the Author" nor in his 2015 publication, "David Foster Wallace: The Critical Reception," published in *Critical Insights: David Foster Wallace*,[106] edited by Philip Coleman. This oversight regarding Wallace's journalism continues to manifest today and remains problematic insofar as it remains "important to understand that Wallace wrote in the tradition of the literary journalist," writes Wallace scholar and historian of the form, Joshua Roiland, "because the form and its field of study provide a whole catalogue of approaches to understanding his stories in relation to his reviews, speeches, and essays."[107] But what exactly is literary journalism how can our close listening to Wallace's audio-recorded literary journalism contribute to conversations current within the discipline?

1.4.3 PART NARRATIVE, PART ARGUMENTATIVE, PART MEDITATIVE, PART EXPERIENTIAL

Thomas Connery, in his essay "A Third Way to Tell the Story" from Norman Sims's 1990 collection, *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century*, writes: "[literary journalism does not] simply present facts, but the 'feel' of the facts, or, as one critic has said of Stephen Crane's newspaper pieces, 'a rendering of felt

[106] Kelly, "David Foster Wallace: the Critical Reception," *Critical Insights: David Foster Wallace*.

[107] Joshua Roiland, "Getting Away from it All: The Literary Journalism of David Foster Wallace and Nietzsche's Concept of Oblivion," in *The Legacy of David Foster Wallace*, ed. by Cohen, Samuel and Lee Konstantinou (New Amer. Canon. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2012).

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detail.'"[108] That is to say that literary journalism "is a reconciling of fact and fiction, reality and language, by being a mode of expression more imaginative than conventional journalism but less imaginative than fiction."[109] While the sciences provide humanity with information regarding what *is*, the humanities help humanity make sense of what this *is* might *mean*. We can think of the sciences embodying the grammatical mood of the indicative (the facts, the what *is*) whereas the humanities embody the subjunctive mood (how these facts might feel, what this *is* might *mean*). This unique role the humanities have within our precarious place in a threatened world is no doubt multifaceted, confounding, and necessarily subjunctive. And while journalism is the presenting of fact in narrative form to a wide audience, traditional methods of the practice do not entirely encompass the humanistic qualities of how these facts might *feel*.

Wallace's literary journalism, too, combine both indicative reportage (the facts) and the subjunctive, imaginative prose (how those facts might feel) on both his and his readers' respective nerve endings. Detailed further by Roiland himself:

> Literary journalism is a form of nonfiction writing that adheres to all of the reportorial and truth-telling covenants of conventional journalism, while employing rhetorical and storytelling techniques more commonly associated with fiction. In short, it is journalism as literature.[110]

So-called straight journalism—presenting "the cold, hard facts"—remains antithetical to our condition of story-telling, fiction-grounded, empathic creatures. And Wallace

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[108] Connery, 6.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Joshua Roiland, "By Any Other Name: The Case for Literary Journalism," *Literary Journalism Studies* (Vol. 7, No. 2, Fall 2015), 71.

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would publish eleven works of literary journalism in his lifetime commissioned by one of eight periodicals. In order of publication, they are:

a) "Ticket to the Fair" (*Harper's*, July, '94)
b) "Democracy and Commerce at the US Open" (*Tennis,* Sept.,'95)
c) "Shipping Out: on the (nearly lethal) comforts of a luxury cruise" (*Harper's*, Jan., '96)
d) "David Lynch Keeps His Head" (*Premiere*, Sept., '96)
e) "The String Theory" (*Esquire*, July, '96)
f) "Neither Adult Nor Entertainment" (*Premiere*, Sept., '98)
g) "The Weasel, Twelve Monkeys and the Shrub" (*Rolling Stone*, April, '00)
h) "9/11: The View From the Midwest" (*Rolling Stone*, Oct., '01)
i) "Consider the Lobster" (*Gourmet*, Aug., '04)
j) "Host" (*The Atlantic*, April, '05)
k) "Federer as Religious Experience" (*Play*, Aug., '06)

Each of the above pieces would eventually be republished in one of three collections of nonfiction: *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again: Essays and Arguments* (1997),[111] *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays* (2005),[112] and *Both Flesh and Not: Essays* (2012).[113] Following Roiland's framework above, we turn to Norman Sims to explore the shared characteristics of the genre: "immersion reporting, complicated structures, character development, symbolism, voice, a focus on ordinary people…and

[111] (a) "Ticket to the Fair" republished as "Getting Away from Already Being Pretty Much Away from It All"; (d) "David Lynch Keeps His Head"; (e) "The String Theory" republished as "Tennis Player Michael Joyce's Professional Artistry as a Paradigm of Certain Stuff about Choice, Freedom, Discipline, Joy, Grotesquerie, and Human Consciousness"; and (c) "Shipping Out: on the (nearly lethal) comforts of a luxury cruise" republished as "A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again" (David Foster Wallace, *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again: Essays and Arguments* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co, 1997).

[112] (f) "Neither Adult Nor Entertainment" republished as "Big Red Son"; (g) "The Weasel, Twelve Monkeys and the Shrub" republished as "Up, Simba"; (h) "9/11: The View From the Midwest" republished as "The View From Mrs. Thompson's"; (i) "Consider the Lobster"; (j) "Host" (David Foster Wallace, *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays* (New York: Little, Brown and Co, 2005).

[113] (k) "Federer as Religious Experience" republished as "Federer Both Flesh and Not" and (b) "Democracy and Commerce at the U.S. Open" (David Foster Wallace, *Both Flesh and Not: Essays* (New York: Little, Brown and Co, 2012).

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accuracy."[114] Wallace's work within the genre hinges on his immersive method of reportage, use of complicated plot structures, character developments, and focus on ordinary people. The latter two—character development and focus on ordinary people—is where his contributions to the practice and field of study situates itself most poignantly. Wallace detailed his own thinking about the form of nonfiction writing in both essays and interviews. In an interview with Bryan A. Garner in 2006, Wallace responds to Garner's question concerning the complexity of his nonfiction pieces, Wallace says "the stuff I do is part narrative, part argumentative, part meditative, part experiential."[115] And it's the experiential that Wallace's audio literary journalism seems to hinge on, most especially evident in his direct addresses that audiences found (or rather *experienced*) in both his print and audio publications.

We can turn to the "Wall Street Journal Structure" of literary journalism to help frame Wallace's contributions that are teased out in greater detail in Chapter 3: "[The Wall Street Journal] style," writes Peter Fourie in *Media Studies: Content, Audiences and Production*, "focus[es] in on the individual and then it moves to the larger issues at stake."[116] This is a method of moving from the particular to the general in order to localize and build empathy with readers. Writers employ this method by grounding articles of broad, national concern in a local face or community of people who are affected or might have something unique to say about it. But Wallace turned

[114] Norman Sims, *True Stories: A Century of Literary Journalism* (Northwestern University Press, 2008), 6-7.

[115] David Foster Wallace, *Quack This Way: David Foster Wallace & Bryan A. Gerner Talk Language and Writing*, 78.

[116] Peter J. Fourie, *Media Studies: Content, Audiences and Production* (Lansdowne: Juta, 2001), 359.

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the Wall Street Journal style in on its head: rather than focusing on a secondary, local individual (because he was, in fact, writing for a national audience) Wallace instead became the subject of focus in tandem with his readers via direct address: writing (and speaking, for that matter) directly to readers and listeners of a particular organ and format. Wallace's inverted-WSJ style is literary manipulation as its finest insofar as Wallace grounded his engagements and localized his topics within reader's themselves, manufacturing readers as subject par excellence of the narrative via dialogic frameworks. "[Wallace's] stories simply don't investigate character," Zadie Smith writes, "they don't intend to. Instead, they're turned outward, toward us. It's *our* character that's being investigated."[117] It is our character, moreover, that is being developed via Wallace's focus on the act of reading and listening itself—a reader-listener centered approach to the genre of literary journalism and the audiobook form.

While Wallace's journalism at large provides new avenues for thinking about his more extended body of work, this project is principally interested in the four works of literary journalism that have undergone re-mediation from print to audio, adding depth to scholarly engagements by adding Wallace's voice, cadence and tone to the discussion surrounding his more extensive body of work. However, this process of writing for a particular audience directly—Wallace's audience, the magazine readers and later book readers—became the face of Wallace's inverted WSJ-style literary journalism, and he did so most especially by employing the keystone characteristic of the form itself: consciousness. "Literary journalists," Sims writes, "recognize the need

[117] Zadie Smith, "Brief Interviews With Hideous Men: The Difficult Gifts of David Foster Wallace" in *Changing My Mind: Occasional Essays*, 273.

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for a consciousness on the page through which the objects in view are filtered."[118] This defining feature of the genre, the consciousness of the author on the page, remains one of Wallace' defining themes within his body of work at large. Explored below is how Wallace's "consciousness on the page" re-mediated and translated to a consciousness in the air, through the speakers, and into the ears of readers and listeners alike.

D.T. Max, Wallace's biographer, notes that "[Wallace's characters] seem able to see everything but what's in front of their eyes and to talk about everything but what actually matters to them."[119] He has an ability to instill what George Saunders calls a "terrified-tenderness" within his readers, creating "a sudden new awareness of what a fix we're in on this earth, stuck in these bodies, with these minds."[120] Again, "it's *our* character that's being investigated."[121] This inversion is done by Wallace's ability to invert the background of characters' lives into the foreground of one's attention to "wake the reader up to the stuff that the reader's been aware of all this time."[122] "For our generation," Wallace writes,

> the entire world seems to present itself as "familiar," but since that's of course an illusion in terms of anything really important about people, maybe any "realistic" fiction's job is opposite what it used to be—no longer making the strange familiar but making the familiar *strange* again. It seems important to

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[118] Norman Sims, *True Stories: A Century of Literary Journalism* (Northwestern University Press, 2008), 7.

[119] D.T. Max, *Every Love Story,* 277.

[120] George Saunders, "Informal Remarks from David Foster Wallace Memorial Service in New York on October 23, 2008," in *Legacy of DFW,* 53.

[121] Zadie Smith, "Brief Interviews With Hideous Men: The Difficult Gifts of David Foster Wallace" in *Changing My Mind: Occasional Essays*, 273.

[122] Lispky, 41 (as cited by Kelly, 17).

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> find ways of reminding ourselves that most "familiarity" is mediated and elusive.[123]

The task Wallace has set out for himself—to defamiliarize the reader—sets a precedent for the scholar-critic as well. Kelly gestures toward these varying points of contact with regard to Wallace's prose circling literary defamiliarization (or prose meant to "awaken the reader"), writing "it remains the task of the literary critic to show as precisely as possible how Wallace's radical method for waking readers up to agency operates in his texts, and how this technique is linked to his highly original style."[124] This radical method or style for waking readers up is also evident in Wallace's audiobooks.

While the aforementioned task of the critic (to "wake readers up") has proved fruitful for scholars of his fiction, this project uses certain elements of DFW Studies scholarship circling his fiction to better frame and understand his technique as a "wake-up artist" with regard to his literary journalism—waking-up readers, so to speak, to the everyday (via fiction or nonfiction) was a task Wallace set out to do, and the task is political insofar as Wallace was keenly aware of not only the power of prose but the power of exhibitionist value that this narrative would have to carry in order to reach audiences. Wallace was seemingly transparent about this throughout his journalistic career, drawing attention to the production and artifice of the texts themselves via direct address to both readers and listeners alike.

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[123] Wallace, "Larry McCaffery Interview," 38.

[124] Kelly, 17.

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The afterlife of a work of art is both personal as it is political. Political, as we've learned, insofar as texts are cultural products that emerge in the midst of a particular discourse at a particular juncture of history. Personal insofar as readers—and critics—are the ones who determine the meaning and significance of any particular text and its later receptions, which goes beyond the garland of authorial-intentionality as well as publishing houses' expectations. This is the afterlife of a work of art: uncertain, discursive, and reader/observer-dependent for meaning to manifest.

Wallace was keenly aware of the personal and political implications surrounding a text. Think of the aforementioned McCaffery interview:

> [T]he reader's own life "outside" the story changes the story. You could argue that it affects only "her reaction to the story" or "her take on the story." But these things are the story. […] Once I'm done with the [text], I'm basically dead, and probably the text's dead; it becomes simply language, and language lives not just in but through the reader. The reader becomes God, for all textual purposes.[125]

The reader becomes God. But why? How? Because meaning lives not in but *through* the reader insofar as, as Gilloch writes, "meaning and significance of a text are not determined by the author at the moment of writing, but are contested and conceptualized anew as it enters subsequent contexts, as it is subject to reading and criticism through time."[126] This is what Stanley Fish calls affective stylistics: texts come into existence via interpretive communities. Wallace's argument that without the reader it's "simply words on a page" is right, but depending on the various and discursive interpretive communities these "words on a page" can signal entirely

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[125] Wallace, "Larry McCaffery Interview," 40.

[126] Graeme Gilloch, *Walter Benjamin, Critical Constellations*. (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2002), 3.

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different responses. But the audiobook format does not have "simply words on a page" but rather transmit ungraspable words within the ear, bringing us back to the auditory reception of aural literature that lacks paratext and, moreover, presents new questions surrounding the phenomenology of literary reception itself, which I ground in a listener-response criticism. The textuality of the audiobook depends upon a listener-centered interpretive community insofar as the form can lack materiality.

1.4.4 SCHOLAR AS RAGPICKER: THE HARRY RANSOM CENTER ARCHIVE

Reader-response criticism, broadly conceived, is a branch of literary theory that principally concerns itself with the reader's experience of a given text ("the event") rather than focusing solely on the text in and of itself ("the object").[127] Just as one cannot separate the dance from the dancer, Fish's affective stylistics is a framework that does not separate texts from its readers.[128] And Wallace is providing a framework for thinking about this malleable afterlife of his own prose, but what is lacking is the political implications of the paratext surrounding Wallace's narrative. This omission is important because paratextual signifiers modify content and, in turn, alter reader/listener-responses. For reader-listener reactions to a narrative are filtered and influenced by the politics of paratext—the exhibitionist incentives behind cover

[127] Fish: "Meaning is an event, something that happens not on the page, where we are accustomed to look for it, but in the interaction between the flow of print (or sound) and the actively mediating of the reader-hearer." Stanley Fish. *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001.

[128] Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1980, 22.

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images, forwards, and endorsement blurbs and the textual ecology or eco-hermeneutic as explored earlier.

Benjamin's notion of the ragpicker is useful for this project insofar as my engagements with Wallace's extended paratext found at the Harry Ransom Center has changed how it is I approach and frame his body of work at large. I am ragpicker, or scholar as ragpicker. Unpublished in Benjamin's lifetime, his "Theses on the Philosophy of History"[129] or "On the Concept of History,"[130] which frames his notion of historical materialism with both "political, historical, and theological motifs in an absolutely original way" would be as his "last major work"[131] written in his lifetime and, he hoped, "would provide the theoretical armature for [his] Baudelaire book."[132] From "Theses on the Philosophy of History":

> There is a picture by Klee called *Angelus Novus.* It shows an angel who seems about to move away from something he stares at. His eyes are wide, his moth is open, his wings are spread. This is how the angel of history must look. His faced is turned toward the past. Where a chain of events appears before *us*, *he* sees one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it at his feet. The angle would like to stay, awaken the dead and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise and has got caught in his wings; it is so strong that the angel can no longer close them. This storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows toward the sky. What we call progress is *this* storm.

"[The ragpicker's] face is turned toward the past," collecting the detritus of yesterday, "Where a chain of events appears before *us,* [*the ragpicker*] sees one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it at his feet."

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[129] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 253-264.

[130] Benjamin, *SW*, IV, 389-397.

[131] Benjamin. *SW*, IV, 440.

[132] Benjamin, *SW*, IV, 440.

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Ursula Marx's 2007 *Walter Benjamin's Archive: Images, Texts, Signs*, frames Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* as such:

> The archival work of the ragpicker is related to his own: *The Arcades Project* wishes to pick up the refuse of history. Like a poor and burdened man cleverly picking through the rubbish of the previous day, the materialist historian selects from among all that is disregarded and from the residues of history. At the library he is unconcerned with what had been accredited as precious and valuable, but rather is drawn toward historical refuse. Waste materials are to enter into significant connections and fragments are used to gain a new perspective on history. Benjamin conceived hos work on the nineteenth century as an appropriation of rags.[133]

"[The ragpicker's] eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history,"[134] as a *modus vivendi par excellence* of New Historicist reading practices. From Baudelaire's "Le Vin des chiffonniers," ("The Ragpickers Wine") of *Les Fleurs du mal*, "The Flowers of Evil," wherein Benjamin's reading reveals both the ragpicker and poet's capacity to up-cycle the leftovers into the main dish of meaning (an inverted literary entropy of sorts):

> "Here we have a man whose job it is to gather the day's refuse in the capital. Everything that the big city has thrown away, everything it has lost, everything it has scorned, everything it has crushed underfoot he catalogues and collects. He collects the annals of intemperance, the capharnaum of waste. He sorts things out and selects judiciously: he collects like a miser guarding a treasure, refuse which will assume the shape of useful or gratifying objects between the jaws of the goddess of industry." This description is one extended metaphor for the poetic method, as Baudelaire practiced it. Ragpicker and poet: both are concerned with refuse…

And so we return back to the main thread of this expanding quilt of Wallace's literary journalism and consider the deepening contexts of our opening story, "Consider the

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[133] Ursula Marx, *Walter Benjamin's Archive: Images, Texts, Signs* (London: Verso, 2007), 252-253.

[134] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 259-60.

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Lobster." And with all varying archival material available for the ragpicker of academia to collect and sort through—as we will do ourselves in subsequent sections—"Consider the Lobster" is housed in a wide variety or organs; as of this writing, eleven of them are:

a) David Foster Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," *Gourmet,* August 2004, 50-64.
b) David Foster Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," in *The Best American Essays 2005,* ed. Susan Orlean and Robert Atwan. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, [10/05], 2005), 252-270.
c) David Foster Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," in *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays* (New York: Little, Brown, HC, [12/13], 2005), 235-254.
d) David Foster Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," in *Selected Essays from Consider the Lobster and Other Essays* (New York: Time Warner Audiobooks, [12/13], 2005).
e) David Foster Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," in *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays* (New York: Back Bay Books/Little, Brown and Co, PB, [07/02], 2007), 235-254.
f) David Foster Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," in *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays* (New York: Little, Brown, e-book, [9/21], 2009).
g) David Foster Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," *Gourmet*, August 2004, (Online Archives, 2000s, [http://www.gourmet.com/magazine/2000s/2004/08/consider_the_lobster], accessed 8/30/13 12:56PM), 1-12.
h) David Foster Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," in *The Norton Reader An Anthology of Nonfiction* (13th ed. ed., Linda Peterson, W.W. Norton), 2012.
i) David Foster Wallace, *David Foster Wallace: In his own words* (New York: Hachette Audio, 2014).
j) David Foster Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," in *The David Foster Wallace Reader* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2014), 920-936. (*N.B. Also available in audio. and e-book*)
k) David Foster Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* (9th Shorter Edition, Volume 2, ed. Robert S. Levine, 2017).

There are currently eleven different versions of this one piece, each of which amending the story in differing ways with via various paratextual markers. So what is the scholar to do? How has the "scholar as ragpicker" influenced both the essay "Consider The Lobster" as well as the expanding field of David Foster Wallace

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Studies itself? Which is the appropriate format of academic citation? The book version, the original magazine, the audio, or some other itteration? Ought there be a difference? These are unanswerable questions at this moment of your reading, yet the hope here is that subsequent section's makes sense of and help you respond these questions in compelling and interesting ways. For now:

> So "here we have a [scholar] whose job it is to gather the [author's] refuse in the [archive]. Everything that the big [publisher] has thrown away, everything it has lost, everything it has scorned, everything it has crushed underfoot he catalogues and collects. He collects the annals of intemperance, the capharnaum of waste. He sorts things out and selects judiciously: he collects like a miser guarding a treasure, refuse which will assume the shape of useful or gratifying objects between the jaws of the goddess of [academia]." This description is one extended metaphor for the [New Historical method], as [academics] practice it. Ragpicker and [scholar]: both are concerned with refuse.

When viewed from the perspective of "scholar as ragpicker" in the above spirit of Benjamin, there's a palpable, redemptive quality surrounding Wallace Studies reading practices: an appreciation and celebration of everydayness—carnival in appearance, sacred in practice. Wallace scholars, sorting through the leftovers of an author's life, collecting the detritus of their yesterdays and arranging them in a way that makes the once-ignored ostensibly loved again, rendering the seemingly banal and tedious and discarded moments of one's life as holy and alive, on fire and teeming with historical subjunctivity. The "paratextal afterlife" of a text explores both how paratext changes from one iteration to another as well as how scholarship surrounding an author's oeuvre evolves with the emergence of new materials made available, in turn authorial-reader relationships become contested and conceptualized anew. In Molly Schwartzburg's "Observations on the Archive at the Harry Ransom Center," published in *The Legacy of David Foster Wallace* collection, she writes, "No archive is ever 'complete' when it arrives at a

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repository—nor was there a time when an archive was *ever* complete. The default condition of a writer's working materials is one of partiality and flux." And this flux is, in essence, the paratextual fluidity that comes into being through scholarship, which comes into being through new readings and criticisms of former and forgotten narratives, which comes into being through new materials made available via archival work. How might we read into certain Wallace texts once (and if) Mary Karr makes her letters from Wallace public which could, as she unabashedly claims, "burn St. David's house down."[135] Are those letters valued equally?

"Criticism," for Benjamin, "is to be conceived not as the recovery of some original authorial intention, but as an interpretative intervention in the afterlife of the artwork. Meaning is transformed and reconfigured as the artwork is read and under stood in new contexts and historical constellations."[136] This interpretative intervention and reconfiguration "seeks to awaken the tendencies and potentialities which lie dormant within the work of art."[137] It is what cannot be seen by the author upon writing but *through* later receptions of the work only. And later receptions are dynamic, unstable, and in flux. Graeme Gilloch, framing both Benjamin's notion of immanent criticism as well as his concept of afterlife: "Meanings emerge (and disappear again) posthumously, during the 'stage of continued life' of the artwork, its 'afterlife,'"[138] for "meaning and significance of a text are not determined by the author

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[135] Mary Karr, "Interview with Terry Gross," *Fresh Air,* aired September 15, 2015. http://www.npr.org/2015/09/15/440397728/mary-karr-on-writing-memoirs-no-doubt-ive-gotten-a-million-things-wrong

[136] Gilloch, *Critical Constellations*, 30.

[137] Ibid., 33.

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at the moment of writing, but are contested and conceptualized anew as it enters subsequent contexts, as it is subject to reading and criticism through time."[139] And the moment of reading, the moment of listening, the reception of the text in tandem with the evolution of these varying receptions via both scholarship's influence on what it is we read and how we read and/or listen to it.

Like Wallace's reader-centered notion of textual experience and meaning, Benjamin's concept of immanent criticism and the afterlife of a work of art recognizes that the valence is always a distributive between the reader and his or her text (and never solely within the reader alone):

> Is a translation meant for readers who do not understand the original? This would seem to explain adequately the divergence of their standing in the realm of art. Moreover, it seems to be the only conceivable reason for saying "the same thing" repeatedly. For what does a literary work "say"? What does it communicate?[140]

What might a literary artifact communicate to a later readership? That is to say, in other words, a writer is writing for both a particular audience and, simultaneously, writing for no one in particular at all. Audience matters, of course, but the central tenet of the argument here is that as reading technologies continue to evolve in tandem with changing social behaviors—along with varying translations and editions of any one particular text—narratives will find audiences that authors could not have anticipated. This is the afterlife of a text. Just as "the truly revolutionary artist, then, is never

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[138] Ibid.

[139] Ibid., 3.

[140] Walter Benjamin, "The Task of The Translator," 69.

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concerned with the art-object alone, but with the means of its production,"[141] Wallace was concerned with the means of production and went to great lengths to reveal the fog between readers and listeners alike.

The reception *is* the story. And society is shaped by the stories it receives and responds to. But how to frame these varying receptions when engagements with Wallace's literary journalism all bring varying elements that frame differing reader and listener-responses insofar as the literary contextualizing process doesn't happen in a vacuum but rather in varyingly unstable environments? This process happens differently with varying iterations of any one particular narrative as well as, and just as importantly, varying environments wherein the listening happens when (in the spirit of Fish) texts "come into being." New contexts also mean new paratexual markers. And the audiobook solicits a whole new series of onto-hermeneutical questions not yet addressed by not only Wallace Studies but also Literary Sound Studies at large—i.e., applications of Foucault's notion of the author function and Genette's concept of paratextuality applied to the audiobook. This application will help reorient how scholarship moves forward with questions concerning authorship—the authorial-presence *in* the text—as well positioning itself as a novel framework for thinking about ecological literary hermeneutics.

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[141] Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 62.

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CHAPTER 2:
CRITICAL THEORY: AUTHOR FUNCTION AND PARATEXTUALITY

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2.1 INTRODUCTION

"Most of those who have written at length about the history of Literary Studies," writes Joseph North in his 2017 publication, *Literary Criticism: A Concise Political History*, "have agreed that modern literary criticism was effectively born at Cambridge in the 1920s, at a moment that has come to be called the 'critical revolution.'"[1] Citing Chris Baldick, Professor of English at Goldsmith University in London, North argues that the fundamental conflict in the period running from 1890 and 1918 was "between scholarly and scientific objectivism on the one side, and aesthetic or 'impressionistic' subjectivism on the other."[2] North continues:

> The critical revolution of the 1920s was a sharp turn away from what seemed the discipline's apparent trajectory. It allowed the distinctive belletristic emphasis on aesthetic appreciation, on cultivating the subjectivity of the reader, and on the connection between tastes and values to be taken up and insisted upon in a thoroughly new way, thereby laying the foundations for a new paradigm of criticism: a paradigm rigorous and scientific enough for the modern research university.[3]

What later observers have termed the "heroic period" of the profession—the paradigm of criticism's move away from subjective interpretation of literary texts toward a seemingly objective analysis of the "texts in and of themselves" (as the phrase goes)—is commonly referred to as New Criticism: the dominant mode of 20th century literary study grounded in a rigorous method of textual analysis termed "close reading" or, to some practitioners, "practical criticism." In the words of Baldick,

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[1] Joseph North, *Literary Criticism: A Concise Political History.* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2017), 21.

[2] Chris Baldick, *Criticism and Literary Theory 1890 to the Present* (London: Longman, 1996), 13. (As cited by Joseph North in *Literary Criticism,* 21.)

[3] North, 22.

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> The heroic phase of modern Anglo-American criticism, from the 1920s to the 1960s, was marked by the subordination of literary-historical and literary-biographical study to the ascendant discourses of critical analysis and evaluation. Regarding method, this entailed a new practice of "close reading," attending to the specific formal features of texts rather than to the general world-views of their authors. Nothing distinguishes twentieth-century literary criticism more sharply from that of previous ages than this close attention to textual detail.[4]

This shift from mid-century literary criticism to the emergence of 60s and 70s literary theory—the literary-historical/conceptualist paradigm that current trends in serious literary study remain grounded in—is intimately entwined with the politicization of Literary Studies. While the names speak for themselves (Barthes, Foucault, Derrida, Said, Williams, Butler, Eco, and so on…) never before had questions concerning sexuality and gender, race and whiteness, colonialism, neoliberalism, and most notably (and more broadly conceived) the focus of exploring (and subverting) power structures been grounded in serious literary analysis.[5] The pivot from mid-century close reading practices to a more radical critique of revealing power structures of institutional and cultural oppression—both within and surrounding serious literary criticism[6]—laid the foundations for what would later be known as New Historical reading practices, which emerged in the wake of Michel Foucault's archival-based

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[4] Baldick, 221.

[5] North, 22.

[6] The irony here is, of course, that the discipline has become very mode of oppression it once set out to subvert, as outlined by Kevin Birmingham in his 2016 acceptance speech for The Truman Capote Award: "The profession of literary criticism depends upon exploitation. […] If you are a tenured (or tenure-track) faculty member teaching in a humanities department with Ph.D. candidates, you are both the instrument and the direct beneficiary of exploitation. Your roles as teacher, adviser, and committee member generate, cultivate, and exploit young people's devotion to literature. This is the great shame of our profession." Republished as "The Great Shame of Our Profession: How the Humanities Survives on Exploitation" in *Chronicle of Higher Ed.,* February 12th, 2017. http://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Great-Shame-of-Our/239148

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cultural analysis, what North refers to as "the scholarly, historicist/contextualist paradigm."[7]

What follows is an investigation into the relationship between author David Foster Wallace, his audience, and the varying formats in which they meet: the texts—and audiobooks, as we have seen above, are textual in their very structure. Focusing principally on Wallace's four audio-recorded works of literary journalism, this chapter sets the theoretical framework for exploring how authorial-reader relations become contested and conceptualized anew when the texts linking author and reader are experienced with the ears rather than their eyes (i.e., authorial-listener). As a working question this chapter circles back to: what are the differences between authorial-reader and authorial-listener engagements? To answer this, I use Foucault's notion of the author function along with Gerard Genette's concept of paratextuality as interpretive frameworks for exploring how reader/listener-receptions differ from one format to another by exploring how paratext informs author function and the different reader/listener receptions thereof.

2.1.1 INTRODUCING OUR THEORIES AND THEORISTS

Broadly conceived, as briefly discussed in the opening section of this project, paratext refers to material that surrounds any given text, from internal materials of a text (e.g., copyright pages, indexes, images) to external, distanced materials of influence (e.g., author interviews, reviews, surrounding scholarship). While paratext does not entirely determine nor does it fully reduce a text in question but nevertheless

[7] North, 59.

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remains politically charged and influential toward the meaning readers and listeners alike derive. Paratext functions as the focus of this project's exploration of Wallace's audio literary journalism, grounded in not only in the entwinement of paratext and author function itself but also with regard to Wallace's use of paratext as a means for revealing modes of production, subsequently furthering the possibility of deepening the intimacy of authorial-reader/listener relationships. Not much has been written about Wallace's play with, and attentiveness toward, paratext—thus in order to best explore the significance of paratext surrounding Wallace's audio-recorded literary journalism this chapter works through Michel Foucault's notion of author function (wherein paratext remains intimately entwined), introduced first in his 1969 publication of "What Is an Author?" (Foucault's response to Barthes's 1967 "Death of the Author").

Whereas Barthes's death of the author implies a separation between the author and text—the literal extinguishment of any authorial-presence (i.e., authority) *in* and *surrounding* a given work (allegedly unbinding the reader from the chains of authorial-power)—Foucault's "What Is an Author?" decenters the author rather than extinguishing the author outright. Literary authorship is predicated on the act of writing yet the act of writing does not necessitate authorship.[8] As this chapter explores in greater detail below, authorship denotes a particular time-and-place—a socio-historical stamp. And for Foucault, an author "points to the existence of certain groups

[8] First rule of logic: If "A" infers "Q," "Q" doesn't necessarily infer "A." [e.g., if it's raining (A) the streets are wet (Q); yet if the streets are wet (Q) it's not necessarily raining (A).] W/r/t the distinction between author and writer, an author (A) infers writer (W), whereas writing (W) does not necessarily infer authorship (A).

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of discourse, and refers to the status of this discourse within a society and culture."[9] This authorial stamp of a socio-historical discourse signifies certain political, philosophical, professional, and technological paradigms that any one particular text emerges from.[10] That is to say that authors (and their writings) *come from* this world, and cannot be reduced to vacuous textual analysis only. However, New Historicism and cultural materialism overwhelmingly fail to engage with literary texts closely, viewing them principally from afar as vehicles for exploring their author function and not being particularly interested in the reader-responses surrounding a texts' discursive reception. This is all to say that New Historical reading practices remain principally concerned with production and not reception, whereas this project has argues that Wallace's audio-recorded literary journalism resists production-centered author function by grounding its production within the reception itself via direct address.

For the text, on its own (i.e., an authorless piece of writing), becomes the equivalent of a note on the back of a bathroom stall, a message in a bottle, a haiku on the back of a dinner napkin—a piece of writing with a clear absence of authorial origins.[11] In other words, the author function is a mark of both authorial indicators

[9] Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" Trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon. In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* (Ed. Donald F. Bouchard. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 123-124.

[10] (What Hegel might off-handedly refer to as an *authorial-zeitgeist,* or what Thomas Kuhn might deem an *authorial paradigm* of influences, possibilities, and problems).

[11] "Private letters may have a signatory," Foucault writes, "but it does not have an author; and, similarly, an anonymous poster attached to a wall may have a writer, but he cannot be an author." Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 123-124.

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("Who was writing? What else has he or she written?"[12]) as well as framing the historical and ideological conditions in which the written emerges from:

> One can say that the author is an ideological product, since we represent him as the opposite of his historically real function. When a historically given function is represented in a figure that inserts it, one has an ideological production. The author is therefore the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning.[13]

Yet the proliferation of meaning is focused less on the socio-historical influences and production and more centered around varying receptions of those works, *wherever* and by *whomever* and in *whatever* context they may happen to be received—with the discursive receptions of Wallace's audio-recorded literary journalism of principal concern here. And to best understand the various receptions of Wallace's audio-recorded literary journalism an understanding of its production must ensue, too.

With all theoretical gymnastics of authorial, paratextual-presence *en route*, one phenomenon of the authorial-reader relationship is worth noting upfront, as posed by Wallace himself: "The reader's absent when the writer's writing, and the writer's absent when the reader's reading."[14] But is this not also true of an audiobook read by its author? While the audiobook takes on new questions surrounding paratextuality, author function, and the authorial-listener relationships that follow, the existence or non-existence of an authorial-presence—in either written or audio form—"may mean many things, but one thing which it cannot mean is that *no one did it.*"[15]

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[12] Ibid., 80.

[13] Ibid., xx.

[14] David Foster Wallace, "Greatly Exaggerated," in *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again,* 1997), 140.

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2.2 "WHAT IS AN AUTHOR?"

If we wish to know the writer in our day, it will be through the singularity of his absence and in his link to death, which has transformed him into a victim of his own writing. I am not certain that the consequences derived from the disappearance or death of the author have been fully explored or that the importance of this event has been appreciated.

— Michel Foucault [16]

Once I'm done with the [text], I'm basically dead, and probably the text's dead; it becomes simply language, and language lives not just in but through the reader. The reader becomes God, for all textual purposes.

— David Foster Wallace [17]

On February 22, 1969, Michel Foucault addressed the Society at the Collège de France, where he sat as chair Professor of the History of Systems of Thought from 1969 until his death in 1984.[18] His lecture, "What Is an Author?" first published in the *Bulletin de la Société française de Philosophie,*[19] reexamines "the empty space left out by the author's disappearance"[20] first asserted by Roland Barthes one year prior. Donald Bouchard's introduction to *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*—a collection of Foucault's essays where the English translation to "What Is an Author"[21]

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[15] William H. Gass. "The Death of the Author," In *Habitations of the Word: Essays*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), 73.

[16] Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 117

[17] Wallace, "Larry McCaffery Interview," 40

[18] Foucault, being is a scholar of myriad titles (e.g., social historian, philosopher, literary analyst, and social and political critic) will be framed throughout this dissertation by his (self selected) title for chair at Collège de France: "Professor of the History of Systems of Thought."

[19] Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 73-104.

[20] Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 121.

[21] Key themes found within "What Is an Author?" are re-introduced and further unpacked in Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge.* All other works by and about Foucault will be secondary to his explicit critique concerning genealogy and ideology of thought—with his work surrounding the reading of Nietzsche being his most notable contribution to the discipline.

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was first published—frames Foucault's historical analysis of authorship as the product of historical and social construction. "The author (like the concepts of sexuality, death, and madness)," writes Bouchard, "is not constant through time…the 'author' has known countless invasions on its domain."[22] Foucault works through the evolutions of the author's intermittent presence:

> [T]here was a time when those texts which we now call "literary" (stories, folk tales, epics, and tragedies) were accepted, circulated, and valorized without any question about the identity of their author. Their anonymity was ignored because their real or supposed age was a sufficient guarantee of their authenticity. Texts, however, that we now call "scientific" were only considered truthful during the Middle Ages if the name of the author was indicated. Statements on the order of "Hippocrates said…" or "Pliny tells us that…" were not merely formulas for an argument based on authority; they marked a proven discourse. In seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a totally new conception was developed when scientific texts were accepted on their own merits and positioned within an anonymous and coherent conceptual system of established truths and methods of verification. Authentification no longer required reference to the individual who had produced them.[23]

As we can see, authorship is a fairly new concept, conceived of in the wake of scientific authority in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to indicate a particular discourse in which the texted emerged. Foucault is concerned with not only the (at times) absentee author but rather "reverses the ordinary priority of author over text through the argument that the role of the author is the product of a particular discursive function."[24] That is to say that Barthes' "Death of the Author"—the literary clarion call denoting the theoretical shift from New Criticism and Structuralism to

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[22] Donald F. Bouchard, "Introduction" to In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, by Michel Foucault. Trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon. Ed. Donald F. Bouchard. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977, 21.

[23] Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 125.

[24] Bouchard, 21.

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Deconstruction—represents the decline of authorial presence *in* the text, whereas Foucault's reaction suggests the importance of the authorial-presence not *in* the text itself but its *surrounding* socio-historical conditions. The authorial stamp, as suggested above, is one of socio-historical merit—an aura of authorial presence, which remains unambiguously political. It is what Foucault calls the author function:

> It is obviously insufficient to repeat empty slogans: the author has disappeared; God and man died a common death. Rather, we should reexamine the empty space left out by the author's disappearance; we should attentively observe, along its gaps and fault lines, its new demarcations, and the reapportionment of this void; we should await the fluid functions released by the disappearance. In this context we can briefly consider the problems that arise in the use of an author's name. What is the name of an author? How does it function? Far from offering a solution, I will attempt to indicate some of the difficulties related to these questions.[25]

"The function of an author," Foucault argues, "is to characterize the existence, circulation, and operation of a certain discourse within a society."[26] The function is, in other words, a categorization. And with Wallace the author function signals a particular discourse within late 20th and early 21st century American literature, a discourse made distinct by not only trending literary criticisms at the turn of the millennium (i.e., e.g., The New Sincerity and Post-Post-Modernism) but paradigm shifting events such as 9/11 and the emergence of the Internet. Foucault's notion of the author function itself signifies a particular discourse, one that requires a closer look into Roland Barthes' work whom Foucault was responding to when he first gave his lecture, "What Is an Author?"

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[25] Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 121.

[26] Ibid., 123-124.

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2.2.1 RESPONDING TO BARTHES

As we have noted, whereas Barthes' "Death of the Author" frees the text from its former Romantic authorial restraints,[27] Foucault implicates the necessity of the authorial-presence—via author function—for the imperative historicization of narrative. Foucault's author function takes the author's absence and breathes historical implication into the text's paratextual significance, a necessary component to fully grasp the socio-historical conditions imbued within and behind a text. Whereas Barthes' "Death of the Author" implies a separation between the author and a text—the literal extinguishment of any authorial-presence *in* and *surrounding* the text in order to then best expand the texts potentiality of meaning (subsequently unbinding the reader from the chains of authorial-influence) Foucault's "What Is an Author?" does not support this extinguishment of authorial-presence but rather decenters the author. The author function represents the importance of the authorial figure in (a) contextualizing any given narrative and (b) using said contextualizing to better understand the socio-historical systems in place that a text emerged from. For Foucault, the author is dead only insofar as the author is not a creator of something original or authentic but rather a product of something larger than the author and text itself—that is to say that the author transcends his or her work. In the context of Wallace, both the author and the ways in which we think about his authority within the text is a product of a larger discourse, both the production of his work as well as its later receptions from readers and listeners alike. Authorship for Wallace is decidedly

[27] "[Barthes' author] becomes the 'past' of the text and therefore to entail authorship to a text is to inflict limits." Prayer Elmo Raj. "Author and Text: Reading Michel Foucault's *What is an Author*" in *The Criterion: An International Journal in English,* Vol. III, Issue III., Sept 2012, ISSN: 0976-8165), 2.

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grounded in readers of his work and not by the mere act of writing itself. In other words the author didn't create a text but rather the text created the author:

> [T]he author is not an indefinite source of significations that fill a work; the author does not precede the works; he is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction. In fact, if we are accustomed to presenting the author as a genius, as a perpetual surging of invention, it is because, in reality, we make him function in exactly the opposite fashion. One can say that the author is an ideological product, since we represent him as the opposite of his historically real function. When a historically given function is represented in a figure that inserts it, one has an ideological production. The author is therefore the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning.[28]

The absentee author is not a new phenomenon within the history of narrative but merely a reoccurrence throughout the larger genealogy of story itself. This, again, is what Foucault denotes the author function, which "points to the existence of certain groups of discourse and refers to the status of this discourse within a society and culture."[29] Foucault continues, "the author's name is not a function of a man's civil status, nor is it fictional; it is situated in the breach, among the discontinuities, which gives rise to new groups of discourse and their singular mode of existence."[30] The author's name is a sign which signifies a particular reigning system of discourse, for the author's presence specifies *the* particular historical conditions which makes the proper name of the author a fundamental category in the classification of works and their socio-historical context.

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[28] Foucault, "What Is an Author?" xx.

[29] Ibid., 123-124.

[30] Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 123-124.

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2.2.2 "THE AUTHOR FUNCTION"

For Foucault, the author function signals a particular time-and-place, the socio-historical stamp of a text that "points to the existence of certain groups of discourses, and refers to the status of this discourse within a society and culture."[31] The author function is what Hegel might off-handedly refer to as an "authorial-zeitgeist," or Thomas Kuhn would call an "authorial paradigm" of certain political, philosophical, professional, and technological interconnections in which any one particular text emerges. That is to say that authors (and their writings) come from this world as products rather than creators—the author as a product, a product that comes into being through writing.

With historical implications of a text's origins aside, what about its later receptions? The author is a product of a particular discourse, sure, and the author function operates as catalyst for exploring said systems further. Foucault is principally concerned with production rather than reception and, furthermore, revealing the ideological structures and cultural hegemony that persists in the modes of producing works of art. The importance of the author function here, in this thesis, is to use Foucault's framework for unpacking the surrounding discourse of Wallace's published audio versions of his literary journalism as well as, and just as importantly, the listener responses each solicit.

As a working question: How might Wallace's author function differ from his magazine publications of his literary journalism and the audiobook versions thereof? Foucault did not explore the role of author function via audiobook, at least not

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[31] Ibid, 123-124.

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explicitly. But by drawing attention to the reception of a work in tandem with its production we can deduce that the two are not so easily divided. Either point of contact (writing and reception) is dealing with a function of hermeneutical discourse, and "in dealing with the 'author' as a function of discourse," Foucault writes, "we must consider the characteristics of a discourse that support this use and determine its difference from other discourses. If we limit our remarks to only those books or texts with authors, we can isolate four different features."[32] They are:

a) Texts are "[O]bjects of appropriation; the form of property they have become is of a particular type whose legal codification was accomplished some years ago."[33]
b) "[T]he 'author function' is not universal or constant in all discourse. Even within our civilization, the same types of texts have not always required authors…"[34]
c) "[This] 'author function' is not formed spontaneously through the simple attribution of a discourse to an individual. It results from a complex operation whose purpose is to construct the rational entity we call an author."[35]
d) "[T]he author is a particular source of expression who, in more or less finished forms, is manifested equally well, and with similar validity, in a text, in letters, fragments, drafts, and so forth."[36]

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[32] Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 124.

[33] Ibid.

[34] "Authentification no longer required reference to the individual who had produced them." Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" Trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon. In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*. Ed. Donald F. Bouchard. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977, 125.

[35] Continuing: "These aspects of an individual, which we designate as an author (or which comprise an individual as an author), are projections, in terms always more or less psychological, of our way of handling texts: in the comparisons we make, the traits we extract as pertinent, the continuities we assign, or the exclusions we practice. In addition, all these operations vary according to the period and the form of discourse concerned. A 'philosopher' and a 'poet' are not constructed…" Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" Trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon. In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*. Ed. Donald F. Bouchard. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977, 127.

[36] Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 129.

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All discourse is political, and the author function is *the* stamp of a text's political pedigrees. Just as texts are objects of appropriation, so too are their respective author functions. It's where the author's name, Foucault notes, "remains at the contours of texts."[37] Foucault:

> The "author function" is tied to the legal and institutional systems that circumscribe, determine, and articulate the realm of discourse, at all times, and in any given culture; it is not defined by the spontaneous attribution of a text to its creator, but through a series of precise and complex procedures; it does not refer, purely and simply, to an actual individual insofar as it simultaneously gives rise to a variety of egos and to a series of subjective positions that individuals of any class may come to occupy.[38]

While the author function is the mark of socio-historical conditions in which texts are produced, it is important to ask how might these marks (and the complex procedures of a text's evolution in which they leave) alter the co-creative meaning-making process of an authorial-reader and authorial-listener relationship wherein any given text is received. This requires that one take both the current socio-historical and ideological structures present at the point of reception in tandem with those in which the text was produced, a differentiating between discursive and non-discursive statements.

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[37] Ibid., 123-124.

[38] Ibid., 130-131.

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2.2.3 NIETZSCHE'S *GENEALOGY* AND THE EMGERGENCE OF NEW HISTORICISM

As "a methodological reflection on [his] historical work[s],"[39] Gary Gutting writes, Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* marks a turning point in his career, which "was not just a book of reflections or a general method but a new orientation, like a new folding acting on the earlier books."[40] In response to Foucault's author function, Deleuze emphasizes that "[*Archaeology*] put forward a dissention between two types of practical formations: the one 'discursive,' involving statements, the other 'non-discursive,' involving environments."[41] These two formations are not mutually exclusive insofar as they both depend upon and reconstitute the other: i.e., our environments produce statements and these statements, in turn, determine how we make sense of our current and future environments (feedback loops).[42] While Foucault's *Archaeology* concerns itself with clinical medicine and the penal systems of late eighteenth century (rather than with authorship and the malleability of the authorial-function) the discursive and non-discursive formations are helpful here insofar as we are concerned with the relationship between statements and the environments in which they are received (i.e., textual ecology or eco-hermeneutics). While the production of a text and the author function thereof might at first appear as a discursive function (a statement made and disseminated from top-down), it is the

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[39] Gary Gutting. *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason*. (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 1.

[40] Gilles Deleuze. "A New Cartographer (*Discipline and Punish)*" in *Critical Essays on Michel Foucault*, Ed. Racevskis, Karlis. (New York: G.K. Hall, 1999, 15-23), 18.

[41] Ibid., 18.

[42] Ibid.

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environment in which the reading happens—its latter reception—that remains non-discursive (ebbing and flowing with a reader's own life in tandem with the format in which the narrative is situated, creating new environments).[43] It is the latter (the non-discursive reception of a text) wherein this project primarily situates itself for hermeneutical probing—for the author function may in fact help determine the socio-political and hegemonic structures in play at publication but forgoes the text's reception however many years, decades, or centuries later it is received. The discursive and non-discursive formations are akin to the malleability of an authorial-reader relationship insofar as this relationship is comparative in nature, rather than linear—what the reader *brings* to the narrative, along with the context in which said narrative is found is fluid and *in* continuum. The text—and the author function thereof—is a discursive function whereas the environment in which reading happens, the set-and-setting, the non-discursive, is always in a state of flux.

It is evident that Foucault's "What Is an Author?" focuses attention on two key aspects: both (a) "The singular relationship that holds between the author and the text, the manner in which a text apparently point to this finger who is outside and precedes it"[44] and—a thread that I pick up next with Wallace—is (b) "the kinship between writing and death."[45] Whereas the author function reveals the socio-historical aspects

[43] Discursive functions are generally understood as top-down structures (e.g., the text's existence is contingent upon social institutions and the dissemination of information) and a non-discursive formation as bottom-up agencies (e.g., the collective variables and equivocations present with literary set-and-settings). Deleuze's specific example might be helpful here: "higher-education at the beginning of the twenty-first century" is a discursive formation, which then relates to a series of non-discursive environments ("institutions, political events, economic practices and processes" that will reconstitute the discursive structure of education). Ibid., 18.

[44] Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 115.

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of any given work, it lacks essential attention to the prospective, uncertain reception of a given text's evolutions and profiles. The acknowledgement of a text's "evolutions and profiles" comes from Foucault's reading of Nietzsche's *Genealogy.* In Nietzsche's wording:

> The whole history of a thing, an organ, a custom, becomes a continuous *chain* of reinterpretations and rearrangements, which need not be causally connected among themselves, which may simply follow one another. The "evolution" of a thing, a custom, an organ is not its *progressus* toward a goal, let alone the most logical and shortest *progressus*, requiring the least energy and expenditure. Rather, it is a sequence of more or less profound, more or less independent processes of appropriation, including the resistances used in each instance, the attempted transformations for purposes of defense or reaction, as well as the results of successful counterattacks.[46]

The fruits of Foucault's reading of Nietzsche's *Genealogy* become the very seeds for thinking about how scholarship influences how we think about an author's body of work: i.e., how might this Nietzschean evolution of a text, and the authorial-reader relationship in which it is built upon, change with audiobooks and discursive paratexts? While Nietzsche's recognition of a text's evolution couldn't have foreseen the eventual emergence of audio and electronic versions of his own words, it nevertheless remains a fertile landscape for Foucault's *Archeology* to explore the exhibitionist and political implications of this authorial-function throughout a text's evolutions.

Terry Eagleton's axiom that "literature is ideology" parallels Foucault's reading of Nietzsche's genealogy. David Couzens Hoy unpacks this when he writes, "During the archaeological phase, [Foucault's] remarks suggest that he is describing

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[45] Ibid., 116.

[46] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and the Genealogy of Morals* (Ed. Francis Golffing, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1956), 210.

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how linguistic structures are the conditions for the possibility of what can be known,"[47] for Foucault "[is focused] less on language alone than on the connection between discursive disciplines and social power."[48] Insofar as "neither language nor power was ever [Foucault's] true concern, but instead, his interest all along has been in how human subjects and their historically variant subjectivities are constituted either by unthought social practices and discourses or by not completely thought-out ethical self fashionings."[49] In the realm of Wallace Studies, this would require making direct connections between how readers encounter the many iterations of Wallace's narratives (politics as usual) along with the relationship that readers have with not only Wallace's prose but also the varying contexts in which his narratives might be situated (like the audiobook). Wallace's oeuvre, like all authors, is both predicated on and also reconstituted by the power structures that have hold over both the works that academic and public discourse is centered around (i.e., e.g., Little, Brown & Company) as well as his archived material (i.e., e.g., the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Austin Texas), which inform scholarship and, subsequently, how readers engage with Wallace's more extensive body of work.

Foucault is helpful here with regard to the paratextual ambiguities of an author's body of work and secondary materials such as letters and drafts. With the text's paratextual ambiguities framed best by his observations of historicizing Nietzsche's oeuvre:

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[47] David Couzens Hoy, "Foucault: Modern or Post Modern" in Karlis Racevskis, *Critical Essays on Michel Foucault*. (New York: G.K. Hall, 1999, p.147-167), 58.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

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> Assuming we are dealing with an author, is everything he wrote and said, everything he left behind, to be included in his work? This problem is both theoretical and practical. If we wish to publish the complete works of Nietzsche, for example, where do we draw the line? Certainly everything must be published, along with the drafts of his works, his plans for aphorisms, his marginal notations and corrections. But what if, in a notebook filled with aphorisms, we find a reference, a reminder of an appointment, an address or a laundry bill, should this be included in his works? Why not? These practical considerations are endless once we consider how a work can be extracted from the millions of traces left by an individual after his death. Plainly, we lack a theory to encompass the questions generated by a work and the empirical activity of those who naively undertake the publication of the complete works of an author often suffers from the absence of this framework.[50]

The above passage—along with Foucault's reading thereof—has since become the impetus of New Historical thinking. While Nietzsche problematizes the author's oeuvre—nodding toward a laundry bill—we're also asked to consider both an author's personal letters and journal entries as well as their online presence (social media, email, blogs, etc.) as equals to their published literary works (books, commissioned magazine pieces, etc.); moreover, we must also consider the non-literary marginalia that surrounds a work such as interviews and profiles. How might the overwhelming amount of author biographical information available today influence this New Historicist thought? Does it expand or debilitate it?

If, as Kristeva argues, "there is no limit to what can be said in the text,"[51] then we must also agree that there is no limit to what can be said outside the text, too. And with the increasing use of digital platforms by authors and scholars alike, the paratextual influence of an author's biography on a reader is teeming with potential

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[50] Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 118-119.

[51] Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 209.

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complexities. Within the digital milieu we're gorged with authorial information, and the "lack of theory" Nietzsche notes to above is where the work of the New Historicists is helpful for uncovering the hermeneutical rabbit hole of contemporary reading practices: how might New Historical thinking and reading practices make sense of not only audiobooks but also the increase in their paratextual authorial influences? How might the exhibition value of narrative precipitate the "jumping of platforms" from one context to another, ignoring the contextual integrity of authorial intentionality with written narratives being remediated into audio formats? In Foucault's words, "If we wish to know the writer in our day, it will be through the singularity of his absence and in his link to death, which has transformed him into a victim of his own writing."[52]

2.2.4 NEW HISTORICISM AND READER RESPONSE CRITICISM

> *The study of literary texts appears at the moment to stand at a decisive juncture. Trends in critical thinking over the past decades have questioned the possibility of recovering a text's historical meaning. At the same time, there is a newly insistent plea for a return to "history" in the interpretation of literature.*
>
> — Gabrielle M. Spiegel [53]

The above passage—from Gabrielle Spiegal's 1997 work *The Past as Text*—nicely frames this section's discussion of New Historicism's tenuous associations with modern and evolving reading technologies. As we will see, there exists a New Historical juncture in contemporary Literary Studies with regard to thinking about and responding to the rise of digital literary formats. Yet before we get to both problems

[52] Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 117.

[53] Gabrielle M. Spiegel. *The Past As Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 3.

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and perspectives amid the current digital shift, the literary and historical juncture Spiegal articulates above—i.e., New Historicism—commences with the work of Stephen Greenblatt, building off of Foucault's reading of Nietzsche's Genealogy. "As with Foucault," Spiegal writes, "the goal of New Historical criticism is to demonstrate the power of discourse in shaping the ways in which the dominant ideology of a period creates both institutional and textual embodiments of the cultural constructs governing mental and social life."[54] As such, New Historical reading practices go beyond the illusory notion that you can separate literature and history at all (the formalist ideal) and instead, in Montrose's wording, "emphasize the dynamic, unstable, and reciprocal relationship between the discursive material domains."[55] This unstable relationship between history and literature is predicated on a relatively new attention toward literary contexts: Hayden White writes "[New Historicists] wish only to supplement prevailing formalist practices by extending attention to the historical context in which literary texts originate."[56] With the overall aim of New Historical thinking centered around the recognition that "literary and other cultural texts are connected in complex ways to the time period in which they were created,"[57] the overall aim of this section's exploration of New Historical reading practices spotlights not the production of the

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[54] Ibid., 16.

[55] Lewis Montrose, "Renaissance Literary Studies," in *Redrawing the Boundaries: The Transformation of English and American Literary Studies,* Ed. By Stephen Greenblatt, Giles B. Gunn. (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1992), 8.

[56] White, "New Historicism: A Comment," in *The New Historicism*, ed. by H. Aram Veeser (New York: Routledge, 1989), 293.

[57] Donald E. Hall, *Literary and Cultural Theory*. (Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 2001), xx.

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written but rather the effects said production has on later audiences. Catherine Gallagher's essay "Marxism and the New Historicism" opens with the following:

> Although there has been a certain amount of controversy over what the New Historicism is, what constitutes its essence and what its accidents, most of its adherents and opponents would probably agree that it entails reading literary and nonliterary texts as constitutes of historical discourses that are both inside and outside of texts and that its practitioners generally posit no fixed hierarchy of cause and effect as they trace the connections among texts, discourses, power, or the constitution of subjectivity.[58]

All texts are of equal investigative merit for New Historical reading practices and similarly, all cultural products (such as receipts, adverts, personal letters, etc.) emerge from the same conditions in which texts do as well, thus ought to be taken up equally as cultural artifacts for the historian. The controversy over what New Historicism is and what its aims (and methods of achieving said aims) ought to be comes in part with what Frank Lentricchia calls "the badge of hermeneutical sophistication…a self-consciousness of the newest of new historians."[59] Stephen Greenblatt himself doesn't set out an explicit theoretical position in either his introduction to "The Forms of Power and the Power of Forms in the Renaissance"[60] or in his essay "Toward a Poetics of Culture;"[61] writing, in the latter, "one of the peculiar characteristics of the 'new historicism' in literary studies is precisely how unresolved and in some ways

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[58] Cathrine Gallagher, "Marxism and The New Historicism," in *The New Historicism*, ed. by H. Aram Veeser (New York: Routledge, 1989), 37.

[59] Frank Lentricchia, "Foucault's Legacy: A New Historicism?" in *The New Historicism*, ed. by H. Aram Veeser (New York: Routledge, 1989), 232. The "newest" of the New Historicists meaning the Greenblatts, Montroses, and Gallaghers of contemporary circles, all contrasted with Foucault and Nietzsche as the first/old New Historicists.

[60] Stephen Greenblatt, "The Forms of Power and the Power of Forms in the Renaissance," in *Genre* (15: 1-2, 1982), 1-4.

[61] Stephen Greenblatt, "Toward a Poetics of Culture," in *Southern Review* (Australia, 20, 1987), 3-15.

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disingenuous it has been—I have been—about the relation to literary theory."[62] Just as Foucault problematizes Nietzsche's body of work (to include the laundry list or not?), Greenblatt problematizes the movement he himself has sparked from the inside out, rather than from the outside in like its formalist predecessors.

Hua Hsu's "In The Context of Infinite Contexts,"[63] published in *PMLA* in March 2015, advises academia to begin "consider[ing] how new developments in citation analysis can be used to evaluate a scholar's influence,"[64] all of which is predicated on the ever-expanding platforms for disseminating thought, with social media and online blogs included. Drawing attention to the changing climate of what is deemed scholastic writing and what is not, Hsu includes the peculiarities of citing Twitter uploads, Facebook messages, and blog postings alongside peer-reviewed publications and books. As such, it's not difficult to surmise that our digital platforms are both complicating—and liberating—the strong-holds of "the limited reach of the pre-Internet era"[65] of academic scholarship. Hsu continues: "There used to be a few portable containers for the circulation of ideas: books, magazine articles, and maybe speeches and television appearances,"[66] and signals that we're now overwhelmed with public intellectualism, and being able to sift through the varying ideas and platforms in which these ideas are found is becoming more difficult than we had previously

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[62] Ibid., 1.

[63] Hua Hsu's "In The Context of Infinite Contexts."*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, March 2015, V.130, N.2, p.461-466.

[64] Ibid., 464-465.

[65] Ibid., 463.

[66] Ibid., 463.

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imagined. So, how might we a scholar's most recent Facebook posting about GOP polls or reactions to reviews and responses to their work?

While teasing out the particulars of New Historical thought can certainly be an exhausting endeavor, it is clear and agreed upon that "New Historical thinking" Donald E. Hall writes—with all its Foucaultian undertones present—"emphasizes systems of social power that are both reflected in and reinforced by such texts."[67] This is akin to the author function discussed above, yet presents us with new problems and perspectives to address: while the author function remains an imperative prerequisite for one to seek and "locate texts within specific and social sites that themselves disclose the political, economic, and social pressures that condition a culture's discourse at any given moment,"[68] they do not provide a framework for exploring the political, economic, and social pressures that condition a culture's discursive *reception* at any given moment.[69] And while New Historical reading practices, again, primarily focus on the origins of production rather than on the texts' later receptions, with the Harry Ransom Center presenting itself as a treasure trove of material to best make sense of how certain narratives of Wallace's oeuvre came about, it does not help us understand how these narratives took on new shapes and profiles *after* their production—in what Benjamin calls their literary "afterlife." What we're looking for

[67] Hall, *Literary and Cultural Theory*, xx.

[68] Spiegel, *The Past As Text,* 7.

[69] Circling back to previous mentions of the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin (the literary archive holding Wallace's papers and library) and Little, Brown and Co. (Wallace's main publishing house), each representing two political structures influencing (if not outright constructing) the evolution of Wallace's pre- and posthumous readerships, New Historical methods of reading might help us make sense of how his works came about but they offer no framework for understanding how these political structures influence future readers. Again, we are looking at reception just as much as production.

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here is the post-production production of Wallace's literary journalism, and how these later iterations signal the very thing New Historical reading practices seek—yet instead of authorial production we seek to reveal reader receptions. So with this New Historical method in mind, each of the two relationships—the production and the reading—will work toward a revealing of social systems of power and the prevailing politics in which any given text is both produced by and received, with the latter, the reception of the text—and more specifically after an author's physical death—remaining nexus of this section's exploration.

While Greenblatt's cultural poetics is more of a resistance to theory rather than a new theoretical framework itself, Gabrielle Spiegel writes that "New Historicists point to the culturally specific nature of texts as products of particular periods and discursive formations;"[70] which is to say that a New Historical reading will, by necessity, examine both the discourse of art as well as its cultural co-creative cohorts. That is to say, and in line with Foucault's author function, that both the socio-historical conditions in which texts emerge is just as important as those conditions' affects on readers, in turn changing the reception and evolution of any given text. Spiegel, indebting New Historical thinking to Foucault, continues:

> …as with Foucault, the goal of New Historicist criticism is to demonstrate the power of discourse in shaping the ways in which the dominant ideology of a period creates both institutional and textual embodiments of the cultural constructs governing mental and social life. What perhaps differentiates the New Historicists from the practice of cultural historians with whom they are

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[70] Gabrielle Spiegel, "History, historicism and the social logic of the text in the Middle Ages," in *The Postmodern History Reader*, ed. K. Jenkins (London: Routledge, 1997), 191-92. Full quote: "New Historicists point to the culturally specific nature of texts as products of particular periods and discursive formations, while viewing reality—history—as itself mediated by linguistic codes which it is impossible for the critic/historian to bypass in the recuperation of past cultures."

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> otherwise so closely allied is their skillful employment of the poststructuralist belief in the heterogeneous, contradictory, fragmented, and discontinuous nature of textuality, to which "social texts" are likewise assimilated. In this vein, New Historicism refuses unproblematical distinctions between "literature" and "history," "text" and "context," and emphasizes, instead, "the dynamic, unstable, and reciprocal relationship between the discursive and material domains."[71]

This dynamic, unstable, and reciprocal relationship between the discursive and material domains is amplified when the material (the text) in which discursive systems (receptions thereof) operate, then traverse the myriad settings (e-readers, HTMLs, audio, etc.). The main nerve of Foucault's author function and contemporary New Historical thinking is a recognition that any given body of work—with emphasis here on posthumous iterations—cannot be reduced to one particular authorial-function, for the discursive authorial-reader relationship evolves with the material evolution of the text. So what hermeneutical gymnastics must a close reading of any one particular work go through when a text takes on a new material and, subsequently, a new authorial-function? This requires, first, exploration of how surrounding material of a text influences these aforementioned, authorial-reader concerns.

While Foucault's author function provides literary historians a way of exposing socio-political implications of any given publication (along with its reception at that particular time), it also solicits unanswered questions regarding how said works are received at later time periods, after works of art have gone through varying iterations and subsequent interpretations via new and emerging platforms in which narratives are now situated. By way of example, Greenblatt's eminent work on Shakespeare and Renaissance studies cited above presents a framework for exploring

[71] Spiegel, "History…" 191-92.

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how art and society are interrelated, yet lacking is a New Historical reading of how the literary/historical juncture is being re-shaped by our evolving technological cohorts: i.e., how might these New Historical reading practices reorient themselves in light of literature's recent surge in audiobook consumption? And more importantly, how does this change the authorial-reader and authorial-listener relationship that author's like Wallace could not have anticipated would emerge posthumously?[72] How might we better understand not only the past functions of writing via New Historicism but also, and just as importantly, current discursive practices of reading?

[72] All but one of Wallace's authored books were made available in both audio- and e-book formats *after* his death (with the 2005 release of *Consider The Lobster* being the one exception).

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2.3 PARATEXTUALITY

> *Literature may be an artefact, a product of social consciousness, a world vision; but it is also an industry. Books are not just structures of meaning, they are also commodities produced by publishers and sold on the market at a profit.*
>
> — Terry Eagleton [73]

> *More than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is, rather, a threshold, or—a word Borges used apropos of a preface—a "vestibule" that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back. It is an "undefined zone" between the inside and the outside zone without any hard and fast boundary on either the inward side (turned toward the text) or the outward side (turned toward the world's discourse about the text), an edge, or, as Phillippe Lejeune put it, "A fringe of the printed text which in reality controls one's whole reading of the text."*
>
> — Gerard Genette [74]

Since its publication in 1987, Gerard Genette's *Paratexts* continues to function as a useful framework for scholarship's continued exploration of a text's varying influences, both *within* and *outside* of any one particular literary artifact. While individual, internal influences remain prevalent for literary interpretations (what you bring to the text changes the text), there also exist external, politically charged materials surrounding any one document—dust jacket images and copyright pages, for example. These surrounding influences are what Genette deems "paratext": the heterogeneous group of practices, discourses, and materials that frame any given document. Paratext exists both within a text (forwards, epigraphs, images, etc.) and also outside of a text (author interviews, promotional material, surrounding scholarship, etc.).

First appearing in his 1979 text, *The Architext: An Introduction*, and later expanded upon in his 1982 work, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, the

[73] Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 59.

[74] Gérard Genette, Jane E. Lewin, and Richard Macksey. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1-2.

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term "transtextuality" is the textual transcendence of the text itself: "all that sets the text in relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts."[75] It is, in other words, a thinking of texts as not single entities themselves but rather interconnected with other texts. Gerald Prince, in his forward for the English translation of *Palimpsests* writes that "rather than insisting on the 'text itself,' its closure, the relations within it that make it what it is, [Genette] focuses on relations between texts the way they reread and rewrite one another."[76] Genette frames these links, or "grafts" as he calls them, with five types of transtextual relationships. While only one of the five will be of direct concern for us here (i.e., paratextuality), it is important to list them all insofar as "one must not view the five types of transtextuality as separate and absolute categories without any reciprocal contact or overlapping, on the contrary, their relationships to one another are numerous and often crucial."[77] They are:

a) Intertextuality: explored first by Julia Kristeva, Genette defines intertextuality as the "relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts: that is to say, eidetically and typically as the actual presence of one text within another."[78] In its most explicit and literal sense, intertextuality would be found in the traditional sense of quoting, as well as an author's allusion or insinuation of another text. It is, in a sense any reference (explicit or otherwise) or use of another text.
b) Paratextuality: in Genette's words: "*paratext*: a title, a subtitle, intertitles; prefaces, postfaces, notices, forewords, ect.; marginal, infrapaginal, terminal notes; epigraphs; illustrations; blurbs, book covers, dust jackets, and many other kinds of secondary signals, whether allographic or autographic. These provide the text with a (variable) setting and sometimes a commentary, official or not, which even the purest among readers, those

[75] Ibid., 1.

[76] Ibid., ix.

[77] Ibid., 7.

[78] Ibid., 1-2.

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least inclined to external erudition, cannot always disregard as easily as they would like and as they claim to do. "[79]

c) Metatextuality: commentary surrounding a text. This, in its most obvious sense would refer to scholarship, with "meta-metatextuality" being scholarship (or commentary) about the commentary, or scholarship of a particular author. A literature review surveying the scholarship surrounding David Foster Wallace's oeuvre would be an example of meta-metatextuality.
d) Hypertextuality: direct correlation from text B (*hypertext*) to text A (*hypotext*), with the latter, the hypotext, being a necessary artifact for the former, the hypertext to exist. In television this would correlate to a spin-off series; with either simple or direct transformation, "there is no literary work that does not evoke (to some extent and according to how it is read)" Genette notes, "some other literary work, and in that sense all works are hypertextual."[80]
e) Architextuality: This aspect of a text's textuality is purely for taxonomic purposes,[81] for the "entire set of general or transcendent categories—types of discourse, modes of enunciation, literary genres—from which emerges each singular text" constitutes its architextuality.[82] In short: fiction or nonfiction? Journalism or literary journalism?

While Genette's *Palimpsests* primarily concerns itself with the forth aspect presented, the *hypertextuality,* he nevertheless continuously weaves all five aspects of transtextuality into his thesis, for any one aspect of the textual transcendence of the text is not entirely complete without a recognition of its transtextual cohorts (i.e., architextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, and intertextuality).[83] With section's

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[79] Ibid., 5.

[80] Ibid., 9.

[81] Ibid., 4.

[82] Ibid., 1.

[83] For example, Genette writes: Generic architextuality is, historically, almost always constituted by way of imitation (Virgil imitates Homer, Mateo Aleman's *Guzman* imitates the anonymous *Lazarillo*), hence by way of hypertextuality. The archetextual appurtenance of a given work is frequently announced by way of paratextual clues. These in themselves often initiate a metatext ("this book is a novel"), and the paratext, whether prefatory of other, contains many more forms of commentary. The hypertext, too, often acts as a commentary: a travesty such as Paul Scarron's *Virgile travesty* is in its way a critique of the *Aeneid*, and Marcel Proust says (and demonstrates) that a pastiche is "criticism in action." The critical metatext can be conceived of, but is hardly ever practiced, without

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focus on paratextuality, the remaining four grafts will be weaved into our exploration of "Consider the Lobster," for thinking of a text's architextuality also requires attention to its paratextuality—they are not separate but entwined with each other, evidenced with a closer look into the varying titles of Wallace's second collection of nonfiction; from the prospect of *Host: Short and Long Nonfiction* to *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*.

2.3.1 PALIMPSESTS: LITERAURE IN THE SECOND DEGREE

The word palimpsest, the singular of *Palimpsests,* conveys "something used again or altered but still bearing traces of its earlier form,"[84] which is most often associated with a parchment or vellum on which writing has been applied over earlier writing. The overarching stamp of textual transcendence is the unstable nature of what is and what is not a text, for "any text is a hypertext, grafting itself into a hypotext, an earlier text that imitates or transforms any writing is rewriting," and—as the subtitle of Genette's *Palimpsests* makes clear—"literature is always in the second degree."[85]

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the often considerable use of a quotational intertext as support. The hypertext tends to avoid this practice, but not entirely, for it makes use of textual allusions (Sarron sometimes invokes Virgil) or od paratextual ones (the title *Ulysses*). Above all, hypertextuality, as a category of works, is in itself a generic of, more precisely, *transgeneric* canonical (though minor) genres such as pastiche, parody, travesty, and with also touches upon other genres—probably all genres. Like all generic catagories, hypertextuality is most often revealed by means of a paratextual sign that has contractual force: *Virgile travesty* is an explicit contract which, at the very least, alearts the reader to the probable existence of a relationship between this novel and the Odyssey, and so on…
Genette, Gérard. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 1997, 7-8.

[84] OED, 644.

[85] Genette, Gérard. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 1997, i.

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If all writing is rewriting, and all texts are imitations and transformation of previous texts, then a comprehensive investigation into a text's hypertextuality will result in an inexhaustible rabbit hole of hypertexual hermeneutics. And with this potential ad-infinitum component of hypertextuality in mind: "[Genette] view[s] the relationship between the text and its reader as one that is more socialized, more openly contractual, and pertaining to a conscious and organized pragmatics."[86] And this pragmatic filter of transtextuality is of paramount concern for this project, for if all texts are hypertexts—i.e., products of other texts—then we are left, "as Jules Laforgue more or less put it, with 'assez d'infini sur la planche' {more infinity than we can handle}."[87] Hypertextuality, and that of the paratext, is only pertinent insofar as the material in-question, and its grafting to other materials, is beneficial for ones understanding of the materials in hand. What this means is a pragmatic exploration into paratext requires a particular telos in mind. And this telos is here is the politics in which the paratext of a narrative influences the authorial-reader and listener relationships. For the existence of any text is, by necessity, dependent upon its coexistence with its ideologically driven paratextual cohorts. This coexistence is the textual ecology. Genette:

> Indeed, this fringe, always the conveyor of a commentary that is authorial or more or less legitimated by the author, constitutes a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also a *transaction*: a privileged place of a pragmatics and a strategy of an influence on the public, an influence that—whether well or poorly understood and achieved—is at the service of a better

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[86] Ibid., 9.

[87] Ibid., 9-10.

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> reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it (more pertinent, of course, in the eyes of the author and his allies).[88]

The stakes for Genette are high, and these stakes are always political. The above mentioned fringe—the paratextual threshold of a text's ecology—is what "enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public."[89] There's both a materiality and, simultaneously, an ephemerality to paratext, as "a paratextual element, at least if it consists of a message that has taken on material form, necessarily has a *location* that can be situated in relation to the location of the text itself," both "around the text and either within the same volume or at more respectful (or more prudent) distance."[90] From copyright pages and book covers to publishing houses and reader/ listener conversations, paratextuality is always a twofold, codependent relationship between materials *within* and also, and just as importantly, materials *outside* of any one particular literary artifact. Genette distinguishes these two components of paratext with the internal materials deemed "peritext," and the external materials deemed "epitext." Both peritext and epitext "completely and entirely share the special field of the paratext."[91] The peritextual component of paratext, in other words, refers to items such as the title page, preface, table of contents, notes, indexes, and so forth, "the special, localized elements of the paratext"[92] whereas the epitextual refers to "the distanced elements…those messages

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[88] Genette, *Thresholds,* 2.

[89] Ibid., 1.

[90] Ibid., 4.

[91] Ibid., 5.

[92] Ibid., 4.

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that, at least, originally, are located outside the book."[93] The epitext, Genette continues, "generally happens with the help of media (interviews, conversations) or under cover or private communications (letters, diaries, and others)."[94] This public epitext is purely spatial insofar as "the epitext is any paratextual element not materially appended to the text within the same volume but circulating, as it were, freely, in a virtual limitless physical and social space."[95]

2.3.2 PARATEXT APPLIED

By way of example, with Wallace's journalism aside, the 20th anniversary edition *Infinite Jest* brings new paratexual elements to readers' engagements with the text, including new cover image by Joe Walsh (N.B.: not the guitarist) and new forward by Tom Bissell. Following Genette's theory, these new paratextual features, like those from previous editions and varying formats available (audio and e-reader as well) have continued to modify the narrative itself, inexorably altering the authorial-reader and authorial-listener relationship cultivated through the very thing binding author and reader together: the text itself. This is not to say that cover images and other varying paratext determine or reduce a text but they certainly influence one's reading, regardless of whether one thinks they ought to or not. Because cover images and other paratextual variables do in fact influence reader receptions, and as such critical attention toward them remains important. When David Eggers cites Sufjan

[93] Ibid., 5.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Ibid., 344.

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Stevens' mission to create an album for all fifty states as comparable to Wallace's accomplishment with *Infinite Jest*,[96] it changes how readers think about the text they're engaging with and, by extension, the author's themselves. Wallace would be the first to acknowledge this, especially with his vocalized indifference regarding the original dusk jacket of *Infinite Jest*: In the 1996 interview with Lenard Lopate, Wallace puts the dust jacket under protest:

> LL: You…said [*Infinite Jest*] doesn't look like the book you imagined…"
>
> DFW: Well I object to the cover 'cause it looks like the American Airline safety pack. But this is a long long standing feud between me and Little, Brown: I sent them a number of ingenious cover ideas which they rejected. The cover is under protest!"
>
> LL: "Well I think the cover is rather effective."
>
> DFW: "But there's no meteorology in the book."[97]

(Note that interviews are epitext. Duck jackets are peritext). Yet there is in fact meteorology in the book. Tore Rye Anderson's 2012 piece in *Critique,* "Judging by the Cover," a paratextual investigative into the dusk jacket's of both Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* and Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, argues that "during [*Infinite Jest*] we do indeed find several passages that seem to echo the cover motif."[98] For example, Hal—around the midway point in the book—is sitting in C.T.'s office, puzzled by the surrounding wallpaper:

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[96] N.B.: Sufjan Stevens' total albums recorded w/r/t "50 State project" = 3.

[97] David Foster Wallace, "Interview with Lenard Lopate," *WNYC*, March 4, 1996, (http://www.dfwaudioproject.org/wp-content/uploads/interviews-profiles/WNYC-Leonard-Lopate-Interview.mp3 or http://www.wnyc.org/story/56878-david-foster-wallace/)

[98] Tore Rye Anderson, "Judging by the Cover," 255-256.

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> [T]he overenhanced blue of the wallpaper's sky, which the wallpaper scheme was fluffy cumuli arrayed patternlessly against an overenhancedly blue sky, incredibly disorienting wallpaper that was by an unpleasant coincidence also the wallpaper in the Enfield offices of a Dr. Zegarelli, D.D.S. […] No one's sure what C.T.'s choice of this wallpaper is supposed to communicate, […] but Hal loathes sky-and-cloud wallpaper because it makes him feel high-altitude and disoriented and sometimes plummeting.[99]

"In the same office," Anderson notes, "a number of photographs of everyday life at the academy are hung on the walls, and in a long endnote these photographs are elaborately described, followed by the observation that they are not arranged 'in a straight line; they're more like chaotically placed,' and that they are all 'surrounded by locationless clouds and sky.'"[100] Concluding, Anderson argues, "The dizzyingly disorienting wallpaper and the chaotically placed photographs in the headmaster's office thus appear to me *mise-en-abymes* of Wallace's dizzyingly disorienting novel with its apparently chaotically placed scenes."[101] With the nonlinear novelistic structure of *Infinite Jest* being surrounded by the "locationless clouds and sky" of the dust jacket, it doesn't seem like much of a scholastic stretch to assume the cover jacket has implications that go beyond exhibitionist value that Little, Brown might have intended. Meaning the cover means more than eye-candy for potential buyers.

2.3.3. PARATEXT: MANIPULATION OR INTIMACY?

So how are we to read this above position? Wallace explicitly has put the cover under protest, claiming "there is no meteorology in the book." Turning to Lucas

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[99] Wallace, *Infinite Jest*, 509 (as cited by Anderson).

[100] Ibid., 1035.

[101] Anderson, 255-256.

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Thompsons's recent publication in *Critique*, "'Sincerity with a Motive': Literary Manipulation in David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest,*" we might be able to better think through Wallace's paratext as a means of furthering the manipulative undertones of Wallace's work toward a more intimate authorial-reader and listener experiences. Thompson's claim is that there exist "complex ways in which Wallace's narratives engage in highly strategic forms of manipulation."[102] Thompson then lays out the stakes of the project:

> A close examination of the processes by which Wallace's work routinely attempts to cajole, coerce, and finagle the reader into occupying particular emotional and interpretive positions reveals the centrality of manipulation to his fiction, as well as offering a more nuanced way of understanding the central thematic preoccupations that other critics have found within his texts.[103]

This reveling of literary manipulation, or "interpretive and emotional pupputerring" that Thompson nicely lays out, has the "paradoxical effect of establishing the possibility of a far more intimate relationship between reader and writer."[104] So how might we extend this argument beyond the page and into the realm of the paratext? For if revealing modes of narrative manipulation can foster greater intimacy between author and reader, then we ought to also apply this framework beyond the narrative and explore the mediums in which these narratives reach both readers' eyes and listeners' ears.

But what we're focusing on here is how scholarship surrounding David Foster Wallace is both shaped and reconstituted by its increasing paratextual influences, with

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[102] Lucas Thompson, "'Sincerity with a Motive': Literary Manipulation in David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest" (*Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, v.57, no. 4, 2016), 360.

[103] Thompson, 360.

[104] Thompson, 370.

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letters, interviews, drafts, scholarship and surrounding conversations included. Circling back to Smyth's thesis above, one can easily see how Genette's epitextual implications are complicated with emerging digital reading platforms as well as reader response platforms (Amazon.com reviews being an obvious example), all of which is built upon and reinforced by larger systems of political influence. So there is, yet again, a dialectical tension present with all paratextual considerations, for both the peritext and epitext depend upon and, in turn, reconstitute the other. While the epitext is primarily situated externally to a text it can also, eventually, become part of the peritext as well. This is common for second or third prints of a text published posthumously, with author interviews and scholarly reactions often referenced in the forwards or introductions to new editions responding to criticisms and praise from readers. Genette make note of this internal-external dialectic of paratext:

> The location of the epitext is therefore anywhere outside the book—but of course nothing precludes its later admission to the peritext. Such admission is always possible, and we will encounter many examples of it: see the original interviews appended to posthumous scholarly editions, or the innumerable excerpts from correspondences or diaries quoted in the critical notes of such scholarly editions.[105]

These later additions to a text amend the narrative. And like a readerships' set-and-setting, "the *temporal* situation of the paratext, too, can be defined in relation to that of the text,"[106] a text which is evolving in tandem with its readership to surrounding scholarship. That is all to say that as a text evolves, so too does its paratext.

Readership changes. Paratext evolves. Context anew. Genette continues:

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[105] Genette, *Paratexts,* 345.

[106] Genette, "Introduction to the Paratext," 264.

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> If we adopt as our point of reference the date of the text's appearance—that is, the date of its first, or original, edition—then certain paratextual elements are of prior (public) production: for example, prospectuses, announcements of forthcoming publications, or elements that are connected to prepublications in a newspaper or magazine and will sometimes disappear with the publication in book form, like the famous Homeric chapter-titles of *Ulysses*, whose official existence proved to be (if I may put it this way) entirely prenatal.[107]

Just as epitextual materials can be categorized in a text's peritext at a later time, so too can the inverse happen, as peritext, eventually, often becomes part of the epitext when materials once included in first editions are later omitted for a new readerships (author interviews included in forwards to anniversary editions, for example). This discursive and malleable evolution of a text brings us back to Foucault's author function.

While the author function might help determine the socio-political and hegemonic structures in play during a texts publication, it forgoes the text's reception. As we have seen above, New Historical reading practices fail to engage with literary texts closely, viewing them principally from afar as vehicles for exploring their author function and not being particularly interested in the reader-responses surrounding a texts' discursive reception. Again, production over reception. However, a close examination of paratext is helpful for understanding both the socio-political and hegemonic structures at play during a text's production (via author function) as well as framing the various politics involved with regard to its *reception*.

Smyth's argument that "there is a wide gulf between the peritext of a print book and the peritext of an ebook"[108] proves moot once future iterations of a text—

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[107] Ibid., 5.

[108] Patrick Smyth, "Ebooks and the Digital Paratext: Emerging Trends in the Interpretation of Digital Media," found in*Examining Paratextual Theory and Its Applications in Digital Culture*, by Nadine Desrochers (Hershey: Information Science Reference, 2014), 316.

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especially audio—when the lines between the two begin to blur. For example, the e-reader *is* itself peritext—both the physical object as well as the time-stamp on screen's center—whereas Amazon reader reviews along with their algorithmic recommendations appear as epitexts. As such, the functional paratextual elements—the framing of a central work and its author(s)—has been displaced with digital media's influences on the relationship between content and context and, by extension, a text and its paratext.[109] Just as the author's death for Foucault is not an extinguishment but rather a displacement of authorial authority, the paratext highlights authorial displacement via surrounding textual indicators. As scholars Hill and Peciskie note, "The edges and distinguishing characterizes of intertext and paratext are not completely distinct, but intertwined."[110] And within the realm of digital paratextuality, where the separation between epitext and peritext are merely a hyperlink away, "the frame separates two absolutely different spaces that somehow coexist."[111] The physical and digital co-exist only insofar as readers' relationship with the text juxtaposed with the readers' relationship to the world: it's a form of literary-oscillation, a continued intertwinement of the peritext and epitext *through* readers. This continual intertwinement of paratextual malleability shows that a text is, without any real question or debate, reconstituted by its varying (and evolving) paratextual influences, consequently altering the continued authorial-reader relationships; It is

[109] Ibid., 329.

[110] Heather L. Hill and Jen Peciskie's "Iterations and Evolutions: Paratext and Intertext in Fanfiction," from *Examining Paratextual Theory and Its Applications in Digital Culture*, by Nadine Desrochers (Hershey: Information Science Reference, 2014), 145.

[111] Lev Manovich,. *The Language of New Media*. (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2002), 99.

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what Kristiva calls the "continuous productivity"[112] of a text, along with Barthes' discussion surrounding the original meaning of the term *text* as being "a tissue, or a woven fabric."[113] The reader, in the digital milieu, has instantaneous access to a text's epitextual influences:

> Just as the presence of paratextual elements is not uniformly obligatory, so too, the public and the reader are not unvaryingly and uniformly obligated: no one is required to read a preface (even if such freedom is not always opportune for the author), and as we will see, many notes are addressed only to *certain* readers.[114]

So who are these readers and listeners and how might paratext influence both the evolution of audiences surrounding Wallace work as well as those yet to be reached by his prose? What is lost, gained, illuminated, and shrouded behind a fog of literary and cultural belief as Wallace's eleven works of literary journalism are later released as audio files, e-files, and the increasing medium of interactive HTML platforms?

This project—and the section that follows this—focuses solely on the paratext of Wallace's four audio-recorded works of literary journalism. And when historicizing literature (understanding literature in relation to the historical forces that any one given text was both produced *and* received) is expected if not outright obligatory in contemporary Literary Studies, yet emphasis with the historicization of literature often favors the study of production rather than the later reception of any given literary artifact. For in the midst of evolving digital mediums in which literature

[112] Nadine Desrochers, *Paratextual Theory and Its Applications in Digital Culture* (Hershey: Information Science Reference, 2014), 145 (As cited by Hill and Peciskie).

[113] Roland Barthes, *Image music, text* (Tras. by S. Heath (Glasgow, UK: Fontana/Collins), 159 (as cited by Hill and Peciskie, 145).

[114] Genette, *Thresholds,* 4.

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is experienced, contextualizing the receiving end of a narrative becomes of equal importance to see how authorial-presence shifts as narratives take on new shapes (mediums) and profiles (contexts), especially posthumously iterations thereof. For example, how might historicizing both production and reception of Wallace's *Infinite Jest* differ when both *listening* to the audio and *reading* the paper book versions are experienced? These varying questions and observations—that the medium in which narratives are situated alters the meaning and significance derived across readership—are essential to consider with regard to the evolving and unstable textual ecology of a narrative. And while historicizing a text has become a compulsory impulse for academics and close readers of literature (if not already quotidian in practice) the following section concerns itself with not the origins of what was written but, again, its later receptions after with new mediums and, by extension, new readers. Less concerned with the production—while noting that one cannot separate reception from its production entirely—of Wallace's literary journalism and more focused on how these stories are received in their later mediums and formats, with or without Wallace's knowing, let alone approval (*Infinite Jest*'s audiobook version, for example, didn't first reach ears till after Wallace's death).

2.3.4 TEXTUAL ECOLOGY REVISTITED

If knowing one's audience is one of the so-called first rules of writing, then how might an author and reader makes sense of the a work "jumping platforms" from one medium (paper-book) to another (audiobook), in turn extending an author's audience? This is what Helen Nissenbaum has called a problem with "contextual

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integrity,"[115] meaning that particular works of literature have certain contexts that ought to be considered when later receptions of the work are received. This differs from historicizing a text insofar as contextual integrity refers to not only the historical forces that shape a narrative but also the mediums in which these narratives are experienced (magazine publications verses book versions, for example). The concept of "contextual integrity" is useful in thinking about the affects of narratives jumping platforms from paper versions to e-readers to audiobooks (often without the consent or knowledge of the author, especially, obviously, with posthumous iterations).[116] With the for-profit component of a narrative jumping platforms in mind, contextual integrity remains an advantageous framework for exploring "the nature of challenges posed by information technologies" and, in turn, emerging platforms in which news contextual influences will solicit varying readings of the same narrative.

Literature, and its reception, is always relational. From the inauguration of Gutenberg's printing press to the first recorded audiobook (c.1930s) and the commencement of electronic readers (c.1970s via the appropriately named, "Project Gutenberg"), the relationship between narratives, the mediums in which narratives are situated, and the means in which humans experience them is always in flux with evolving, discursive technologies. Coming back to the set-and-setting framework and textual ecology, all texts are, by the mere (and necessary) presence of the reader and

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[115] Helen Nissenbaum's "Privacy as Contextual Integrity." *Washington Law Review*, 2004 V.79, N.1, p.119-57.

[116] At the time of this writing there are currently twelve David Foster Wallace audiobooks available via audible[dot]com (all three novels, all three short-story collections, and all six of his published non-fiction)—only two of which were published during his lifetime (*Consider The Lobster*, 2005, and *Brief Interviews With Hideous Men,* 1999, each read by Wallace himself).

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listener alike, always in a state of literary and cultural conversion, dependent upon and reoriented by both the reader's (a) *mindset* approaching a text in tandem with the (b) *setting* in which narrative is experienced (the textual ecology). Circling back to Wallace's application of quantum phenomenon to literary hermeneutics: "Once I'm done with the [text]," Wallace writes, "I'm basically dead, and probably the text's dead; it becomes simply language, and language lives not just in but through the reader. The reader becomes God, for all textual purposes."[117] In it's most literal sense, Wallace here is saying that words are meaningless in and of themselves insofar as a stop sign without someone to read it is *means* nothing—a sign always must be in relation to something other than itself to signify meaning, just as a text without a reader becomes simply words on a page—a sign without a signifier means nothing at all. Moreover, when Wallace writes "I'm basically dead" it is not to mean that the author is metaphorically dead in a Barthesian sense but rather that he is temporally comatose, so to speak, with the reader performing the literary equivalent of CPR to the author—breathing the reader's own personal narrative into the textual ecology surrounding the narrative in hand. "For the readers own life 'outside' the story," Wallace writes, along with a reader's take on the story becoming the story itself.[118] While the co-creative authorial-reader relationship is predicated on the intermediary between the author and reader, i.e., the text itself, we must also recognize that texts are not static, and a framework of textual ecology helps make sense of this continuum of textual conversion; i.e., eco-hermeneutics.

[117] Wallace, "Larry McCaffery Interview," 40.

[118] Ibid.

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Literary scholar Graeme Gilloch writes that "meaning and significance of a text are not determined by the author at the moment of writing, but are contested and conceptualized anew as it enters subsequent contexts, as it is subject to reading and criticism through time."[119] And Wallace's poststructuralist claim that "without a reader present a text is *simply language,*" supported with Gilloch's note on a text's "subsequent contexts" and Nissenbaum's "jumping platforms" we can posit that any one text's reception (and its meaning) is contingent upon the author, the reader, and (of course) the binding of the two: the text.

Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, frames this hermeneutical (and political) problematic: "literature," writes Eagleton, "*is* an ideology,"[120] and thus all literary pursuits remain hidden behind a fog of cultural belief and practice. Readers don't often know the commissioning value of any one particular publication at the moment of reception, nor are readers in tune with the choice behind cover images and the like—but in time, with the help of archival work, these things begin to reveal themselves. And because of these factors, readers begin to reevaluate certain literary texts; rereading them anew as new information of their production comes about. This is not to say that there exists some authentic, un-politicized, or original text out there but rather that there remains, as a prerequisite for literary reception (i.e., being able to engage with a narrative—even this dissertation here), in Eagleton's words, "the largely concealed structure of values which informs and underlies our factual statements…. The ways in which what we say and believe connects with the power-structure and

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[119] Gilloch, *Critical Constellations*, 2.

[120] Eagleton, *Literary Theory,* 19-20.

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power-relations of the society we live in."[121] And to understand ideology in this sense is to further understand both (a) past historical contexts and (b) present conditions more fully by way of systematic exploration into the ideas, values, and feelings by which men and women experience (conscientiously or otherwise) their societies at various times. These ideological understandings (ideas, values, beliefs, and feelings of a particular culture at a particular time), while often hazy, "are available to us," writes Eagleton, "only in literature."[122]

Ideology works in mysterious ways, often-unknowable ways; it is both the window into the world and also the very blinds concealing our place within it; like the horizon, you might be able see it, but it remains always a bit out of reach, equidistant and ungraspable as you continue to move in its direction; never quite able to fully orienting one's hermeneutical compass, so to speak. Eagleton, much like Wallace's authorial-reader valence, recognizes the set-and-setting component to literary interpretations:

> The fact that we always interpret literary works to some extent in the light of our own concerns—indeed that in one sense of "our own concerns" we are incapable of doing anything else—might be one reason why certain works of literature seem to retain their value across the centuries. It may be, of course, that we still share many preoccupations with the work itself; but it may also be that people have not actually been valuing the "same" work at all, even though they may think they have.[123]

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[121] Eagleton, *Literary Theory,* 13.

[122] Full quote: "Marxist criticism is part of a larger body of theoretical analysis which aims to understand *ideologies* – the ideas, values and feelings by which men experience their societies at various times. And certain of those ideas, values and feelings are available to us only in literature. To understand ideology is to understand both the past and present more deeply; and such understanding contributes to our liberation." Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, xii-xiii.

[123] Eagleton, *Literary Theory,* 10-11.

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This argument is just as much about an author's canon as it is about how readers experiences any one particular piece of literature with an another's name associated with it—implicit, explicit, or otherwise, these valences between a reader and a text matter for how we make sense of literary texts. But how might Eagleton unpack these ideas further as it relates to myriad iterations of literature in perpetual states of literary ecological conversion? Coming back to Gilloch's thoughts regarding a text's significances and meaning through time, literature and its authorial-reader/listener relationships are also contested and conceptualized anew as it enters subsequent contexts (differing organs in which narratives are situated).[124] This is clearly evident with varying methods for reading/listening, especially with regard to the classics.

> "Our" Homer is not identical with the Homer of the Middle Ages, nor "our" Shakespeare with that of his contemporaries; it is rather that different historical periods have constructed a "different" Homer and Shakespeare for their own purposes, and found in these texts elements to value or devalue, though not necessarily the same ones. All literary works, in other words, are "rewritten," if only unconsciously, by the societies which read them; indeed there is no reading of a work which is not also a "re-writing." No work, and no current evaluation of it, can simply be extended to new groups of people without being changed, perhaps almost unrecognizably, in the process; and this is one reason why what counts as literature is a notably unstable affair.[125]

For not only will the presence of the reader alter the texts' meaning—what you bring to the text changes the text—but this unstable affair of literary parameters Eagleton brings up (what constitutes a literary reading and what does not?) increases in uncertainty with the emergence of new digital reading/listening technologies. We still do not yet fully understand the scope of Wallace's posthumous body of work, for his narratives continue

[124] Gilloch. *Critical Constellations*, 2.

[125] Eagleton, *Literary Theory,* 11.

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to take on new shapes and profiles as remain situated in varying mediums not yet addressed in DFW scholarship. The interesting point of contact here is the “rewriting” of all literary works as they enter subsequent contexts, remaining subject to re-readings and new criticisms. Therefore the question then becomes how might scholarship—with regard to reader response theories—navigate the increasing demand of not only electronic dwelling of narratives but also the growing popularity of the audiobook? What role does authorship play with the spoken word rather than the printed form? What will a close listening of Wallace’s audio-recorded literary journalism reveal about his authorial-reader relationships?

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CHAPTER 3:
CLOSE LISTENINGS: DAVID FOSTER WALLACE'S LITERARY JOURNALISM

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3.1 INTRODUCTION

> *When I'm writing sentences the biggest thing I'm trying to do—particularly because a lot of the stuff I do is hard, like it's hard to read—is make it intimate somehow, so the reader sounds like somebody is sort of talking to him [sic].*
>
> — David Foster Wallace [1]

> *I don't know how it is for other people [but] when I really like a writer there's a voice of that writer in my head. And the couple of times that I've heard actual living writers I admire speak it kind of messed me up 'cause I like having that page voice in my head, and then the real writer is, ya know, phlegmy or lisps and does all those kinds of human things and then it ends up kind of being a distraction.*
>
> — David Foster Wallace [2]

"Welcome to the highly specific world of David Wallace,"[3] writes Wallace's literary agent, Bonnie Nadel, in an email exchange with *Gourmet Magazine*'s deputy editor, Jocelyn Zuckerman, in April 2003 amid negotiations for Wallace's assignment to cover the 56th annual Maine Lobster Festival. Agreeing to $2.50 a word (with 6000-words in total),[4] along with Wallace's request that the *Gourmet* staff provide him with any and all *Gourmet* articles that have covered "public gorging events…lobster, Maine, the US northeast coast and high-lipped seafood,"[5] Wallace's reporting would generate a "record-breaking number of responses that the [*Gourmet* editorial staff] received [from its readers]."[6] That story, "Consider the Lobster,"[7] published in August

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[1] David Foster Wallace, "Interview with David Kipen," San Francisco for City Arts & Lectures, 2004 (http://www.dfwaudioproject.org/wp-content/uploads/David-Foster-Wallace-Conversation-San-Francisco-2004.mp3)

[2] Ibid.

[3] Bonnie Nadell, "Email with Jocelyn Zuckerman, 04/07/03," Harry Ransom Center's David Foster Wallace Archive (Bonnie Nadell collection, Box 1.6—Figure 3.1).

[4] Jocelyn Zuckerman, "Email with Bonnie Nadell, 04/07/03," Harry Ransom Center's David Foster Wallace Archive (Bonnie Nadell collection, Box 1.6—Figure 3.1).

[5] David Foster Wallace, "Email with Bonnie Nadell, 04/04/03," Harry Ransom Center's David Foster Wallace Archive (Bonnie Nadell collection, Box 1.6—Figure 3.2).

[6] Ruth Reichl, "Letters to Editor," *Gourmet,* November 2004, 57.

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2004, is one of eleven works of literary journalism Wallace would publish in his lifetime. And in the spirit of Roiland's above framework that this project's engagement with Wallace's audio-recorded journalism provides new and novel understandings of—and further avenues of exploration toward—Wallace's more extensive body of work. It's worth restating Wallace's career-long engagement with the genre (as discussed in detail above); again, Wallace would publish twelve works of literary journalism in his lifetime commissioned by one of eight periodicals. In order of publication, they are:

a) "Ticket to the Fair" (*Harper's*, July, '94)
b) "Democracy and Commerce at the US Open" (*Tennis,* Sept.,'95)
c) "Shipping Out: on the (nearly lethal) comforts of a luxury cruise" (*Harper's*, Jan., '96)
d) "David Lynch Keeps His Head" (*Premiere*, Sept., '96)
e) "The String Theory" (*Esquire*, July, '96)
f) "Neither Adult Nor Entertainment" (*Premiere*, Sept., '98)
g) "The Weasel, Twelve Monkeys and the Shrub" (*Rolling Stone*, April, '00)
h) "9/11: The View From the Midwest" (*Rolling Stone*, Oct., '01)
i) "Consider the Lobster" (*Gourmet*, Aug., '04)
j) "Host" (*The Atlantic*, April, '05)
k) "Federer as Religious Experience" (*Play*, Aug., '06)

Each of the above articles would eventually be republished in one of three collections of nonfiction: *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again: Essays and Arguments* (1997),[8] *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays* (2005),[9] and *Both Flesh and Not: Essays* (2012). [10]

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[7] David Foster Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," *Gourmet,* August 2004, 50-64.

[8] (a) "Ticket to the Fair" republished as "Getting Away from Already Being Pretty Much Away from It All"; (d) "David Lynch Keeps His Head"; (e) "The String Theory" republished as "Tennis Player Michael Joyce's Professional Artistry as a Paradigm of Certain Stuff about Choice, Freedom, Discipline, Joy, Grotesquerie, and Human Consciousness"; and (c) "Shipping Out: on the (nearly lethal) comforts of a luxury cruise" republished as "A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again" (David Foster Wallace, *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again: Essays and Arguments* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co, 1997).

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Of these eleven, four were also re-mediated from print to audio and read by Wallace himself. They are: “Big Red Son,”[11] “The View From Mrs. Thompson’s,”[12] the collection’s title narrative, “Consider the Lobster,”[13] and an abridged audio-version of his April 2000 *Rolling Stone* piece on Senator John McCain, aired on NPR’s *This American Life* on May 19, 2000 as “Sonny Takes a Fall.”[14] This section, with these four narratives in particular focus, explores the relationship between the print and audio publications, highlighting the paratext of each to frame how the author function differs from one format to another—a listener centered response criticism.

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[9] (f) “Neither Adult Nor Entertainment” republished as “Big Red Son”; (g) “The Weasel, Twelve Monkeys and the Shrub” republished as “Up, Simba”; (h) “9/11: The View From the Midwest” republished as “The View From Mrs. Thompson’s”; (i) “Consider the Lobster”; (j) “Host” (David Foster Wallace, *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays* (New York: Little, Brown and Co, 2005).

[10] (k) “Federer as Religious Experience” republished as “Federer Both Flesh and Not” and (b) “Democracy and Commerce at the U.S. Open” (David Foster Wallace*, Both Flesh and Not: Essays* (New York: Little, Brown and Co, 2012).

[11] Originally published as “Neither Adult Nor Entertainment” with *Premiere*, September 1998. David Foster Wallace, ”Big Red Sun” in *Selected Essays from Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Time Warner Audiobooks, 2005).

[12] Originally published as “9/11: The View From the Midwest” with *Rolling Stone,* October 2001. David Foster Wallace, ”The View From Mrs. Thompson’s” in *Selected Essays from Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Time Warner Audiobooks, 2005).

[13] David Foster Wallace, ”Consider the Lobster,” in *Selected Essays from Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Time Warner Audiobooks, 2005).

[14] Originally published as “The Weasel, Twelve Monkeys and the Shrub” with *Rolling Stone*, April 2000. David Foster Wallace, “Sonny Takes a Fall” *This American Life* episode 160: “Character Assassination,” aired on May 19th 2000 (http://tal.fm/160).

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3.1.1 CONSIDER THE PARATEXT

David Foster Wallace's publication of *Consider the Lobster*, both print and audio editions, each begin with the following disclaimers, respectively: the first, from the copyright page of *Consider the Lobster*'s print edition:

> The following pieces were originally published in edited, heavily edited, or (in at least one instance) bowdlerized form in the following books and periodicals. N.B.: In those cases where the fact that the author was writing for a particular organ is important to the essay itself—i.e., where the commissioning magazine's name keeps popping up in ways that can't now be changed without screwing up the whole piece—the entry is marked with an asterisk. A single case in which the essay was written to be delivered as a speech, plus another one where the original article appeared bipseudonymously and now for odd and hard-to-explain reasons doesn't quite work if the "we" and "your correspondents" thing gets singularized, are further tagged with what I think are called daggers. To wit:
>
> * †"Big Red Son" in *Premier*
> "Certainly the End of *Something* or Other, One Would Sort of Have to Think" in the *New York Observer* and *the Anchor Essay Annual: The Best of 1998.*
> † "Some Remarks on Kafka's Funniness from Which Probably Not Enough Has Been Removed" and *"Authority and American Usage" in *Harper's*.
> "The View from Mrs. Thompson's" *"Up, Simba" in *Rolling Stone.*
> "How Tracy Austin Broke My Heart" in the *Philadelphia Enquirer*.
> * "Consider the Lobster" in *Gourmet* and *The Best American Essays 2005.*
> "Joseph Frank's Dostoevsky" in the *Village Voice Literary Supplement.*
> * (at least a tiny bit) "Host" in the *Atlantic Monthly*.[15]

And from the audiobook edition of *Consider the Lobster* (N.B.: audio-notes from here on out are *italicized and in 10-point font*):

> A note for the listener: This is David Foster Wallace. I sometime use footnotes in these essays, which presents kind of a nasty problem for an audiobook: where do the footnotes go? There is no bottom of a page in an audiobook, obviously. So here's a solution: footnotes are usually in a smaller font than the main text. Time Warner's audio director feels that a workable equivalent of two different fonts here could be two different sounds for my voice. So when my voice sounds the way you're hearing it now, I'm reading from the main text. *And when my voice sounds like this, I'm reading a footnote; the footnote sound is a little*

---

[15] David Foster Wallace, "Copyright page," *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Little, Brown, 2005).

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> *smaller, but that's why they're audio-footnotes.* If you hate the whole idea, please know that it's not my fault.[16]

The former, the copyright page of *Consider the Lobster*, situates itself between obligatory publishing legal clauses (i.e., e.g., "The publisher is not responsible for websites [or their content] that are not owned by the publisher"[17]) and the "Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data" entry.[18] This copyright page, including both Wallace's disclaimer and publisher's legal clauses, are internal peritext, part of the spatial category of elements within the text.[19] *Consider the Lobster*'s print edition's peritext also includes the book's cover image, author photo, author bio, the "Also by David Foster Wallace" page, the dedication page ("*for Bonnie Nadell*"), its "Personal Acknowledgements" page, and—included in the paperback version released in 2007—three full pages of "*Praise for David Foster Wallace's* Consider the Lobster and Other Essays," with its first entry from none other than revered literary critic Michiko Kakutani herself.

Along with the above disclaimer found on the copyright page of *Consider the Lobster*, a prospective reader may encounter the following insights from surveying the print book's internal paratext:

a) Wallace is the author of *Infinite Jest.*[20]
b) Back Bay Books in an imprint of Little, Brown and Company.[21]

---

[16] David Foster Wallace, "Audio Forward," *Selected Essays from Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Time Warner Audiobooks, 2005).

[17] "Copyright page," *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Little, Brown, HC, 2005).

[18] "Copyright page," *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Little, Brown, HC, 2005).

[19] For more on the relationship between peritext and epitext, see 2.1.8.

[20] Ibid.

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c) David Foster Wallace's writing is comparable to:
   a) A computer worm[22]
   b) Tom Wolfe[23]
   c) John McEnroe[24]
   d) Andre Agassi[25]
   e) Michael Jordan[26]
   f) A snowboarder with a PhD[27]

d) *Consider the Lobster* "document[s] the perversities of modern American Life."[28]

e) *Consider the Lobster* is "Brilliantly entertaining" and, moreover, "proves once more why [Wallace] should be regarded as this generation's best comic-writer."[29]

f) Wallace is the author of two novels, three short story collections, and one previous nonfiction collection.[30]

g) Wallace is a white male and—at the time of his author photo shoot—has shoulder-length hair.[31]

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[21] Ibid.

[22] "Wallace is as original and disturbing as a computer worm." Robert McCrum, *Gaurdian*, "*Praise for David Foster Wallace's* Consider the Lobster And Other Essays," *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Little, Brown, 2007).

[23] "To read Wallace's rendition of these events is to experience the muchness of American life in the way that Tom Wolfe used to deliver it to us." John Freeman, *Boston Globe,* "*Praise for David Foster Wallace's* Consider the Lobster And Other Essays," *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Little, Brown, 2007).

[24] "Watching Wallace play his outrage meter is a little like watching John McEnroe complain about a line call." John Freeman, *Boston Globe,* "Back Cover," *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Little, Brown, 2005).

[25] "David Foster Wallace is to the footnote what Agassi was to tennis or Jordan was to basketball." J-Keirn-Swanson, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, "*Praise for David Foster Wallace's* Consider the Lobster And Other Essays," *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Little, Brown, 2005).

[26] Ibid.

[27] "…the reader swoops and swirls and double back and races down the final reaches of Wallace's prose. It's as if Wallace had been, not a tennis star, but a snowboarder. A snowboarder with a PhD." Peter Grier, *Christian Science Monitor.* "*Praise for David Foster Wallace's* Consider the Lobster and Other Essays," *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Little, Brown, 2005).

[28] "Cover," *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Little, Brown, 2005).

[29] "Back Cover," *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Little, Brown, 2005).

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

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h) Wallace is the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship (aka, the "Genius Grant") along with "numerous other awards."[32]
i) Wallace is "rabidly intelligent."[33]
j) *Consider the Lobster*'s paperback edition cost's $17.00 in Canada ($2.00 more than its U.S. price tag).[34]
k) Wallace can be "sad, funny, silly, heartbreaking, and absurd…all at once."[35]
l) Wallace's has a "voice that manages to be both Midwestern-front-porch digressive and scientifically rigorous."[36]
m) *Consider the Lobster* is "also available from Hachette Audio"[37]

Along with the above audio-disclaimer—without having listened to a single word from any one of the four essays included in the audio edition of *Consider the Lobster*—a prospective listener may encounter the following insights from surveying the audiobook's internal paratext via the Audible app:[38]

a) Wallace is the author of *Infinite Jest*.[39]
b) *Selected Essays from Consider the Lobster and Other Essays* runs three hours and forty-eight minutes.[40]
c) *Selected Essays from Consider the Lobster and Other Essays* has a 4½ stars rating (out of 5) from 866 raters as of January 21st, 2018.[41]

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] "*Praise for David Foster Wallace's* Consider the Lobster and Other Essays," *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Little, Brown, 2005).

[37] "Back Cover," *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Little, Brown, 2005).

[38] The following comes from the digitally available Audible version of *Selected Essays from Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*.

[39] "Cover," *Selected Essays from Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Time Warner Audiobooks, 2005).

[40] "View Details," *Selected Essays from Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Time Warner Audiobooks, 2005).

[41] Ibid.

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d) *Selected Essays from Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*' synopsis: "Do lobsters feel pain? [Wallace] addresses this and other important cultural questions in four brilliant essays from his latest collection. In what is sure to be a much-talked-about exploration of distinctly modern subjects, one of the sharpest minds of our time delves into some of life's most delicious topics."[42]

Notwithstanding the tone-deaf deployment of "life's most delicious topics"—wherein either (or both) reader and listener of Wallace's collection will no doubt surmise that whoever wrote the audiobook synopsis did not, in fact, listen to the collection itself—the peritext of *Selected Essays from Consider the Lobster and Other Essays* is gravely limited in comparison to its print counterpart. This chapter explores the varying paratextual differences—both internal peritext (above) all well as the distanced epitext—readers and listeners alike may encounter. As explored in previous sections, paratext does not entirely determine author functions but it does, however, reconstitute the author function in question.

As a brief overview, paratext is where the author function lies most pressingly apparent to its readers, and Genette frames paratext as a fringe-space, an interstices, an Agambenian "whatever."[43] Genette writes,

> Indeed, this fringe, always the conveyor of a commentary that is authorial or more or less legitimated by the author, constitutes a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also a *transaction*: a privileged place of a pragmatics and a strategy of an influence on the public, an influence that—whether well or poorly understood and achieved—is at the service of a better

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[42] Ibid.

[43] In his seminal work, *The Coming Community,* Giorgio Agamben refers to "the whatever" as the threshold where meaning-making happens. The whatever places itself in the liminal space between the particular and the general. *Whatever* is always relative. The *whatever* is neither this or that yet precisely that which exists betwixt and between the binaries present. The *whatever* goes beyond the garland of intellectual and academic pursuits, as the threshold between the generalities and particulars of language also includes action and the metaphorical condition of human community. The *whatever* is, precisely enough, the indefinite space, or *threshold*, between the particular and general entities of our technological condition.

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> reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it (more pertinent, of course, in the eyes of the author and his allies).[44]

Paratext is always political and is, in Genette's words, "what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and more generally, to the public."[45] And the significant cultural power that the name "David Foster Wallace" carries remains grounded in paratextual materials as cited above, materials that even go beyond the garland of peritext and into the elusive and epitextual realm (this dissertation included, respectfully). All of which—both internal paratext and the more distanced materials—enable and frame, as we have seen, Foucault's notion of author function. If we are to take Genette's above claim as axiomatic, that paratext enables a text to become a book, then we must also extend our understanding of paratext to include its application to audiobooks because the absence of extensive paratextual materials within audiobooks change both (a) Wallace's author function and, more generally, the (b) experience of listening to audiobooks themselves.

3.1.2 CONSIDER THE ARCHIVED PARATEXT, TOO

On March 31, 2005—nine months shy of *Consider the Lobster*'s December 2005 publication—Michael Pietsch, Wallace's editor and Senior Vice President & Publisher of Little, Brown and Company, sent Wallace a fax containing a number of editorial and publishing questions and concerns, one of which discusses the

[44] Gérard Genette, Jane E. Lewin, and Richard Macksey. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2.

[45] Ibid.1.

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importance of including the magazine references within the essays (i.e., the above disclaimer):

> The only question that came up repeatedly [with the editorial staff] was whether readers would enjoy the book more if the pieces did not often remind them of their origins in magazines and newspapers. There are a couple of pieces where such references come out clean but in general they're connected in by so many tendrils—and often humorously—that in the end I decided not to try excising them. If you think otherwise please let me know.[46]

Hence *Consider the Lobster*'s copyright page disclaimer, which begins with "the following pieces were originally published in edited, heavily edited, or (in at least one instance) bowdlerized form in the following books and periodicals."[47] This is all to note that both Wallace and Pietsch agree: paratext matters. Even in 2008, during an interview with the *Wall Street Journal*'s Christopher McFarley in preparation for Little, Brown's publication of the extended paper-book version of Wallace's October 2000 *Rolling Stone* piece covering the 2000 Republican primary, Wallace tells McFarely: "I wouldn't take back anything that got said in that essay, but I'd want a reader to keep the time and context very much in mind on every page."[48]

Before the above disclaimer was situated on the copyright page of the published text it was first situated on a single page under the heading "Institutional

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[46] Michael Pietsch, "Fax to David Foster Wallace, 03/31/05, (Harry Ransom Center's David Foster Wallace Archive (Michael Pietsch collection, Box 2.4).

[47] David Foster Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," in *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Little, Brown, HC, [12/13], 2005), vi.

[48] David Foster Wallace, "Interview with Christopher Farley," *Wall Street Journal,* May 2008, republished in *David Foster Wallace: The Last Interview and Other Conversations*. Brooklyn, NY Melville House, 2012),
118.

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Acknowledgments,"[49] situated recto (to the right) of the books' dedication page ("*for Bonnie Nadell*"). This, like the aforementioned first title of the collection as "*HOST*" would have inexorably altered readers' engagement with Wallace's essays (especially those originally featured and commissioned by any one particular magazine). In a 2006 interview with Michael Silverblatt, Wallace explains the importance of this paratextual re-contextualization:

> There are three or four pieces in [*Consider the Lobster*] that are nearly, to me, inexplicable unless frequent acknowledgement is made in the piece that they were appearing in a certain organ [...] [And the magazine editors] seemed somehow allergic to the idea of the article talking about the organ in which it was appearing and what certain demographic or rhetorical considerations followed from that. So the only place that I really have space and permission to talk in detail about that is in the book but of course now that it's in the book it is in fact *not* in that organ and so it all ends up being extremely strange.[50]

The copyright page—along with other paratextual materials—for Wallace, required his own critical attention. In a letter to Betsy Uhrig, Wallace's copyeditor at Little, Brown—regarding the master-proof galley of *Consider the Lobster*—Wallace made the following observations regarding its "Institutional Acknowledgements" page (later situated on the copyright page):

> Betsy – The publication-acknowledgements list is a ghastly, head-clutching mess and must be reset as follows:
>
> * †"Big Red Son" in *Premier*
> "Certainly the End of *Something* or Other, One Would Sort of Have to Think" in the *New York Observer* and *The Anchor Essay Annual: The Best of 1998.*
> † "Some Remarks on Kafka's Funniness from Which Probably Not Enough Has Been Removed" and *"Authority and American Usage" in *Harper's*.
> "The View from Mrs. Thompson's" *"Up, Simba" in *Rolling Stone.*
> "How Tracy Austin Broke My Heart" in the *Philadelphia Enquirer*.
> * "Consider the Lobster" in *Gourmet* and *The Best American Essays 2005.*

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[49] Harry Ransom Center Archive, "The David Foster Wallace Archive," Box 5.4—Figure 3.3).

[50] David Foster Wallace, "Interview with Michael Silverblatt," *Bookworm,* 2006.

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> "Joseph Frank's Dostoevsky" in the *Village Voice Literary Supplement.*
> * (at least a tiny bit) "Host" in the *Atlantic Monthly*.
>
> [[[Notice, in the correctly set list, that "Consider the Lobster" has two attributions. Notice also that the asterisks and dagger are—need to be—unmistakably superscripted, and they are neither loose nor crashy w/r/t the text they apply to. Notice also that in the last line, the (at least a tiny bit) that follows the superscript asterisk is itself superscripted. Gaaa.]]][51]

While Wallace may not have had the final word regarding the various cover designs of his books he certainly had his hands dirty with the internal paratext between book jackets' bindings.[52] The above letter—found in the Harry Ransom Archive—is epitext (distanced materials) whereas its content—i.e., situated on the copyright page of *Consider the Lobster*—remains peritext (internal materials). However, as we have seen, the two (peritext and epitext) are not so easily divided (perhaps one day the above email will be situated in the front matter of a future publication—from epitext to peritext). And Wallace's publications—from his first novel, *Broom of the System* (1987), to his posthumously published novel, *The Pale King* (2012)—are awash in paratextual materials amending the main text itself. But with regard to his nonfiction, and literary journalism in particular, Wallace's paratext becomes all the more pressing due to his precarious, slightly contentious, and well-documented relationship he had with magazine editors throughout his career. This focus on paratext within Wallace's narratives—blurring the lines between paratext and main text—comes in the wake of Wallace's reader-centered approach to the genre of literary journalism via his inverted

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[51] David Foster Wallace, "Letter to Betsy Uhrig, 8/05," Harry Ransom Center Archive (David Foster Wallace Collection, 6.2—Figure 3.4).

[52] See 2.3.2 for more on Wallace's "long standing fued with Little, Brown" regarding the cover of *Infinite Jest*.

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Wall Street Journal style of writing[53]—manipulating readers into becoming the subjects within the very narrative they're encountering. Rather than focusing on a secondary—local—individual (because Wallace was, in fact, writing for a national audience) he instead became the subject of focus in tandem with his readers via direct address: writing (and speaking, for that matter) directly to readers and listeners of and for a particular organ and format.[54] And in accordance to the tradition of the literary journalists—who "recognize the need for a consciousness on the page through which the objects in view are filtered"[55]—Wallace brought his consciousness to the forefront of readers' and listeners' respective attention by exploring how the varying organ in which the piece is going to be published will alter how he approached the structure and form of the narrative itself. Thus building trust and intimacy with readers and listeners alike.

3.1.3 BY WAY OF EXAMPLE I: CONSIDER "SHIPPING OUT"

On the seven-night Caribbean cruise Wallace embarked on both "voluntarily and for pay,"[56] commissioned by and published with *Harper's* magazine in 1996, Wallace would fill three notebooks worth of material and produce a 110-page essay for the magazine which, in his own words, "ended up getting cut just about in half."[57]

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[53] See 1.4.3 for more on Wallace's inverted WSJ-style of literary journalism.

[54] See 1.4.3 for more on "The Wall Street Journal" style.

[55] Norman Sims, *True Stories: A Century of Literary Journalism* (Northwestern University Press, 2008), 7.

[56] Wallace, "Shipping Out," 34.

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Continuing, "And every time I'd bitch and moan to *Harper's* they would say, 'Well, this is still going to be the longest thing we've ever put in [the magazine].'"[58] In an email exchange with Didier Jacob of the French literary magazine *Le Nouvel Observateur,* Wallace unpacks his methodological approach for his journalistic fieldwork:

> All I do at these events is walk around, smoke too many cigarettes, fill notebooks with observations, and worry about how I can possibly write anything coherent about an event that is so detailed and complex. The actual writing time starts when I get home and have to start organizing the notes into an article. [59]

Totaling 23 pages in its *Harper's* publication, Wallace's "Shipping Out: on the (nearly lethal) comforts of a luxury cruise"—along with his July 1994 *Harper's* publication, "Ticket to the Fair"—would become some of "the most famous pieces of journalism of the past decade and a half,"[60] writes David Lipsky in his 2008 *Rolling Stone* essay following Wallace's death. In Josh Roiland's 2017 publication of "Derivative Sport: The Journalistic Legacy of David Foster Wallace"—an oral history of Wallace's career-long engagement with the genre as told by various editors and writers who worked with him—Colin Harrison, Wallace's editor at *Harper*'s for both "Ticket to the Fair" and "Shipping Out" explores the difficulties of length with Wallace's above mentioned articles:

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[57] David Foster Wallace, "Interview with Tom Scocca, 1998" in *Conversations with David Foster Wallace* ed. Stephen Burn (University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 84.

[58] Ibid.

[59] David Foster Wallace, "Email exchange with Didier Jacob," Harry Ransom Center Archive (David Foster Wallace Collection, Box 31.8—Figure 3.5).

[60] David Lipsky, "The Lost Years & Last Days of David Foster Wallace," *Rolling Stone Magazine*, Oct 30, 2008.

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> The challenges in the case of the first two pieces which we commissioned were that they were just way too long for the magazine. And, I don't remember the original length that the state fair piece was commissioned at…but it came in much longer than that. Same too with the cruise ship piece. As I recall the cruise ship piece was the longest piece I'd ever done; it was the longest piece we'd ever done at *Harper's* in my time there. And so, when those pieces came in I read them and was greatly admiring of them but the fact of the matter is it was a magazine, not a book.[61]

Hence Wallace's willingness to publish a collection of his nonfiction pieces in book form, giving him the "chance to undo the cuts editors had imposed on him to make extra room for Volvo ads,"[62] as he once wrote in a letter penned to Don DeLillo as cited by D.T. Max in *Every Love Story is a Ghost Story*. Max continues: "Wallace explained that the book versions gave him the chance to add back in what had [previously] been taken out, sometimes doubling the published length of the pieces, reestablishing their verbal exuberance and their scope."[63] In the aforementioned exchange with Jacob, Wallace would call the book versions of his magazines the "director's cuts" (the collection Wallace mentioned below would later become *Consider the Lobster*):

> So what appears in American magazines is usually just a small portion of the actual article I wrote; the rest gets edited out. The nice thing about collecting the pieces into books (I'm supposed to have a second such collection coming out soon in the US; we're editing the galleys right now) is that I get to publish the "director's cuts" of the articles, the ones I actually wrote rather than the heavily edited magazine versions.[64]

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[61] Colin Harrison, as quoted in Joshua Roiland's "Derivative Sport: The Journalistic Legacy of David Foster Wallace," *Longreads*, December 2017, https://longreads.com/2017/12/07/derivative-sport/

[62] D.T. Max, *Every Love Story Is a Ghost Story: A Life of David Foster Wallace* (New York: Viking, 2012), 228.

[63] Ibid., 228.

[64] David Foster Wallace, "Email exchange with Didier Jacob," Harry Ransom Center Archive (David Foster Wallace Collection, Box 31.8—Figure 3.5).

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Consequently, there's a 20,000-word difference between the main text of the magazine and the book version of "Shipping Out" (with an additional one hundred footnotes found in the book opposed to the magazine).

The above example has two functions: one the one hand, there's the recognition that scholarship exploration between the alterations between Wallace's magazine publications and their later book versions—exposing the political and cultural implications surrounding certain omissions and restraints within magazine publishing versus book punishing (a la paratext)—has become a project of academic exploration in and of itself. And on the other hand, the "Shipping Out" example provides a tertiary angle of sorts for what is to follow: Wallace's audiobooks, too, differ from print to audio in both content and, of course, their varioud paratextual contexts. Which is to say that Wallace's play with form was not merely limited to his magazine and books publications but also extended into his audiobooks, including not only *Consider the Lobster* but also including his audiobook publication of *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*.

3.1.4 BY WAY OF EXAMPLE II: CONSIDER "HOST"

"Host," Wallace's profile of conservative talk radio host DJ John Ziegler, first published with the *Atlantic* in 2005 and later republished in *Consider the Lobster*. The most experimental of his published literary journalism (with regard to Wallace's play with form and paratext). "In ['Host']," writes Roiland in above-mentioned article, "Wallace used paratextual boxes and a dizzying array of lines and arrows crisscrossing

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the page to repeatedly redirect the reader's eye."[65] As a layout that employs in-text box-notes (instead of Wallace's habitual use of footnotes) with leaders and labels guiding the reader to asides and digressions, creating something that would—as quoted by Marie Mundaca, *Consider the Lobster*'s design director—"stress the immediacy of communication and the speed of thought that occurred in the studio where [Ziegler] worked."[66] What this shows, and in what follows, is Wallace's overt attention and play with paratext in conjunction with the content being explored.

In a fax sent to Wallace's editor at Little, Brown, Michael Pietsch, when considering "Host" to be included in his second collection of nonfiction, Wallace frames the importance of the article's inclusion of "arrowed lines from both text to box and box to subsidiary box"[67] rather than his trademark footnotes. Continuing:

> The thing I wish to stress is that the boxes are not supposed to be just cute variations on footnotes. A big part of the connotation of the boxes was/is supposed to be the incredible complications that shoot out in all direction from even the simplest effort to be truly fair and comprehensive in discussing talk radio. An ordered kaleidoscope, as it were, and the lines w/ arrows were part of what was supposed to convey this sense.[68]

"Host" remains terrible under explored. In fact, Wallace first proposed that his second collection of nonfiction be titled *Host: Long & Short Nonfiction*[69] rather than its

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[65] Josh Roiland, "Derivative Sport: The Journalistic Legacy of David Foster Wallace," *Longreads, December 2017, https://longreads.com/2017/12/07/derivative-sport/*

[66] Marie Mundaca, "The Influence of Anxiety: Wading In," *hipsterbookclub.com,* June 2009, accessed 4/24/15, 1.

[67] David Foster Wallace, "Fax to Michael Pietsch, 03/29/05, (Harry Ransom Center's David Foster Wallace Archive (Michael Pietsch collection, Box 2.4—Figure 3.6).

[68] Ibid.

[69] David Foster Wallace, Harry Ransom Center Archive (Stephen Moore Collection, Box 1.8—Figure 3.7)

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published title, *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. There's an important distinction to be made with the above two collection titles, too, and it doesn't have anything to do with the featured essay selection but rather the genre-blurring subtitles each employ: what might it mean to read a collection of self-described "essays" rather than the broader, umbrella classification of "long & short nonfiction"?

3.1.5 CONSIDER THE AUDIOBOOK

Criticisms of audiobooks, as explored earlier with Rubery, seem to center around fundamental questions regarding what it means to read a book and, therefore, what it means to be a reader of books.[70] This, too, extends to questions concerning what it means to be a listener of books and, moreover, how the two mediums' paratext (or lack thereof) modify the author function in question. It goes without saying that listening to a narrative and reading one are two entirely different modes of literary engagement and neither one should be collapsed into the other. It's also worth repeating the seemingly totally obvious: we read with the eyes (via the visual cortex) and listen with the ears (via the auditory cortex)[71]; this clear difference, however, does not take away from audiobook engagements as being profoundly literary and, in the words of K.C. Harrison, audiobooks have an "important place in contemporary culture that augments, rather than impoverishes, literary life."[72]

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[70] Rubery, *Untold Story,* 25. See "Introduction" and Chapter 1 Section 2 for more on questions concerning what it might mean to be a reader of sound.

[71] Rubery, "Introduction."

[72] K.C. Harrison, "Taking Books, Toni Morrison, and the Transformation of Narrative Authority," in *Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies*, Ed. Matthew Rubery (Routledge, 2014), 143.

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Let me be clear, again: my argument in this chapter and project at large is not that Wallace's audiobook version of *Consider the Lobster* (nor the audiobook *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*) function as a substitute for its book publications (just as much as the book publications do not function as substitutes for their magazine publications) but instead functions as (a) possible means for deepening (and problematizing) authorial-reader and listener relationships and (b) changes Wallace's author function by way of included and omitted paratext in comparison to the essay's book-versions (as well as magazine versions, too). These differences begin, first and foremost, with Wallace's doubled voice: i.e., the stylized voice of Wallace's journalistic prose and, on top of the rhetorical voice, there's the literal voice of David Wallace, the narrator—the doubled voice of David Foster Wallace reading "David Foster Wallace" (and the smaller voice of Wallace reading the footnotes, too).

From the audio-forward of Hachette Audio's May 2014 publication of *David Foster Wallace: In His Own Words*—a collection of in-studio recordings, selected radio interviews, and public readings—John Jeremiah Sullivan makes the following observations regarding Wallace's narrating voice:

> What you'll notice immediately about [Wallace's] voice is that it belongs emphatically to someone *reading*. Many writers adopt other voices when they do this kind of thing—what they attempt is more like acting, playing a role: a different way of hiding. Wallace eschews it, seemingly.[73]

Unlike the audiobook version of *Infinite Jest* performed by Sean Pratt, Wallace's audiobook recordings feel less like one is being read to or performed at but rather much more like listeners are somewhat voyeuristically eavesdropping in on Wallace in

[73] John Jeremiah Sullivan, introduction to *David Foster Wallace: In his own words*. (New York: Hachette Audio, 2014).

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another room reading softly to himself, alone. "It's more interior," Sullivan tells us, the voice of Wallace "more tenuous."[74] Sullivan's audio-forward, which this chapter draws heavily on is as followed in full:

> David Foster Wallace, who died in 2008 at the age of 46, is considered by his admirers and even by many of those critics who did not love his style, to be one of the most important writers of the decades that hinged around the turn of the millennium. The influence that he exerted on multiple prose forms—the novel, the short story, the essay, the long New Journalistic nonfiction piece—was such that the job of calculating it has just started; in some ways we can't measure it yet because we are still absorbing it, as we are still absorbing the reality of his death.
>
> His last work of fiction, *The Pale King,* even at the unfinished stage where he left it, contained—only more apparently in the time since it was published—some of the first truly great American fiction of the 21st century. It's a palpable loss that we will never hear Wallace read from that book. And it's in the context of that thought that this collection makes sense and has a reason for existing: an audio anthology of his studio recordings, of the occasions on which someone got him in front of a mic, with a glass of water, and captured him reading his own work.
>
> What you'll notice immediately about this voice is that it belongs emphatically to someone *reading*. Many writers adopt other voices when they do this kind of thing—what they attempt is more like acting, playing a role, a different way of hiding; Wallace eschews it, seemingly. He emphasizes the sound of the sentences—flattening and rounding off his soft, nasal, at times almost surfary mid-western University English, as if in hopes that he can find a transparency that way. He can't have it, of course. No one felt it more keenly than Wallace—that there was artifice in the very scenario of being a writer.
>
> The voice he invented for his pages that you'll encounter in these essays and stories is not that of someone sitting and confidently reading aloud, it's more interior, and I think more tenuous. So there is perhaps a deeper kind of acting going on: not a choice of earnestness or irony, but a vibrating between them, taking place at a very high level. Which when I think of it I have always heard his writing.
>
> This is sounding solemn, and nothing could be more wrong, because there is humor throughout here. It's a laughter that seems at times to come from behind a rictus, a desperate sounding humor. In hindsight, a valiant humor. The voice of David Foster Wallace.[75]

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[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid.

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Sullivan's emphasis on reading is important here. Whereas "the written word is fully available to the reader," as D.E. Wittkower outlines, "to be engaged with at her own pace and in the order and level of care that she prefers,"[76] an audiobook is paced and voiced for listeners. Whereas a reader may circle back and review previously encountered material in a printed text, the narrator of an audiobook marches onward with or without a listener's consent.

Contrary to Sullivan's introductory remarks—that Wallace eschews performance by an interior reading, an indirect address—Sarah Kozloff argues that "audiobooks are predicted [sic] upon *direct address*. We are not over-hearing, or eavesdropping; the narrating voice is explicitly addressing the listener."[77] What's missing from Sullivan introduction, which has become the very foundation for this chapter's argument and project at large, is that Wallace did, in fact, address his listeners directly. Albeit at times subtly—for the voice Wallace created for his listeners was in fact "interior…tenuous"—it was also unambiguously attentive toward the fact that there was someone else on the other end of the line, someone listening. This occurs both in the main text as well as its paratext. E.g., while reading the second footnote from the collection's title essay, "Consider the Lobster," Wallace in what appears to be going off script, so to speak—but of course that is highly unlikely given that Wallace was went so far as to edit in what appears to be impromptu digressions—(everything following "NB" is *not* found in the print version): "NB, which means

[76] D.E. Wittkower, "A Preliminary Phenomenology of the Audiobook," in *Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies*, Ed. Matthew Rubery (Routledge, 2014), 222.

[77] Sarah Kozloff, "Audio Books in a Visual Culture," *Journal of American Culture* 18, no. 4 (1995): 92.

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'nota bene,' which the audio commandant wants me to tell you means 'note well,' but actually really means 'by-the-way.'"[78] Wallace's direct address aligns nicely with Sarah Kozloff argument that "audiobooks create a stronger bond than printed books between storyteller and listener by 'envoicing' the narrator."[79] Kozloff continues, "'envoicing' the narrator creates a sense of connection stronger than reading impersonal printed pages: the communicative paradigm—storyteller to listener—that underlies printed texts has again become flesh."[80] Just as John Young argues, as quoted by K.C. Harrison, "audiobooks are not just derivative versions but 'importantly new textual forms…a distinct medium that changes the public nature and reception of the text,'"[81] and it's evident that Wallace's play with the audiobook format—most especially the paratext of direct address—remains a signature trait of Wallace's career-long engagement within the genre of literary journalism.

3.1.6 CONSIDER THE COMPOUND CONJUNCTION: AND BUT SO DFW ENVOICES DFW

Sara Knox suggests that "the movement of a novel from the printed page to pageless audio might best be understood as both a re-mediation of a form and a translation of the *voice* of the text."[82] The literal vocalization of Wallace's own literary

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[78] David Foster Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," in *Selected Essays from Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Time Warner Audiobooks, 2005).

[79] Kozloff, 83-95 (as quoted by K.C. Harrison, 145).

[80] Ibid., 92.

[81] John Young, "Toni Morrison, Oprah Winfrey, and Postmodern Popular Audiences, *African American Review* 35, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 196.

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voice (described in the print version of *Consider the Lobster* as "both Midwestern-front-porch digressive and scientifically rigorous"[83]) and can be "sad, funny, silly, heartbreaking, and absurd…all at once,"[84] writes Michiko Kakutani—listeners of Wallace reading his own text are caught not only in a doubling of authorship (from textual voice to an additional narrators voice) but a doubled doubling of authorship. Whereas "the 'doubling of authorship,' is a shared characteristic of the production of unabridged literary works for audio as well as of literary translation," the doubled doubling is a presence of the voicing narrator interpreting his or her own text, "loom[ing] at large for listeners as does the presence of the translator for readers of literary works in translation."[85] As Jason Camelot has argued (much to the chagrin of audiobook enthusiasts, including me) that listening is a more passive interpretive activity than reading insofar as the "talking book necessarily entails a concrete 'envoicing' narrator,"[86] a significant departure, Knox notes, from one of the primary values attributed to reading literature: the readers' process of constructing the author's voice.[87]

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[82] Sara Knox, "Hearing Hardy, Talking Tolstoy: The Audiobook Narrator's Voice and Reader Experience," in *Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies*, Ed. Matthew Rubery (Routledge, 2014), 128.

[83] "*Praise for David Foster Wallace's* Consider the Lobster And Other Essays," *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Little, Brown, 2005).

[84] Michiko Kakutani "Back Cover," *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Little, Brown, 2005).

[85] Knox, 133.

[86] Jason Camelot, "Early Talking Books: Spoken Recordings and Recitation Anthologies, 1880-1920," *Book History 6* (2003): 167.

[87] Knox, 128.

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Wallace's envoicing is heightened by his signature deployment of the compound conjunction (e.g., "And but so") at the beginning of paragraphs. When KCRW's *Bookworm* host, Michael Silverblatt, asked Wallace to discuss the compound conjunctions throughout his work, Wallace tells Silverblatt that "[the compound conjunctions are] little unconscious clue[s] to the reader that he is more listening than reading now; that we are at a pace now that is supposed to be far more sound, and pace, and breath than these short, contained messages."[88]

And but so "the portable player," Rubery writes, "does not present an actual person before you; there is no body movement, no facial expression, and no eye contact. The difference here lies in what might be called ear contact, the unbroken link between voice and ear."[89] It's a monologic reception (the audio experience) rather than dialogic. Charles Berstein, in his forward to *Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies*, nicely encapsulates this ethereal, monologic ghostly presence of Wallace in one's ear:

> Unlike "live" performance, [audiobooks are] a textual experience: you hear it but it doesn't hear you. Like writing, the audio voice is always a voice that conjures the presence of the speaker but marks the speaker's absence. For this reason, all voice recording is at some fundamental, if usually subliminal, level ghostly. The voice of the dead speaking as if alive. Or alive one more time.[90]

Ethereal. Spectral. Wraithlike.

As outlined in previous sections and in accordance to the Audiobook Publishers Association's most recent report, there's no debate: audiobooks are an

[88] David Foster Wallace, "Interview with Michael Silverblatt," *Bookworm*, 1997.

[89] Matthew Rubery, "Play it Again, Sam Weller: New Digital Audiobooks and Old Ways of Reading," *Journal of Victorian Culture* 13, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 72.

[90] Bernstein, xvi.

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increasingly growing industry, yet the hermeneutics of close listening practices have not yet been fully processed, let alone recognized as a literary endeavor meriting a large body of scholarly attention in and of itself. So what difference does it make whether one reads or listens to Wallace's literary journalism? And how might paratext influence one's response to the above question? The following four sections explore these two questions by performing close readings and listenings of Wallace's four audio-recorded works of literary journalism. In so doing I draw from previous sections to frame, unpack, and defend the arguments outlined in this thesis: that close listenings of David Foster Wallace's audio-recorded literary journalism provide new and essential avenues for David Foster Wallace Studies to explore while also providing Wallace's larger audience opportunities to deepen authorial-reader/listener relationships. Moreover, that the relationship between paratext and author function remains in flux and becomes contested and conceptualized anew with the rise of audiobook popularity in recent years, arguing that an updated, audiobook-centered notion of author function will provide the burgeoning field of Literary Sound Studies with a useful framework for thinking about the cultural and political implications surrounding the fastest growing industry in contemporary American publishing. This project—and chapter in particular—focuses on Wallace reading his own literary journalism to best provide a framework for thinking about larger questions surrounding the role audiobooks have taken on when approaching questions concerning authorship.

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3.2 AUDIO COMMANDANTS AND DIRECT ADDRESS: "CONSIDER THE LOBSTER"

> *To be a mass tourist, for me, is to become a pure late-date American: alien, ignorant, greedy for something you cannot ever have, disappointed in a way you can never admit. It is to spoil, by way of sheer ontology, the very unspoiledness you are there to experience, It is to impose yourself on places that in all non-economic ways would be better, realer, without you. It is, in lines and gridlock and transaction after transaction, to confront a dimension of yourself that is as inescapable as it is painful: As a tourist, you become economically significant but existentially loathsome, an insect on a dead thing.*
>
> — David Foster Wallace [91]

> *N.B.—which means "*nota bene*," which the audio commandant wants me to tell you means 'note well,' but actually really means "by-the-way."*
>
> — David Foster Wallace [92]

> *There are said to be certain Buddhists whose ascetic practices enable them to see a whole landscape in a bean. […] The goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text.*
>
> — Roland Barthes [93]

EVALUATION: *"Consider the lobster,"* he says. And he says it with a soft conviction. The narrator's voice is soft, whispery, with the words flowing together as if hyphens rest on both sides of the "*the*"; "*Consider-the-lobster*," he says, in one fluid and connected and unassuming breath; but why must the listener consider anything, let alone *the* lobster? Or is it *a* lobster? Is this consideration a consideration of the general lobster or does the narrator have a particular crustacean in mind? Plural or singular?

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[91] Wallace, "Consider the Lobster" (audio).

[92] Ibid.

[93] Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1973), 3-4.

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Definite lobster or the indefinite lobster? It must be one or the other. Consider the possibility of both.

Nevertheless, it's an arduous task to be sure whether the narrator is merely restating the title of the collection, *Consider the Lobster*, or initiating his reading of the essay "Consider the Lobster" by affirming its title. Or, perhaps "*Consider the lobster*" is simply the first sentence of the essay itself. Regardless, all definite or indefinite lobster(s) and title considerations aside, why is the voice of what appears to be David Foster Wallace (but how can one be so sure?) accompanied by an oboe (or some other double reed wooded instrument)? It is an oboe, yes? It is Wallace speaking, yes? It must be Wallace himself (but what matters who is speaking, anyways?). But what about the music? How does this non-diegetic and unbearably sad oboe music function for listeners? Does it signal what is to come? A foreboding foreshadowing of non-diegetic sound? Must all consideration be, on some fundamental and ghostly level, looming? Is sound a rhetorical device? Can it be? A sound that seemingly comes *into* the narrative—becomes apart and indistinguishable from the narrative itself—after the writing and narration have already concluded? How am I certain this is Wallace speaking? It is. It must be. The packaging assures me it is: "Narrated by the author."[94] But what *is* an author? And how can I be sure of this let alone be confident that the narrator and author are the same?

"The enormous, pungent, and extremely well-marketed Maine Lobster Festival is held every late July in the state's midcoast region, meaning the western side of Penobscot Bay, the nerve stem of Maine's lobster industry." It took three rewinds and

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[94] "Front matter," *Consider the Lobster* (print).

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three replays to get that all down. Comma or em-dash after “region”? What’s the difference? We’re listening, after all. And why is this oboe (or is it now oboes? I think I hear two, maybe three) still in my ears?

It’s tempting to run Wallace’s “Consider the Lobster” through a Barthean readerly/writerly analysis. But is it useful? What function does this framework carry when applied to audiobooks? In his 1973 publication of *S/Z*, Roland Barthes differentiates between readerly texts and writerly texts. The former (readerly) distinguished by an absence of recognition from an author that readers function as participants in the meaning-making process but rather exist as merely receivers of a fixed, predetermined meaning—a meaning received through the act of reading. But is this not also true with the act of listening? The latter, the writerly, calls attention to the co-dependence of author and reader (via the text) of the meaning-making process: “a perpetual present,”[95] Barthes writes, often revealed by way of rhetorical techniques that call attention to the text itself, its production, and its acknowledgment of the reader as not only a participant but also, and more importantly, co-producer in the meaning-making process. But is this not also true with the act of listening? The short answer is yes and no. The longer answer is what follows.

3.2.1 CONSIDER THE READERLY & WRITERLY: THE STARRED TEXT, AS IT WERE/IS

When applied to audio-texts, and audiobooks in particular, the readerly and writerly collapse into one another insofar as the listener can be both present and absent

[95] Barthes, 5.

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as the narrative unfolds—the Schrödinger's cat of audio hermeneutics, if you will: if the narrator is outside the box, so to speak, the listener is both present (alive) and absent (dead) simultaneously. The narrator (our hypothetical scientist) does not know if the receiving end is met with presence or absence of a listener, passive or active reception. The readerly, for Barthes, "are products (and not productions)"[96] to be received, not co-produced. "The writerly text," on the other hand, "is not a thing"[97] but rather (to state once again) "a perpetual present, upon which no *consequent* language (which would inevitably make it past) can be superimposed."[98] It is, in other words, a phenomenological continuum: a moment of moments wherein the reader (or listener, for this matter) takes part in the meaning-making process. But when listening to an audiobook—after the play button has been pressed—the readerly takes hold insofar as the listener cannot fully exchange with the text insofar as the text will continue onwards with or without the presence of a listener unlike, of course, the dependent agency a reader has with a book, which fosters (nay, requires) active participation (although limited, in accordance with the readerly argument) at the receiving end of a text. Yet listening can be passive, unconscious, and ostensibly sleepy: i.e., e.g., fall asleep with a book on your lap and reading seizes—no meaning is made let alone received; but fall asleep with an audiobook playing and reading continues right up until its end (or until the batteries run dry). Yet writerly texts do not merely recognize the reader/listener passively as a receiver of a text and its meaning but rather identify

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[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Ibid.

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the reader/listener actively and depend upon them to co-facilitate meaning-making. This co-facilitation of meaning-making is done by not merely *receiving* a text and its meaning but actively taking part in the textual reception itself.

Wallace fosters a space of co-dependent meaning-making—as writerly texts do—by revealing modes of production within and surrounding his published works of literary journalism, soliciting readers and listeners alike to participate in the meaning-making process via, for one example, his "Institutional Acknowledgments" disclaimer on the copyright page of *Consider the Lobster* and his "Note to the Listener" introduction to the audiobook version. These self-referential direct addresses to readers and listeners are rhetorical techniques which require that readers and listeners alike participate in the contextualization his writings. This is all to say that Wallace's literary journalism is, broadly conceived, unambiguously writerly. But can we also apply this writerly framework to the audio-recorded journalism when, as noted above, they do not require the agency of listeners that their printed counterparts depend upon with readers? This question becomes all the more difficult when we see and think of audiobooks as being (in contrast to their printed counterpart) antithetical to Barthes' ideal text, which is best termed as a hypertext of sorts, wherein readers do not read and engage with a text linearly but rather navigate the text in fractured, seemingly random sequence and thus making each reading experience distinctive from another. The audiobook, however—being antithetical to Barthes' ideal text—is all the more difficult to experience and frame as a hypertext insofar as it operates in just one, sequential direction: onwards.

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3.2.2 READER/LISTENER RESPONSES

"We were pretty certain that David Foster Wallace's article 'Consider the Lobster' (August 2004) would cause a stir," writes *Gourmet* editor-in-chief, Ruth Reichl, in her "Letter from the Editor" note the November 2004 edition, "but we would never had anticipated the record-breaking number of responses that we received."[99] With *Gourmet* reader responses ranging from "['Consider the Lobster' was] the most tedious, self-indulgent and under edited article *Gourmet* has ever printed" and "[not the least bit] hilarious or informative about the festival" to "brilliant," "a masterpiece," and "[DFW's] description of the standard American tourist should be emblazoned above the exit portal at every international airport."[100] *Boston Globe* journalist Alex Beam responded to (and framed) the article as being "alternately jarring, disjointed, contrapuntal, maddeningly long, and enviably brilliant…devot[ing] two-thirds of the article to a physiological and philosophical meditation on the bioethics of lobster boiling."[101] While Beam's description of "Consider the Lobster" holds true to its audio-recorded version, the descriptor "disjointed" misses the mark in a noteworthy way.

Across Wallace's published works of journalism, from "Ticket to the Fair" (*Harper's*, 1994) to Federer as Religious Experience" (*Play*, 2006, his last published work of literary journalism), Wallace would regularly reference and make

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[99] Ruth Reichl, "Letters to Editor," *Gourmet,* November 2004, 57.

[100] Ibid., 57-58.

[101] Alex Beam, "Lobster tale lands writer in hot water," *The Boston Globe,* 5/5/04.

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unmistakably clear that the organ in which a piece was to be published will irrevocably change the trajectory of the narrative itself and, moreover, the readers reception thereof. In a 2006 interview with Michael Silverblatt (as cited briefly in this Chapter's introduction) Wallace unpacks his attentiveness to prospective audiences and the infuriating editorial process that followed in its wake:

> There are three or four pieces in [*Consider the Lobster*] that are nearly, to me, inexplicable unless frequent acknowledgement is made in the piece that they were appearing in a particular organ […] [And the magazine editors] seemed somehow allergic to the idea of the article talking about the organ in which it was appearing and what certain demographic or rhetorical considerations followed from that.[102]

In print, "Consider the Lobster" asks readers to navigate 21 footnotes amid the complicated plot structure that the essay embodies, requiring that readers bracket their reading of the main text and drop gaze to the bottom the page, sometimes having to complete the footnote's content on subsequent pages. The audio version, however, while including the content of footnotes as audio-notes with a softer, quieter, and muffled tone than the main text, listeners are not required to navigate the text any differently between main text and audio-notes because they are presented and received as one fluid, sequential narrative, unbroken besides a change in tone and volume of Wallace's own voice. By way of example, below is the sentence where readers and listeners encounter footnote and audio-note number 8, wherein Wallace will not only read the audio-note as one fluid, entwined narrative but relocated the note-break from mid-sentence to sentence's end. First the printed version:[103]

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[102] David Foster Wallace, "Interview with Michael Silverblatt," *Bookworm,* 2006.

[103] Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," 242.

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> [Lobsters] come up alive in the traps, are placed in containers of seawater, and can – so long as the water's aerated and the animals' claws are pegged or banded to keep them from tearing one another up under the stresses of captivity[8] – survive right up until they're boiled.
>
> [8] N.B. Similar reasoning underlies the practice of what's termed "debeaking" broiler chickens and brood hens in modern factory farms…

And the audiobook version of this particular passage is read as followed:[104]

> [Lobsters] come up alive in the traps, are placed in containers of seawater, and can – so long as the water's aerated and the animals' claws are pegged or banded to keep them from tearing one another up under the stresses of captivity – survive right up until they're boiled. *This note regards the part of the main text that talks about the animals' claws being pegged or banded: Similar reasoning underlies the practice of what's termed "debeaking" broiler chickens and brood hens in modern factory farms…*

The latter, the audio version, not only omits the "N.B." but provides additional context for the audio-note itself, which comes after the end of the sentence rather than, as with the printed version, within the em-dashes. Em dashes—arguably the most versatile (and often abused) of the punctuation mark family—function as rhetorical devices to enhances readability when breaking up a single sentence, much like a comma. Yet with an audiobook, which can be both a passive and active reception—unlike reading, which is entirely an active engagement—the form itself does not require the agency of the receiver to its narrative to transgress.

Along with the narrators deployment of "quote" prior to a direct quote, as with an audiobooks quotation marks (and punctuation at large) are not evident unless otherwise inflective or signaled by the narrator, Wallace translated other markers and abbreviations for the listeners such as the above epigraph regarding his use of the Latin phrase nota bene, often abbreviated as "N.B." In what can be surmised as a

[104] Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," (audio).

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producer's refusal to accept that listeners of "Consider the Lobster" would know what "N.B" stands for, Wallace took to his rhetorical technique found throughout his printed works of literary journalism—i.e., signaling the modes of production that his work is influenced and shaped by—and brought it to the forefront of listener engagements by modifying not only the content but also the narrative structure itself: Wallace's first use of "N.B." reads and—following the print version—is narrated as such:[105]

> Your assigned correspondent saw it all, accompanied by one girlfriend and both his own parents—one of which parents was actually born and raised in Maine, albeit in the extreme northern inland part, which is potato country and a world away from the touristic midcoast.[2]
>
> [2] *N.B. All personally connected parties have made it clear from the start that they do not want to be talked about in this article.*

And the audio version:[106]

> Your assigned correspondent saw it all, accompanied by one girlfriend and both his own parents—one of which parents was actually born and raised in Maine, albeit in the extreme northern inland part, which is potato country and a world away from the touristic midcoast. *N.B.—which means "nota bene," which the audio commandant wants me to tell you means 'note well,' but actually really means "by-the-way." All personally connected parties have made it clear from the start that they do not want to be talked about in this article.*

The above direct address ("which the audio commandant wants me to tell you…") is more of a rhetorical consideration for the audiobook format than an addition of content for article's sake. It fosters a space of intimacy between author and listener by bringing listeners *into* the production of the audiobook itself, akin to Wallace's frequent deployment of direct address in the magazine versions of the essay, e.g.,

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[105] Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," 236.

[106] Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," (audio).

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"But, since this FN will almost surely not survive magazine editing anyway, here goes…"[107] mid footnote (which did, for the record, survive magazine editing). Regarding changes in content and translation, like signaling quotations with "quote" and "close quote" and reading ellipsis as "dot dot dot," Wallace would also change adjectives, numbers, and omit and add certain words and phrases. E.g in the middle of footnote 14, the print and audio-versions read and are listened to as followed. First the print version:[108]

> N.B.$_2$ Not that PETA's any sort of font of unspun truth. Like many partisan in complex moral disputes, the PETA people are fanatics, and a lot of their rhetoric seems simplistic and self righteous. But this particular video, replete with actual factory-farm and corporate-slaughterhouse footage, is both credible and traumatizing.

And the audiobook version:[109]

> *N.B. number two, not that PETA's any sort of font of unspun truth. Like many partisan in complex moral disputes, the PETA people are fanatics, and a lot of their rhetoric seems simplistic and self righteous. But this particular video, replete with actual factory-farm and corporate-slaughterhouse footage, is both credible and excruciating.*

Along with orating "number two" after the N.B., Wallace substituted "excruciating" for "traumatizing" for reasons unknown (a la intentional fallacy). But of course what we're after here is not *why* a change was made but rather *how* these changes function for listeners and readers alike. Moreover, alone with word changes, narrative flow and structure, there's also the change in footnote placement, as noted above, which change the meaning of the content. E.g., the print version:[110]

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[107] Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," 240.

[108] Ibid., 247.

[109] Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," (audio).

[110] Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," 237.

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> And it's true that [lobsters] are garbagemen of the sea, eaters of dead stuff,[4] although they'll also eat some live shellfish, certain kinds of injured fish, and sometimes one another.
>
> [4] *Factoid: Lobster traps are usually baited with dead herring.*

And the audiobook versions:[111]

> And it's true that [lobsters] are garbagemen of the sea, eaters of dead stuff, although they'll also eat some live shellfish, certain kinds of injured fish, and sometimes one another. *Factoid: Lobster traps are usually baited with dead herring.*

Situating the audio-note after the sentence rather than mid-sentence (as with the printed version) functions as a displacement of signal and signifier—the listener (opposed to the reader) unable to retrace the narrative backwards to associate the correct clause with its audio-counterpart. And it doesn't quite end there: Wallace would also translate symbols for listeners. E.g., around mid-way through the essay, the print version reads as such:[112]

> To my lay mind, the lobster's behavior in the kettle appears to be the expression of a *preference*; and it may well be that an ability to form preferences is the decisive criterion for real suffering.[19] The logic of this (preference → suffering) relation…
>
> [19] *"Preference" is maybe roughly synonymous with "interest," but it is a better term for our purposes because it's less abstractly philosophical—"preference" seems more personal, and it's the whole idea of a living creature's personal experience that's at issue.*

And the audiobook version:[113]

> To my lay mind, the lobster's behavior in the kettle appears to be the expression of a *preference*; and it may well be that an ability to form preferences is the decisive criterion for real suffering. *"Preference" is maybe roughly synonymous with "interest," but it is a better term for our purposes because it's less abstractly philosophical—"preference" seems more personal, and it's the whole idea of a*

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[111] Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," (audio).

[112] Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," 251.

[113] Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," (audio).

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> *living creature's personal experience that's at issue.* The logic of this (preference entailing suffering) relation…

Along with the change from footnotes to audio-notes moving from the fractured to the linear (the reader's eyes moving from main text to footnote whereas the listeners encounter the audio-note as a linear transgression of narrative, Wallace translates the arrow as "entailing." This observation brings us back to the doubling of authorship that audiobook responses are grounded in. As Sara Knox rightly posits, the re-mediation from print to audio is akin to work in translation, and Wallace's "Consider the Lobster" becomes—via re-mediation and a change in narrative structure and its content—a doubled-doubling. When an author writes something—anything—the author is mediating thoughts. When a speaker gives a speech—any speech—the speaker is mediating thoughts. But when someone takes something written and speaks it into a recording, it's re-mediation. And "the 'doubling of authorship,'" Knox writes, "is a shared characteristic of the production of unabridged literary works for audio as well as of literary translation. The role and presence of the voicing narrator looms as large for listeners as does the presence of the translator for readers of literary works in translation."[114] And so too do Wallace's remaining three audio-recorded works of literary journalism foster a doubled-doubling, with Wallace's voice not only looming at large for readers and listeners but also, on top of the rhetorical voice itself, his literal voice envoicing the rhetorical one.

[114] Knox, 133.

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3.3 THE HORRIFYING HORROR OF THE HORROR: "THE VIEW FROM MRS. THOMPSON'S"

> *My point of departure is that nationality, or, as one might prefer to put it in view of that word's multiple significations, nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artifacts of a particular kind.*
>
> — Benedict Anderson [115]

> *I'm trying, rather, to explain how some part of the horror of the Horror was knowing, deep in my heart, that whatever America the men in those planes hated so much was far more my America, and F—'s, and poor old loathsome Duane's, than it was these ladies'.*
>
> — David Foster Wallace [116]

> *He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision—he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath: "The horror! The horror!"*
>
> — Joseph Conrad [117]

EVALUATION: From Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, wherein the Kurtz, novel's protagonist, utters his last words during the so-called final judgment: *"The horror! The horror!"* The phrase, as it was and remains today, symbolizes a frightening reaction after witnessing and living through an act of evil, a phrase emanated through television sets across the globe as the events of 9/11 unfolded in real, horrifying time. Wallace's "The View From Mrs. Thompson's," first published in *Rolling Stone*'s October 2001 "9/11 Edition," chronicles Wallace's small town of Bloomington, Illinois in the days following the 9/11.

Within the 3,500-word piece, Wallace would deploy the phrase "the Horror"—capital H-Horror—ten times, with the word "horror"—lowercase h-horror—three times (along with one deployment of "horribly"): "The Horror," signaling the events

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[115] Benedict Anderson, "Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Speak of Nationalism (London, Verso, 1983), 1.

[116] Wallace, "The View," 140.

[117] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Firth Norton Critical Edition: New York, London, 2017), 73.

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of 9/11 unfolding in real time, appearing side-by-side the adjective horror, signaling the distressing foreboding of watching the Horror unfold (see above epigraph). A reader of "The View" can easily distinguish between the Horror and the horror yet listening to the audiobook version causes differing listener reactions from reader-responses insofar as a listener cannot differentiate between the event itself and the horrific feelings one embodies when witnessing it. The following passage is quoted in length—mostly one full sentence—appearing around the halfway mark of the essay wherein Wallace is framing the scene of Mrs. Thompson's living room where a number of guests (Wallace included, obviously) have joined together to watch the Horror unfold on Mrs. T's television. Wallace's description of the Horror is akin to many other American's: shock.

> Several other ladies from church are already over here, but I don't know if I exchanged greetings with anyone because I remember when I came in everybody was staring in transfixed horror at one of the very few pieces of video CBS never reran, which was a distant wide-angle shot of the North Tower and its top floors' exposed steel lattice in flames, and of dots detaching from the building and moving through smoke down the screen, which then a sudden jerky tightening of the shot revealed to be actual people in coats and ties and skirts with their shoes falling off as they fell, some hanging onto ledges or girders and then letting go, upside-down or wriggling as they fell and one couple almost seeming (unverifiable) to be hugging each other as they fell those stories and shrank back to dots as the camera then all of a sudden pulled back to the long view—I have no idea how long the clip took—after which Dan Rather's mouth seemed to move for a second before any sound emerged, and everyone in the room sat back and looked at one another with expressions that seemed somehow both childlike and terribly old. I think one or two people made some sort of sound. I'm not sure what else to say.[118]

It's hard to listen to the above passage without also thinking about *Infinite Jest*'s Kate Gompert, who articulates the "slightly less terrible of two terrors" when the so-called psychotically depressed person in caught in the metaphorical burning high rise: "When

[118] Wallace, "The View," 136.

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the flames get close enough, falling to death becomes the slightly less terrible of two terrors."[119] While not all listeners of Wallace's "The View" will be familiar with *Infinite Jest* there's nevertheless an experience of feeling a part of a wider group of listeners who are, in fact, familiar with the above-footnoted scene from the novel. Yet it's less about *knowing* there are others listening but rather a recognition of the *possibility* of other listeners—a subjunctive shared experience. Moreover, there remains the shared experience of listeners whom Wallace plays little role in the shared, imagined community of listeners, for all present and alert during the day of 9/11 have their own remembrances that Wallace's "The View" might solicit. And because of the content of "The View" it's useful to frame and focus this section on a key fixture of Sound Studies and, by way of extension, Literary Sound Studies, too: the notion of imagined communities, which has its roots in the creation of the nation-state itself.

[119] "The so-called 'psychotically depressed' person who tries to kill herself doesn't do so out of quote 'hopelessness' or any abstract conviction that life's assets and debits do not square. And surely not because death seems suddenly appealing. The person in whom *Its* invisible agony reaches a certain unendurable level will kill herself the same way a trapped person will eventually jump from the window of a burning high-rise. Make no mistake about people who leap from burning windows. Their terror of falling from a great height is still just as great as it would be for you or me standing speculatively at the same window just checking out the view; i.e. the fear of falling remains a constant. The variable here is the other terror, the fire's flames: when the flames get close enough, falling to death becomes the slightly less terrible of two terrors. It's not desiring the fall; it's terror of the flames. And yet nobody down on the sidewalk, looking up and yelling 'Don't!' and 'Hang on!', can understand the jump. Not really. You'd have to have personally been trapped and felt flames to really understand a terror way beyond falling." David Foster Wallace, *Infinite Jest* (NY, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 1996), 696.

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3.3.1 IMAGINED COMMUNITIES: WHY "THE HORROR" MATTERS

In his 1983 book exploring the emergence of nationhood in the late 19th century and the "subjective experience of belonging to a nation,"[120] Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* examines the role of the press and media in shaping the rise of nationalism across the West. Anderson's argument—which has since been adopted by Radio Studies and Literary Sound Studies as well—suggests that notwithstanding the social/cultural and geographic divisions within a nation "the experience of reading the national newspaper every day was profoundly unifying."[121] Like listening to a nationally broadcast public radio station, reading a national newspaper—knowing well that there were millions of others listening and reading simultaneously—fostered a space for one's building of an "imagined national community" as Anderson calls it. This is how, in large part, Anderson argues that nationalism came into prominence via Mass mediia. That is to say one cannot separate the growth of mass media and nationhood itself.

The notion of "imagined community," while Anderson himself never mentioned radio once throughout his work, has since become a key concept in Radio Studies itself, referring to the sense of belonging that has no determined location let alone any semblance of physicality. It is being an active participant—even if a passive recipient of a radio broadcast—in an experience that transcends space and time. Moreover, this projects situates the notion of imagined communities in a Barthean

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[120] Hugh Chignell, *Key Concepts in Radio Studies*, 82.

[121] Ibid.

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notion of writterly.[122] Radio, like newspapers and mass media at large, the argument goes, fosters spaces for these imagined communities . But is this also true of audiobooks? Wallace's "The View" presents itself as a useful narrative for working through this question because its content is unambiguously about American nationalism in the immediate aftermath of 9/11.

"Nationalism," Anderson writes (note the Foucauldian undertones to come), "has to be understood by aligning it [...] with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of it—as well as against which—came into being."[123] Anderson frames the cultural systems that precede the rise of nationalism as a collapse in of three fundamental cultural conceptions that held firm to social order before the rise of the late eighteenth century Western nations. Those three conceptions are:

> a) Script-language offered privileged access to ontological truth, precisely because it was an inseparable part of that truth.
> b) Society was naturally organized around and under high centres—monarchs who were persons apart from other human beings and who ruled by some form of cosmological (divine) dispensation.
> c) A conception of temporality in which cosmology and history were indistinguishable, the origins of the world and of men essentially identical.[124]

Following these three conceptions Susan Douglas, in her 1999 publication of *Listening In: Radio and The American Imagination*, argues that radio influenced the imaginations of those growing up in the Americas before television took precedence over radio: "While radio brought America together as a nation in the 1930s and 40s," Douglas writes, "it also highlighted the country's ethnic, racial, geographic, and

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[122] See Chapter 3 Section 2.1 for more on Barthes' notion of the writerly and readerly.

[123] Anderson, 52.

[124] Anderson, 52.

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gendered divisions."[125] What made the radio—and sound at large—so unique for the creation of imagined communities is its "blindness" quality, letting the listener fill in the gaps left by the absence of pictures or any images whatsoever—casting a spell over its listeners.[126] It was Michele Hilmes's 1997 publication of *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922-1952* wherein this connection between Anderson's work and Sound Studies came into the discussion:

> …listeners tuning in by the tens of thousands to one specific program airing at a specific times created that shared simultaneity of experience crucial to Benedict Anderson's concept of the modern "imagined community" of nationhood.[127]

And while the relationship between radio and sound is grounded in the absence of the image—of the visual cortex—which may, in fact, be of mostly historical interest, it remains a useful framework for thinking about the function of audiobooks and their potential for imagined community building amid a fractured nation—the subjunctive superseding the indicative. And if, as Anderson suggests, "the convergence of [late eighteenth century] capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation,"[128] it is this section's argument that the convergence of 21st century neoliberalism and a globalized, digital economy is creating the possibility—akin to the divide between good ol' Mrs. Thompsons' and

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[125] Susan Douglas, *Listening In: Radio And The American Imagination,* 5. As cited by *Key Concepts in Radio Studies*, "imagined communities."

[126] (As cited in *Key Concepts in Radio Studies* entry for "Imagined Communities")

[127] Michele Hilmes, *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922-1952* (University Of Minnesota Pres, 1997), 11. (As cited in *Key Concepts in Radio Studies*, "Imagined Communities").

[128] Anderson, 58.

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Wallace's respective notions of America—for new forms of imagined community, setting the stage for the decline of the modern nation-state itself (if not its outright extinguishment).

Wallace's "The View" frames the division of ignorance and innocence with awareness and cynicism surrounding the horrifying witnessing of the Horror. "What these Bloomington ladies are, it starts to seem to me," Wallace says, "is innocent. There is what would strike many Americans as a marked, startling lack of cynicism in the room."[129] Wallace goes on to unpack the internal monologue running through his head the day of: i.e., e.g., "Nobody's near hip enough to lodge the sick and obvious post-modern complaint: We've Seen This Before. Instead what they do is all sit together and feel really bad, and pray."[130] Wallace continues, ending "The View" with a reflection on the fractured imagined community that is the U.S.:

> Make no mistake, this is mostly a good thing. It forces you think and do things you most likely wouldn't alone, like for instance while watching the address and eyes to pray, silently and fervently, that you're wrong about the president, that your view of him is maybe distorted and he's actually far smarter and more substantial than you believe, not just some soulless golem or nexus of corporate interests dressed up in a suit but a statesman of courage and probity and…and it's good, this is good to pray this way. It's just a bit lonely to have to. Truly decent, innocent people can be taxing to be around. I'm not for a moment trying to suggest that everyone I know in Bloomington is like Mrs. Thompson. Her son F— isn't, though he's an outstanding person. I'm trying, rather, to explain how some part of the horror of the Horror was knowing, deep in my heart, that whatever America the men in those planes hated so much was far more my America, and F—'s, and poor old loathsome Duane's, than it was these ladies'.[131] *[Outro music]*

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[129] Wallace, "The View" (audio).

[130] The printed version of "The View From Mrs. Thompson's" does not spell out post modern but rather uses its abbreviated "po-mo" usage. David Foster Wallace, "The View From Mrs. Thompson's," *Selected Essays from Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Time Warner Audiobooks, 2005).

[131] Wallace, "The View" (audio).

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"Then silence; just as on the page, blankness."[132]

[132] Garrett Stewart, "Novelist as 'Sound Thief': The Audiobooks of John le Carré," in *Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies*, Ed. Matthew Rubery (Routledge, 2014), 125.

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3.4. PARATEXT AND PORN GROOVES: "BIG RED SON"

> *"Big Red Son" — quick note here there's a first-person plural pronoun that gets used throughout. This piece was originally published bipseudonymously for weird reasons and for equally weird reasons it really can't be changed now, so, that's why the "we" and "your correspondents" stuff.*
>
> *The American Academy of Emergency Medicine confirms it: Each year, between one and two dozen adult US males are admitted to emergency rooms after having castrated themselves. With kitchen tools, usually, sometimes with wire cutters.*
>
> — David Foster Wallace [133]

> *Some insiders like to refer to the adult industry as Hollywood's Evil Twin, others as the mainstream's Big Red Son. It is no accident that Adult Video News—a slick, expensive periodical whose articles are really more like infomercials—and its yearly Awards both came into being in 1982.*
>
> — David Foster Wallace [134]

EVALUATION: Alright, I admit it: I just Googled "soft-core porn music" in hopes of finding language to best frame the opening sounds of Wallace's audio-recorded rendition of "Big Red Son." Because that's how "Big Red Son" begins: with the smooth, groovy, on-the-nose sounds of a 70s soft-core porn scene as if taken directly out of Gerard Damiano's 1972 film, *Deep Throat*.

Porn groove, the particular genre of music that imitates the sounds typical of a pornographic film with "electric guitar and wah-wah pedal being the most common instrument associated with the genre,"[135] functions as not only intro and outro music to Wallace's reading of "Big Red Son" (originally published as "Neither Adult Nor Entertainment" with *Premier* magazine in 1998), but also employed intermittently throughout the essay's audio-recording. This section will briefly explore the non-diegetic sound within "Big Red Sun" and the varying listener responses that manifest

[133] Wallace, "Big Red Son" (audio).

[134] Wallace, "Big Red Son" (audio).

[135] "Porn Groove," *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Porn_groove)

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when listened to via different formats. There's much more that can be done with the following section for future projects. However, because this project concerns itself with paratext and author function surrounding Wallace's literary journalism, of which I have teased out in great detail above, the aim of the below section is to merely hint at some of the issues surrounding non-diegetic sound and propose where and how future projects might situate their attention.

3.4.1 TABLE OF CONTEXTS: INTIMACY AND NON-DIEGETIC SOUND

Totaling 51 pages in the print version, the audiobook version of "Big Red Son" runs just under 2-hours (1:59:35). And unlike "The View From Mrs. Thompson" and "Consider the Lobster," due to the CD platform in 2005, Wallace's recording of "Big Red Son" is broken into two separate audio-files for the *Consider the Lobster* audiobook (2005) and three separate files in *David Foster Wallace: In his own words* (2013). Depending on the format, listeners will have differing responses. For example, because Audible does not yet have the capacity for chapter titles, *In his Own Words* has "Chapter 1" through "Chapter 31" listed, with listeners having no way of knowing where one story might begin or end.

With the table of contents eliminated)another example of omitted paratext) listeners are left with content sans its required context. For example, with regard to "Big Red Son," if a listener were to arbitrarily select Chapter 25 they would be met with the following opening line: "It is difficult to describe how it feels to gaze at living human beings whom you've seen perform in hard-core porn. To shake the hand of a

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man whose precise erectile size, angle, and vasculature are known to you."[136] Without the context—without the table of contents and porn groove—listeners are without necessary paratext to frame the narrative. For all listeners know, with the absence of paratext framing the narrative, they could be listening to a work of fiction or an interview.

While the above break in the narrative comes in the wake of compiling a collection of Wallace's in-studio and live recordings, the *Consider the Lobster* edition breaks the narrative up in two files (or trackes), with the audio-intermission signaled to the listener by a fading in of porn groove with Wallace's voice seemingly fading out and then, of course, back in again. Turning to Claudia Gorbman's *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music,* wherein Gorbman argues that a film's score "greases the wheels of the cinematic pleasure machine by easing the spectator's passage into subjectivity"[137] (double entendre intended). Referring specifically to nondiegetic sound, opposed to diegetic sound which is "music that (apparently) issues from sources within a narrative," non-diegetic sounds is a "narrative intrusion upon the diegesis" like a film's score, wherein the characters do not hear the music that audiences are experiencing. When applied to Wallace's "Big Red Son," the argument here is that the introductory and intermittent porn groove music "greases the wheels of the [audiobook] pleasure machine by easing the [listener's] passage into

[136] Wallace, "Big Red Son" (audio).

[137] Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington: Indiana, University Press, 1987), 69, as quoted in Justin St. Clair's "Soundtracking the Novel: Willy Vlautin's *Northline* as Filmic Audiobook," in *Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies*, Ed. Matthew Rubery (Routledge, 2014), 94.

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subjectivity."[138] The non-diegetic sound of "Big Red Son"— along with "Consider the Lobster" and "The View From Mrs. Thompson's"—is sound that does not originate in the diegesis, meaning that Wallace himself is not fiddling with a record player but is nevertheless apart of its narrative structure with regard to listener receptions.

Henceforth, non-diegetic sound within audiobooks—as is the case with a film's score—is part and parcel to the book itself. Just as Justin St. Clair explores in "Soundtracking the Novel," book-scores have already seen the light of day: "Mark Z. Danielewski's obsessively filmic *House of Leaves* (2000)...boasts a soundtrack, this one composed and performed by pop singer Poe."[139] Poe, born Annie Danielewski (Mark's brother), published *Haunted* as a "compassion piece to her brother's labyrinthine novel (and following the simultaneous release of *Haunted* and *House of Leaves*, the siblings took their multimedia show on the road, appearing together in a series of hybrid events)."[140] However, while the non-diegetic sound paces the reading in differing ways insofar as the audiobook (e.g., the porn groove in "Rig Red Son") non-diegetic sound is aligned with the content whereas with an external soundtrack (e.g., *Haunted* and *House of Leaves*) the readers pace will not align equally—consistently—from one reader and listener to another, thus altering the very text in question. Barthes would certainly prefer the latter as it lends itself toward his notion of the ideal text (as explored above) being a hypertext of sorts, wherein readers (and listeners alike) do not experience and engage with a text linearly but rather navigate

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[138] (Pun intended, which should go without saying.)

[139] St. Clair, 92.

[140] Ibid.

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the text in fractured, seemingly random sequences—thus making each reading experience distinctive from another. And while most audiobook experiences are somewhat antithetical to Barthes' ideal text insofar as it operates in just one, sequential direction, there will certainly be a way for emerging audio-platforms to sync works like *Haunted* and *House of Leaves* in a way that fosters more intimate, evenly paced, and ideal-textual listener-receptions. Although Wallace's attempt to transcend the form's limitations ultimately failed, "Big Red Son" nevertheless remains a fertile audio-text to explore how the same audio-recording—when situated in varying platforms (CD, downloadable audio-file, Youtube, etc.)—alter listener receptions in significant ways.

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3.5 NOBODY READS: "SONNY TAKES A FALL"

> *Act II: "Sonny Takes a Fall": It turns out that if both sides in a political fight start throwing mud at each other, contrary to what you might think, it can definitely benefit one side more than the other. In a sense, this is the scenario that decided this year's [2000] republican nomination for president. David Foster Wallace happened to be reporting on the South Carolina primaries on the campaign of John McCain, when he got a chance to see this happen firsthand.*
>
> — Ira Glass [141]

> *Even the network techs, who are practically zen masters at waiting around and killing time, are bored out of their minds today. The way the techs handle deep boredom is to become extremely sluggish and torpid. So that lined up on the makeshift ottoman, they look like an exhibit of lizards whose rock isn't hot enough. Nobody reads.*
>
> — David Foster Wallace [142]

EVALUATION: David Foster Wallace took his own life on September 12, 2008, just two months shy of Barack Obama's victory over Republican candidate John McCain. In June of that year (five months before the 2008 election) Little, Brown and Company would publish Wallace's last living publication, *McCain's Promise: Aboard the Straight Talk Express with John McCain and a Whole Bunch of Actual Reporters, Thinking About Hope*, an extended paper-book version of his October 2000 *Rolling Stone* piece covering the 2000 Republican primary between Governor George W. Bush and Senator John McCain, titled, "The Weasel, Twelve Monkeys, and the Shrub: Seven Days in the Life of the Late, Great John McCain."[143] In Wallace's words, following the book publication, "The truth is that this book is really a magazine article

[141] Ira Glass, "Sonny Takes a Fall" *This American Life,* episode 160: "Character Assassination," aired on May 19th 2000 (http://tal.fm/160).

[142] Wallace, "Sonny Takes a Fall," *This American Life*.

[143] David Foster Wallace, "The Weasel, Twelve Monkeys, and the Shrub: Seven Days in the Life of the Late, Great John McCain," October, 2001 (print).

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whose subject just turned out to be too big and thorny and multiramified to be doable at article length."[144]

With the articles focus on McCain's anti-candidate candidacy—and the medias appeal thereof—Wallace asks readers to contemplate the yin-and-yang paradox of contemporary politics: can human genuineness and political professionalism coexist at a time of "unprecedented cynicism and disgust with national politics, a moment when blunt, I don't-give-a-shit-if-you-elect-me honesty becomes an incredibly attractive and salable and electable quality?"[145] Or, perhaps, can "an anticandidate be a real candidate? […] Can you sell someone's refusal to be for sale?"[146] If this is all sounding too familiar in the wake of the 2016 election of Donald Trump, strap in, because "Suppose, let's say," Wallace writes in 2000:

> You've got a candidate who says polls are bullshit and totally refuses to tailor his campaign style to polls, and suppose then that new polls start showing that people really like this candidate's polls-are-bullshit stance and are thinking about voting for him because of it, and suppose the candidate reads these polls (who wouldn't?) and then starts saying even more loudly and often that polls are bullshit and that he won't use them to decide what to say, maybe turning "Polls are bullshit" into a campaign line and repeating it in every speech and even painting *Polls Are Bullshit* on the side of his bus…[147]

There's never been a more germane time to revisit Wallace's narrative framing the relationship between a political candidate's shrewd, seemingly calculated appeal and its effects on an already cynical public and the impact that this relationship has on how

[144] David Foster Wallace, "Interview with Christopher Farley," *Wall Street Journal,* May 2008, republished in *David Foster Wallace: The Last Interview and Other Conversations*. Brooklyn, NY Melville House, 2012), 120.

[145] Wallace, *McCain's Promise,* 116.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Ibid., 116-117.

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voters vote or whether they'll show up to the booths at all. Revisiting Wallace's *McCain's Promise* signals the prophetic insights Wallace had at the turn of the millennium. Notwithstanding Wallace claiming that "[his own] résumé happens to have 'NOT A POLITICAL JOURNALIST' right there at the very top,"[148] his 2000 political reporting nevertheless awarded him the National Magazine Award that year. However, it was an abridged audio-version of his award-winning political journalism that first aired on NPR's *This American Life* on May 19, 2000 as "Sonny Takes A Fall"[149] that his envoicing self—i.e., David Foster Wallace reading "David Foster Wallace"—conjures the presence of Wallace but also marks his absence. For this reason, Burnstein writes, "all voice recording is at some fundamental, if usually subliminal, level ghostly. The voice of the dead speaking as if alive. Or alive one more time."[150]

3.5.1 GHOSTS: PERFORMACE AND PERSONA

On March 22, 2017, *Orbit*, a "Journal of American Literature," published their "David Foster Wallace Special Edition."[151] Of particular interests here are the papers by Vincent Haddad and Dave Hering, each exploring a keystone Wallacean trope: the ghostliness and authorial presence in Wallace's fiction. In true Wallace Studies

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[148] Wallace, *McCain's Promise*, 3-4.

[149] Originally published as "The Weasel, Twelve Monkeys and the Shrub" with *Rolling Stone*, April 2000. David Foster Wallace, "Sonny Takes a Fall" *This American Life* episode 160: "Character Assassination," aired on May 19th 2000 (http://tal.fm/160).

[150] Bernstein, xvi.

[151] "Supposedly Fun Things: A David Foster Wallace Special Issue." *Orbit: A Journal of American Literature.* 5(1). DOI: http://doi.org/10.16995/orbit.214

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fashion, though, there's an obvious absence of critical attention to how ghostliness and authorial presence function in Wallace's journalism and audio publications. This section—albeit limited in its scope and depth—briefly explores the above tropes in "Sonny Takes a Fall." I ground my listening of "Sonny Takes a Fall" not only in Herring and Haddad's above arguments but also Mike Miley's 2016 publication of "... And Starring David Foster Wallace as Himself: Performance and Persona in The Pale King," published in *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* in 2016. There's much more that can be done with this section for future projects, but the principal aim here is to merely hint at some of the issues surrounding the author function and audio performance and propose where and how future projects might situate their attention moving forward.

While Wallace's career-long deployment of ghostly authorial presence runs deep throughout his fiction (and scholars, no doubt, have taken note), what is seldom commented upon is Wallace's ghostly authorial presence in his nonfiction, too. In the introduction to *Orbit*'s Wallace special edition, Edward Jackson, the series editor, makes the following observations surrounding Hering's article: "Hering suggests that Wallace's spectres develop from 'absent possessors' to 'companion' in the pursuit of dialogic communion with readers."[152] This dialogic communion is also found with close listening of Wallace's audiobooks wherein—as noted above—Wallace modifies the narratives themselves for the ear by not only altering the very structure of the

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[152] Jackson, E., del Pont, X.M. & Venezia, T., (2017). "Introduction – Supposedly Fun Things: A David Foster Wallace Special Issue." *Orbit: A Journal of American Literature.* 5(1). DOI: http://doi.org/10.16995/orbit.214 (In other words Wallace's early texts (*Broom* and *Girl*) take on the monologic narrative approach whereas the latter texts—*The Pale King* most especially—take on a dialogical narrative structure and do so through apparitions wherein there's a co-creation of meaning, "without clear authorial conclusions drawn.)

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narrative but also drawing listeners into the production of the audio narrative itself, which is not to easily divided from his copyright pages and footnotes exploring his long-standing precarious relationship with magazine editors.

A note about terminology here: "Contrasted with monologic, a dialogic approach seeks truth through discussion *between* characters, authors and readers. Whereas monologic operates under the premise that truth is *within* the characters or the text itself. This is akin to Barthes' reader and writerly distinction, wherein the dialogic is grounded in writerly texts and the monological with readerly texts.[153] Wallace's literary journalism, broadly conceived, unambiguously falls within the latter of the two, the dialogic and writerly.

Wallace's "Sonny Takes a Fall" is, albeit an abridged excerpt from a much lengthier piece, embodied a redemptive quality, as there is with most of Wallace's writing. While the print version culminates at the intersection of an author fearing his own cynicism almost as much as his own credulity in tandem with a recognition of a collective readership confronting its own interior battles between cynicism and idealism, apathy and naïveté; the abridged *This American Life* version, though, omits Wallace's deployment of self-consciousness and direct address to readers and listener alike. To wit, from the print version of the McCain piece:

> Since you're reading *Rolling Stone*, the chances are you're an American between say 18 and 35, which demographically makes you a Young Voter. And no generation of Young Voters has ever cared less about politics and politicians than yours. There's hard demographic and voter-pattern data backing this up…assuming you give a shit about data. In fact, even if you're reading other stuff in RS, it's doubtful you're going to read much of this article—such is the enormous shuddering yawn that the Political Process

[153] See Chapter 3 Section 2.1 for more on Barthes' notion of the writerly and readerly.

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> evokes in us now, in this post-Watergate-post-Iran-Contra-post-Whitewater-post-Lewinsky era, an era when politicians' statements of principle or vision are understood as self-serving ad copy and judged not for their sincerity or ability to inspire but for their tactical shrewdness, their marketability.[154]

In the end, *McCain's Promise* asks readers to accept the possibility of a political view that might be something otherwise than the hip-cynicism and political distrust that its *Rolling Stone* readers were (and likely remain) imbued with. It is this connection to his audience—both in written and audio form—wherein the dialogic sincerity of Wallace's literary journalism rests. However, listeners do not have this perception with "Sonny Takes a Fall" because Wallace's persona of direct address is omitted.

In Mike Miley's "... And Starring David Foster Wallace as Himself," Miley differentiates between David Foster Wallace the author and David Wallace the persona, wherein Wallace "continually attempts to shatter layers of performance and fakery in his writing, to step out from behind the curtain, as it were, and speak directly to the reader without the mediation of performance."[155] While also evident with his audio-recordings (most especially the seemingly off-script [but highly scripted and constructed] direct addresses within "Consider the Lobster") it is transparent throughout *McCain's Promise* but barely felt in the audio-rendition thereof. Miley continues: "[Wallace's] attempts to [speak directly to his readers] are part of what make readers connect so strongly with his work—they become, as Lee Konstantinou writes, part of his style,"[156] a style that is apparent with Wallace's deployment of

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[154] Wallace, *McCain's Promise*, 13.

[155] Mike Miley, "... And Starring David Foster Wallace as Himself: Performance and Persona in The Pale King" (*Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 57:2, 2016), 195-196.

[156] Ibid.

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direct address within all eleven works of his literary journalism. However, "Sonny Takes a Fall" does not employ direct address.

Wallace's stories, both fiction and nonfiction "don't simply investigate character," as Zadie Smith writes, "they don't intend to. Instead, they're turned outward, toward us. It's our character that's being investigated."[157] This character of investigation is both Wallace and Reader/Listener in communion via his direct addresses to readers and listeners alike. Miley brings the point home in the following line:

> Wallace's authorial intrusions, which appear frequently in his nonfiction […] achieve two things: they convince the reader of "the total, genuine honesty" of Wallace and, as a result, forge a "connection with Wallace as a writer [...] not 'Dave Wallace' the character, but the author" (Konstantinou, "No Bull" 94, 98). They, in effect, enable, if not encourage, the reader's tendency to conflate David Wallace with David Foster Wallace."[158]

Reading Wallace is, quite literary, reading David Foster Wallace, the persona. And vice versa. While Wallace came away from the experience of covering the McCain/Bush primary marveling at "how unknowable and layered these candidates are"[159] he nevertheless produced a text that appears to be both honest and just as unknowable and layered as the candidates themselves. This is Wallace's journalistic voice as being somewhat anti-journalistic, mimicking the very subjects his piece set out to cover (or uncover).

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[157] Smith, "Brief Interviews…" 27.

[158] Miley, 195-196.

[159] David Foster Wallace, "Interview with Christopher Farley," *Wall Street Journal,* May 2008, republished in *David Foster Wallace: The Last Interview and Other Conversations*. Brooklyn, NY Melville House, 2012), 117.

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"What made the McCain idea interesting to me," Wallace tells Christopher Farley with the *Wall Street Journal* in May 2008, "was that I'd seen a tape of his appearance on Charlie Rose at some point the previous year, in which he spoke so candidly and bluntly about stuff like campaign finance and partisan ickiness, stuff I'd not heard any national-level politician say."[160] Wallace, of course, would go on to write a National Magazine Award winning article framing John McCain's anti-candidacy and how this status was always just one negative ad-attack away from "dissolve[ing] before almost everyone's eyes…"[161]

> Wallace's anti-persona becomes his persona. In what sounds like a bizarre echo of Frederic Jameson's description of late capitalism's invulnerability to attack, any attempt by the writer to deconstruct or get outside of the persona by being "real" will become incorporated into the persona and serve only to reinforce it. Persona and performance therefore become inescapable.[162]

"Then silence; just as on the page, blankness."[163]

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[160] Ibid.

[161] David Foster Wallace, "The Weasel, Twelve Monkeys and the Shrub."

[162] Miley, 196.

[163] Garrett Stewart, "Novelist as 'Sound Thief': The Audiobooks of John le Carré," in *Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies*, Ed. Matthew Rubery (Routledge, 2014), 125.

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CONCLUSIONS & CODAS

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I. INTRODUCTION: WHY BOTHER?

> *Out of damp and gloomy days, out of solitude, out of loveless words directed at us, conclusions grow up in us like fungus: one morning they are there, we know not how, and they gaze upon us, morose and gray. Woe to the thinker who is not the gardener but only the soil of the plants that grow in him.*
>
> — Friedrich Nietzsche [1]

> *What matter who's speaking?*
>
> — Samuel Beckett [2]

Throughout writing this dissertation I have had many people ask me (both academics and non-academics) why audiobooks? In reply, I would explain that serious academic engagement with audiobooks—with regard to both their literary merits as well as their larger political and cultural implications—has been terribly overlooked by Literary Studies at large. This oversight has become all the more pressing as audiobook sales continue to surge due in large part to the ubiquity of smartphones and on-demand audio-files. While I stand by the above engagements and arguments surrounding the fastest growing industry in American publishing, I nevertheless carry the heavy burden of asking myself a comparable, context-driven question throughout the dissertation process: as the daily newsfeeds present an onslaught of humanitarian and ecological crises, why, Ryan, spend the mental energy laboring over audiobooks?

At the time of this writing, just days after a former student of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida opened fire and killed 17 people, I reflect on the seemingly endless stream of Horrors I have witnessed and continue to

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[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, *"Daybreak": Thoughts on the prejudices of morality*, Ed. and Trans. Clark, Maudemarie, Brian Leiter, and R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 384.

[2] Samuel Beckett, *Texts for Nothing,* Trans. Becket, (London: Calde & Boyars, 1974), 16. Cited in Michel Foucault's "What Is an Author?" Trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, (In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*. Ed. Donald F. Bouchard. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 138.

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lament over since I proposed this dissertation in March 2015—Horrors I have watched unfold, no less, on the very same screen wherein these words appear to me now. The June 2015 shooting in Charleston, South Carolina comes immediately to mind, wherein the racially motivated attack at a historically Black church claimed the lives of nine. One year later, on the morning of June 13, 2016, the country awoke to the news that 49 persons were dead in the wake of the Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida—at the time, the single largest mass shooting in American history, surpassed shortly thereafter by the Las Vegas shooting in October 2017, where a 64-year-old white male from Mesquite, Nevada unleashed a fusillade of ammunition over a crowd of roughly 22,000 concertgoers from the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino, killing 58 and injuring 851. Meanwhile—as American mass shootings continue unabated—nuclear threats intensify, mass incarceration and the militarization of local law enforcement proliferates, structural and institutional racism runs rampant, and public confidence in the democratic process remains threatened in the wake of foreign meddling in the 2016-elections.

Moreover, beyond yet not so easily divided from the few Horrors listed above, the largest refugee crisis since World War II continues to propagate due in large part to unrelenting conflicts in the Middle East and Northeastern Africa, with the latest numbers from the United Nation's Refugee Agency reporting "an unprecedented 65.6 million people around the world have been forced from home…among them are nearly 22.5 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18."[3] As the Syrian civil war persists with upwards of 4.9 million refugees fleeing its borders since

[3] United Nations Human Rights Council Refugee Agency, "Statistical Yearbook," (accessed 2/22/18, http://www.unhcr.org /en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html)

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2011, overwhelming evidence suggests that the conflict was triggered by severe drought directly linked to human-caused climate change;[4] even the United States Pentagon's 2014 "Climate Change Adaptation Roadmap" reports that "Rising global temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, climbing sea levels, and more extreme weather events will intensify the challenges of global instability, hunger, poverty, and conflict."[5] And with global warming being just one of many existential threats looming over humanity's hubris, we're also faced with the uncertain longitudinal effects of developments in artificial intelligence and biotechnology research, let alone the collective scientific evidence suggesting that Earth has already entered its sixth mass-extinction with three-quarters of all species likely to disappear in the coming centuries.

And—above or below it all—the U.K. has appointed a "Minister of Loneliness" to tackle what Prime Minister Theresa May calls the "sad reality of modern life" for many U.K. citizens.[6]

So again, why audiobooks, Ryan? What good will any of this do?

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[4] According to a report published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 2015. In tandem with, of course, a corrupt government, spreading inequality, and population growth. (accessed 2/22/18 https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/ article/pii/S0962629816301822)

[5] NASA reports that global temperatures have risen 1.7 degrees Fahrenheit since 1880 with ten of the eleven warmest years on record occurring in the last seventeen years, with data showing that 2017 is now officially the warmest year on record globally, making it four consecutive years of record-breaking global temperatures—with 2018 on track to surpass 2017 numbers. (accessed 2/22/18, https://climate.nasa.gov/ The US Department of Defense's *2014 Climate Change Adaptation Roadmap. http://ppec.asme.org/ wp-content/uploads/2014/10/CCARprint.pdf)*

[6] Merrit Kennedy, "U.K, Now Has A Minister for Loneliness," *NPR International*, January 17th 2018 (accessed 2/22/18, https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/01/17/578645954/u-k-now-has-a-minister-for-loneliness)

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As humanity continues to struggle with its current arrangement of narratives, images, and data sets unveiling the vulnerable world of war, warming, and loneliness we're currently enmeshed in, the humanities have a unique role in providing frameworks and narratives to not only make sense of but also provide meaning for our place within this threatened world. As a window into exploring the world and the ontologies therein, narrative—and the forms (e.g., literary journalism), mediums (e.g., audiobooks), and environments in which they take on and are received (i.e., eco-hermeneutics and textual ecology)—provides both a lamp for the journey as well as the faculty required to tell the tale. And in the spirit of previous engagements with MacIntyre,[7] our individual and collective human experiences are narratable experiences insofar as meaning is co-produced through language, through narrative, grounded in the forms, mediums, and environments in which meaning is co-produced—with all three dependent upon and reconstituted by one another in tandem with changes in digital technology as well as changing social behaviors and market trends.

The chapters above—along with the synthesis below—argue that authorship and the author function have become contested anew in the wake of on-demand digital audio-texts, altering not only how humans receive and make making but also, and more broadly conceived, how these discursive receptions (and context blurring

[7] "Humanity is essentially a storytelling animal […] To be the subject of a narrative that runs from one's birth to one's death is…to be accountable for one's actions and experiences which compose a narratable life." Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 216-217.

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platforms) amend our very collective way of seeing, hearing, thinking, and Being-in-this-threatened-world.

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II. CONSIDER THE AUDIOBOOK, or THE HERMENEUTICS OF CLOSE LISTENING

And while I'm not naïve about the marginal role this dissertation has for crises listed above, I nevertheless consider the contributions to current and potential conversations in the burgeoning fields of both David Foster Wallace Studies and Literary Sound Studies remains warranted as the humanities continue to reevaluate the role of authorship within and surrounding audiobooks, literary journalism, and audio-journalism at large. My contributions provide scholars essential avenues of exploration that help frame and better understand the function audiobooks (and audio-texts at large) carry and the varying emotive responses from listeners and readers alike. The world's events unfold. Journalists report. People watch, read, and listen. And eco-hermeneutics explores how the environment wherein one listens amends our individual and collective engagements with the world.

The preceding chapters have explored the cultural and political implications of audiobooks within and surrounding both Literary Studies communities as well as broader American cultural shifts in literary engagement. By focusing on David Foster Wallace's audio-recorded literary journalism I have shown that Wallace's literary journalism—both print and audio versions—share a distinctive characteristic of rhetorical self-consciousness via direct address to readers and listeners alike. This direct address from Wallace breaks the fourth wall, as it were, both on the page as well as through the speakers—each of which (both audio and print) foster the potential for deepening intimate authorial-reader and authorial-listener relationships. These relationships remain grounded in and dependent upon both (a) the forms in which they meet and (b) the hermeneutical frameworks that listeners and readers alike embody.

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Focusing on the audiobook, often a passive engagement with narrative, I have argued that the environment in which listening transpires cannot be ignored when framing a listener's hermeneutical approach. This, in short, is the hermeneutics of close listening: an eco-centered hermeneutics of audio-text listener-response criticism.

Hermeneutics—broadly conceived—is the process of understanding. More specifically—and more traditionally for that matter—hermeneutics is the process of interpreting texts. In the spirit of Hans-Georg Gadamer, hermeneutics is "a philosophical effort to account for understanding as an ontological—the ontological—process of man"[8] and thus a framework for understanding our collective understandings of Being-in-the-world. Like MacIntyre above, narrative and our individual interpretive perceptions and understandings thereof remain unambiguously ontological. Just as Gadamer was attempting to recapture something that is both natural (interpretation and understanding) as well applying this natural condition to discursive and culturally driven social relations, this project has applied a hermeneutical framework to both audio-texts and their changing social and cultural relations—a working dialectic. The hermeneutics of close listening grounds itself in a textual ecology (or an eco-hermeneutics) wherein the dialectical tension includes (but is not limited to) the (a) organ in which a given text is situated, the (b) physical environment wherein listening transpires, and the (c) listener's own interpretive frameworks therein. This is a listener-response centered approached to textual ecology, and because audiobooks lack visual form, paratextual structures applied to

[8] Palmer, Richard (1969). Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. p. 163.

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audiobooks pose serious questions regarding listener-engagements and authorial-functions. Concluding that the omission of paratext endangers the author function and further intensifies the already alarming decline (or outright extinguishment) of context amid the digital age.

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III. AUTHOR FUNCTION AND DAVID FOSTER WALLACE'S AUDIO-RECORDED LITERARY JOURNALISM

Charting the history of literary criticism from late 19th and early 20th century divisions in the academy—between scholarly and scientific objectivism on the one side and the aesthetic subjectivism on the other[9]—to the politicization of Literary Studies and the New Historicist turn of 60s and 70s literary criticism, we have seen how the very discursive modes of literary engagement are products of more substantial socio-historical and technological condition just as much as the texts they're exploring are, too. We have also seen that the pivot from mid-century close reading practices to a more radical critique of revealing power structures of institutional and cultural oppression—both within and surrounding serious literary criticism—laid the foundations for what would later be known as New Historical reading practices, which emerged in the wake of Foucault's archival-based cultural analysis. Whereas Barthes' death of the author implied the separation between the authority of the author and its text (the literal extinguishment of any authorial-presence in and surrounding a given work) Foucault's author function decenters the authorial presence rather than extinguishing the author outright.

Authorship denotes a particular time-and-place—a socio-historical stamp—and for Foucault, for this thesis, the author signals a particular discourse, a socio-historical discourse that signifies certain political, philosophical, professional, and technological paradigms that any one particular text emerges from. That is to say that authors come from this world and cannot be reduced to vacuous textual analysis only.

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[9] Chris Baldick, *Criticism and Literary Theory 1890 to the Present* (London: Longman, 1996), 13. (As cited by Joseph North in *Literary Criticism,* 21.)

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However, New Historicism overwhelmingly fail to engage with literary texts closely, viewing them principally from afar as vehicles for exploring their author function and not being particularly interested in the reader-responses surrounding a texts' discursive reception. This is all to say that New Historical reading practices remain principally concerned with production and not reception whereas this project has argued that Wallace's audio-recorded literary journalism resists production-centered author function by grounding its production within the reception itself via direct address.

The notion of direct address—while explicit in Wallace's audio-recorded journalism—remains constant throughout his larger body of work, too, both in his fiction and nonfiction. And as outlined by Roiland above, it is "important to understand that Wallace wrote in the tradition of the literary journalist, because the form and its field of study provide a whole catalog of approaches to understanding his stories in relation to his reviews, speeches, and essays."[10] Following Roiland's line of thinking, this project has shown how Wallace approached his audio-recorded literary journalism in new and innovative ways, unveiling how his narratives' contents were altered and audiences addressed differently from one medium to another, thus providing new and novel understandings of (and further avenues of exploration toward) Wallace's more extensive body of work.

The main contribution to Wallace Studies here is that Wallace's second-voice (his narrative persona or "authorial voice") is a rhetorical device that transcends form

---

[10] Joshua Roiland, "Getting Away from it All: The Literary Journalism of David Foster Wallace and Nietzsche's Concept of Oblivion," in *The Legacy of David Foster Wallace*, ed. by Cohen, Samuel and Lee Konstantinou (New Amer. Canon. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2012).

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and grafts itself onto the particular medium in which audiences will encounter its content, evidenced most especially—as I have shown above—in his literary journalism. The thread that weaves Wallace's more extensive body of work together in both form as well as the mediums in which they're situated remains direct address, all of which culminates with a reflection that Wallace's self-conscious second voice—the voice of the author speaking directly to readers and listeners alike—functioning as a catalyst for deepening authorial-reader and listener relationships.

As an updated, audiobook-centered notion of the author function I have shown that authorship applied to on-demand, digital audio-texts reconceptualizes the role of the listener as both co-producer of meaning and product of his or her environment wherein the listening transpires; for Barthes, the co-producers of meaning are the reader and the text. For Foucault, the co-producers of meaning are the author, text, and the reader. For this project, the co-producers of meaning are the author, the text, the listener, and the environment in which one listens (this is the eco-hermeneutics of textual ecology). This project's framework of a listener-centered author function differentiates itself from the author function of reading in two distinct ways: on the one hand, listening does not necessitate immersive attention as reading does (although I nevertheless argue for deep, close-listenings to heighten the immersive literary engagement) and thus, the environment and movements within and surrounding wherein one listens becomes all the more influential toward the co-production of meaning. Moreover, because on-demand audio-texts often lack the required paratext that necessitates Foucault's author function, audiobooks challenge listener's capabilities to fully contextualize any one given narrative. Just as paratextuality

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remains a twofold, codependent relationship between materials within (peritext) and materials outside (epitext) any one particular literary artifact, the author-listener relationship is a twofold, codependent relationship between materials within (paratext) and materials surrounding (the context and ecology) of any one particular listening experience. Close listenings of Wallace's audio-recorded literary journalism provide listeners with insight into not only the content explored therein but also the production and politics of audiobook recordings themselves.

I have argued that scholastic study surrounding audiobooks is not only a necessary response to the growing production and consumption of the format but also, and more specifically, that these academic engagements reveal how the form itself challenges what authorship and capital-L Literature might mean in a time of increasing re-mediation and adaptations of the printed word. The audiobook industry—and works that challenge the author function such as Wallace's *Consider the Lobster*—is revolutionizing what it means to experience Literature in both overt (e.g., "Where do the footnotes go?"[11]) and also subtle ways (e.g., "Audiobooks have proved to be essential in performing the tasks of daily life"[12]), thus prompting the need for Literary and Cultural Studies to rethink not only how we conceptualize the role of audiobooks and our understandings and orientations toward them but also reframing notions of the author function and paratext in ways that both Literary Sound Studies as well as David Foster Wallace Studies scholars can use and respond to in their own

[11] David Foster Wallace, "Introduction," *Selected Essays from Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. (New York: Time Warner Audiobooks, 2005).

[12] K.C. Harrison, "Taking Books, Toni Morrison, and the Transformation of Narrative Authority," in *Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies*, Ed. Matthew Rubery (Routledge, 2014), 154.

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unique and respective ways. Thus, it is this project's concluding stance that audiobooks (and audio-texts at large) and their function in contemporary Literary Studies require further academic engagement addressing the ways in which the format challenges, questions, and reconstitutes previously held notions of authorship and (more broadly conceived) what it might mean to experience Literature and co-produce narratable meaning in the 21st century.

Children continue to get shot. People in Syria are dying. The climate has gone mad. And but so where will the footnotes go?

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IV. CODA I

On May 5, 2008, just four months shy of Wallace's suicide, Bonnie Nadell, Wallace's career-long literary agent, exchanged emails with *GQ*'s Joel Lovell in preparation for what would have been Wallace's twelfth work of literary journalism (and his second political profile of a Presidential candidate—this time Senator Barack Obama). Lovell to Nadell:

> I could imagine [Wallace] following the [2008 Presidential Democratic] race from his armchair, watching the shifting story lines, the way the media and much of the rest of America become momentarily obsessed with certain aspects of the race and then casts them aside, paying attention to what sticks and what doesn't, observing it all with an essayist's critical distance.[13]

Wallace agreed to do the story, pending *GQ*'s ability to get him close one-on-one access to not Obama himself but rather Obama's speechwriters. Wallace to Nadell, in the early stages of contractual negotiation:

> …But what I need to know about is ACCESS. Ideally what I'd like is close, candid access to a couple of Obama's junior speech guys for a couple days BEFORE they start serious work on whatever speech(es) O is going to give at the [2008 Democratic] convention. I need to know whether this access is going to be possible. That, to me, is more important than dates of locations.[14]

Although Wallace never signed a contract with *GQ* (he would soon fall ill and, shortly thereafter, take his own life) Lovell signed off the above May 5th email pitching the story to Nadell with the following note: "As for deadlines, we'd need a draft of the piece by, say, September 12, which would give Dave a couple weeks to write post-

---

[13] "Joel Lovell email with Bonnie Nadell, 03/05/08," Harry Ransom Center's David Foster Wallace Archive (Bonnie Nadell collection, Box 1.3—Figure 3.8).

[14] David Foster Wallace, "Email with Bonnie Nadell, 06/10/08," Harry Ransom Center's David Foster Wallace Archive (Bonnie Nadell collection, Box 1.3—Figure 3.9).

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convention."[15] Wallace would take his own life on that very same day: September 12, 2008.

Alas, all coincidence aside, we don't have that story. Nor do we have Wallace, the heart-pounding, breath-gasping human, either. Wallace's body of work remains limited to what has been found in the wake of his death, and although we can conjure up the voice of Wallace speaking as if alive (or alive one more time through his audiobooks), "the presence of the speaker," as Charles Bernstein writes, "also marks the speakers absence."[16]

[15] Joel Lovell, "Email with Bonnie Nadell, 03/05/08," Harry Ransom Center's David Foster Wallace Archive (Bonnie Nadell collection, Box 1.3—Figure 3.8).

[16] Bernstein, "Forward" to *Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies*, Ed. Matthew Rubery (Routledge, 2014), xvi.

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V. CODA II

At Adobe's annual conference in 2016, developer Zeyu Jin presented Adobe's latest project: "Project #VoCo: Photoshop for Audio."[17] VoCo, short for Voice Conversion, attempts to do for audio what Photoshop does for photography—blurring the line even further between what is real and what is artificial—but this time for the ears rather than the eyes by presenting "speech editing capabilities that even includes adding words that did not originally appear in the audio file."[18] With just over twenty-minutes of recorded voice, Adobe's Voice Conversion program lets users edit recorded speech so one can alter what someone says and create entirely new phrases and sentences from their recorded voice. And with upwards of 5 hours of Wallace's audio-recorded literary journalism we can assume that one day we'll have all his works of literary journalism available for the ears just as we have them for the eyes (let alone his fiction, too). However, the direct address will not be attended to, obviously, as Wallace would have to be in the studio with the "audio commandant" attending to Wallace's deployment of coded footnotes, thus deepening the already blurred lines of authorial intent and exhibitionist incentives.

And while it's easy for this thesis to argue that the likely possibility of having Wallace's voice digitally programmed to read his own work—let alone having Wallace's voice giving directions via Googlemaps through your car speakers—it would be easy to tell which stories Wallace recorded himself and which he did not by

[17] Sebastian Anthony, "Adobe demos 'photoshop for audio,' lets you edit speech as easily as text" (accessed 2/24/18: https://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2016/11/adobe-voco-photoshop-for-audio-speech-editing/)

[18] Zeyu Jin, "#VoCo. Adobe MAX 2016 (Sneak Peeks) | Adobe Creative Cloud" (accessed 2/24/18: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3l4XLZ59iw)

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the absence of his signature deployment of audio direct address. But here's the rub: I don't have much faith in audience let alone the for-profit publishing houses that oversee Wallace's work, with the latest exhibitionist snafu being Hachette Audio and Wax Audio Group announcing that a series of audiobooks pressed to vinyl will begin publication in March 2018, and first up is none other than David Foster Wallace's *This Is Water*, an essay adaptation of his 2005 commencement speech at Kenyon College.[19] So while Wallace may have been "Fine about the audio thing"[20] in March of 2008—regarding John Krasinski's request to adapt his 1999 collection of short stories, *Brief Interviews With Hideous Men*—we can't be sure that he'd be okay about having his commencement address turned into a stand-alone booklet let alone a audiobook on vinyl. But if, by the likely chance that the seemingly impossible does in fact become possible within the next few years and audiences could have access to not only Wallace's corpus read by Wallace himself via voice editing program like Adobe's #VoCo, we'll also have to confront a new terrible reality: digital, wraith-like Wallace (or any celebrity or public figure or recorded voice for that matter) hauntingly careening toward you at every turn, every sentence, and every Google-translate.

Try to stay awake.

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[19] Matthew Strauss, "Vinyl Audiobook Series Launches With David Foster Wallace and More" *Pitchfork*, 2/27/18 (accessed 3/2/18: https://pitchfork.com/news/vinyl-audiobook-series-launches-with-david-foster-wallace-and-more/).

[20] David Foster Wallace, "Email with Bonnie Nadell, 03/27/08," Harry Ransom Center's David Foster Wallace Archive (Bonnie Nadell collection, Box 1.3—Figure 3.10).

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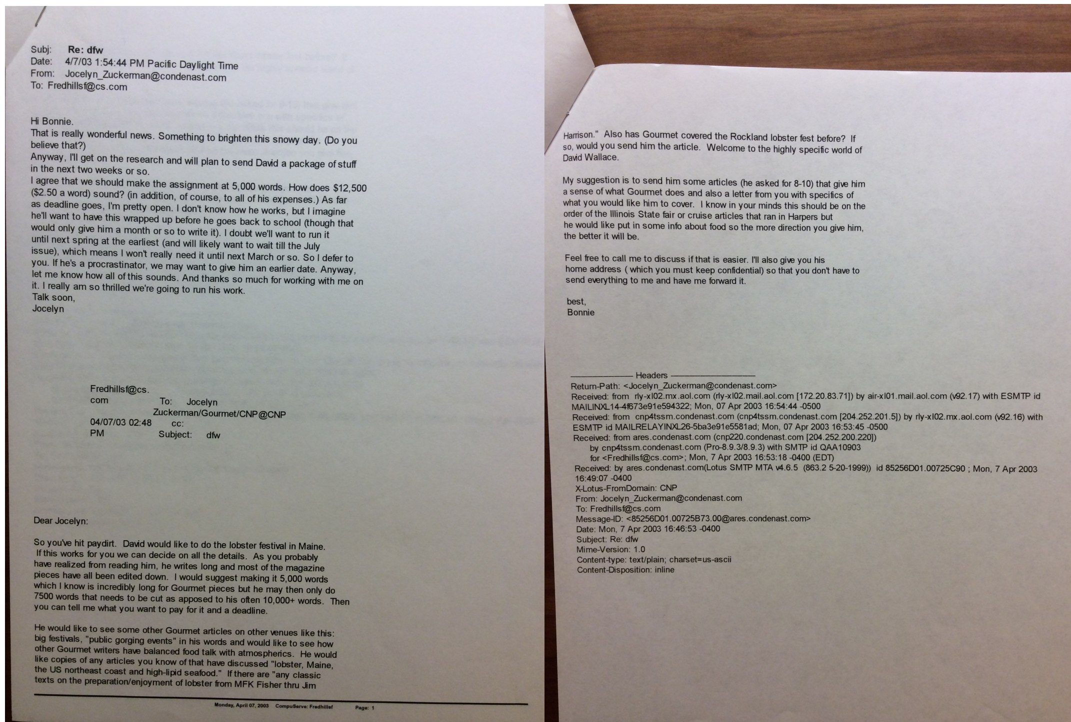
Figure 3.1



Subj: **Re: dfw**
Date: 4/7/03 1:54:44 PM Pacific Daylight Time
From: Jocelyn_Zuckerman@condenast.com
To: Fredhillsf@cs.com

Hi Bonnie.
That is really wonderful news. Something to brighten this snowy day. (Do you believe that?)
Anyway, I'll get on the research and will plan to send David a package of stuff in the next two weeks or so.
I agree that we should make the assignment at 5,000 words. How does $12,500 ($2.50 a word) sound? (in addition, of course, to all of his expenses.) As far as deadline goes, I'm pretty open. I don't know how he works, but I imagine he'll want to have this wrapped up before he goes back to school (though that would only give him a month or so to write it). I doubt we'll want to run it until next spring at the earliest (and will likely want to wait till the July issue), which means I won't really need it until next March or so. So I defer to you. If he's a procrastinator, we may want to give him an earlier date. Anyway, let me know how all of this sounds. And thanks so much for working with me on it. I really am so thrilled we're going to run his work.
Talk soon,
Jocelyn

Fredhillsf@cs.com
04/07/03 02:48 PM
To: Jocelyn Zuckerman/Gourmet/CNP@CNP
cc:
Subject: dfw

Dear Jocelyn:

So you've hit paydirt. David would like to do the lobster festival in Maine. If this works for you we can decide on all the details. As you probably have realized from reading him, he writes long and most of the magazine pieces have all been edited down. I would suggest making it 5,000 words which I know is incredibly long for Gourmet pieces but he may then only do 7500 words that needs to be cut as apposed to his often 10,000+ words. Then you can tell me what you want to pay for it and a deadline.

He would like to see some other Gourmet articles on other venues like this: big festivals, "public gorging events" in his words and would like to see how other Gourmet writers have balanced food talk with atmospherics. He would like copies of any articles you know of that have discussed "lobster, Maine, the US northeast coast and high-lipid seafood." If there are "any classic texts on the preparation/enjoyment of lobster from MFK Fisher thru Jim

Monday, April 07, 2003 CompuServe: Fredhillsf Page: 1

Harrison." Also has Gourmet covered the Rockland lobster fest before? If so, would you send him the article. Welcome to the highly specific world of David Wallace.

My suggestion is to send him some articles (he asked for 8-10) that give him a sense of what Gourmet does and also a letter from you with specifics of what you would like him to cover. I know in your minds this should be on the order of the Illinois State fair or cruise articles that ran in Harpers but he would like put in some info about food so the more direction you give him, the better it will be.

Feel free to call me to discuss if that is easier. I'll also give you his home address (which you must keep confidential) so that you don't have to send everything to me and have me forward it.

best,
Bonnie

———— Headers ————
Return-Path: <Jocelyn_Zuckerman@condenast.com>
Received: from rly-xl02.mx.aol.com (rly-xl02.mail.aol.com [172.20.83.71]) by air-xl01.mail.aol.com (v92.17) with ESMTP id MAILINXL14-4f673e91e594322; Mon, 07 Apr 2003 16:54:44 -0500
Received: from cnp4tssm.condenast.com (cnp4tssm.condenast.com [204.252.201.5]) by rly-xl02.mx.aol.com (v92.16) with ESMTP id MAILRELAYINXL26-5ba3e91e5581ad; Mon, 07 Apr 2003 16:53:45 -0500
Received: from ares.condenast.com (cnp220.condenast.com [204.252.200.220])
by cnp4tssm.condenast.com (Pro-8.9.3/8.9.3) with SMTP id QAA10903
for <Fredhillsf@cs.com>; Mon, 7 Apr 2003 16:53:18 -0400 (EDT)
Received: by ares.condenast.com(Lotus SMTP MTA v4.6.5 (863.2 5-20-1999)) id 85256D01.00725C90 ; Mon, 7 Apr 2003 16:49:07 -0400
X-Lotus-FromDomain: CNP
From: Jocelyn_Zuckerman@condenast.com
To: Fredhillsf@cs.com
Message-ID: <85256D01.00725B73.00@ares.condenast.com>
Date: Mon, 7 Apr 2003 16:46:53 -0400
Subject: Re: dfw
Mime-Version: 1.0
Content-type: text/plain; charset=us-ascii
Content-Disposition: inline

"Jocelyn Zuckerman email exchange with Bonnie Nadell, 04/07/03," Harry Ransom Center's David Foster Wallace Archive (Bonnie Nadell collection, Box 1.6.)

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Figure 3.2

Subj: **For Bonnie from Dave W.**
Date: 4/4/03 10:56:36 PM Pacific Daylight Time
From: TPDRITZ@pomona.edu (Ryan Trask)
To: fredhillsf@cs.com ('fredhillsf@cs.com')

Hi Bonnie. Hope this works. Could you either forward this to Ms. Z at Gourmet or else relay the salient points to her in the manner of your choosing?

I accept, contingent on Bonnie's OK, the Lobsterfest assignment. But I will need help to do this well. Here's some of what I need (I reserve the write to extend this list at some future point):

I need a note from Ms. Z. in which she discusses what they want. I need to know word-counts; I need to know deadlines.

Has Gourmet covered the Rockland Lobsterfest before? If so, I need to see the article.

I need 8-10 copies of other Gourmet articles concerning venues like this - festivals, big public gorging events, etc. I need to see how other Gourmet writers have balanced food-talk with atmospherics.

I need copies of any Gourmet articles Ms. Z. knows of that have discussed lobster, Maine, the US Northeast coast, high-lipid seafood, etc.

If there are any classic texts on the preparation/enjoyment of lobster - from MFK Fisher thru Jim Harrison - I need to know them. I am prepared to do some of my own eccentric researching, but I need to know Ms. Z. is willing and able to help.

I think that's it for now. Other stuff I'll call you (Bonnie) about.

Pray for us all.

Dave W.


```
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<meta name=Originator content="Microsoft Word 10">
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  <w:GrammarState>Clean</w:GrammarState>
  <w:DocumentKind>DocumentEmail</w:DocumentKind>
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"David Foster Wallace email exchange with Bonnie Nadell, 04/04/03," Harry Ransom Center's David Foster Wallace Archive (Bonnie Nadell collection Box 1.6).

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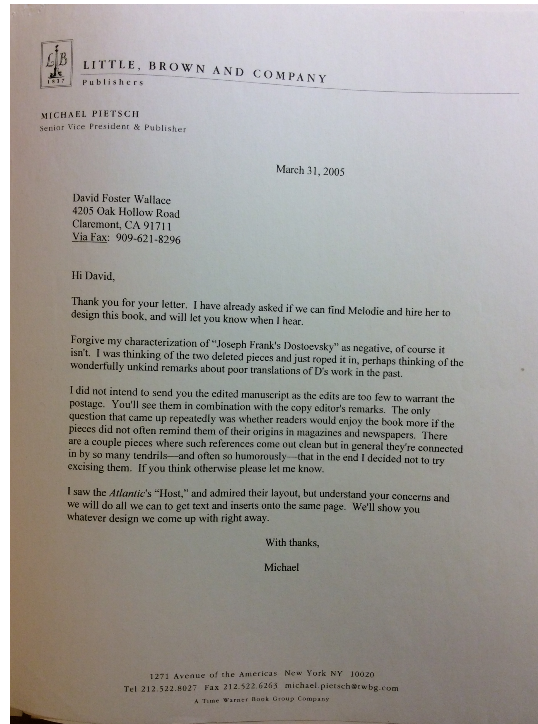
Figure 3.3



LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY
Publishers

MICHAEL PIETSCH
Senior Vice President & Publisher

March 31, 2005

David Foster Wallace
4205 Oak Hollow Road
Claremont, CA 91711
Via Fax: 909-621-8296

Hi David,

Thank you for your letter. I have already asked if we can find Melodie and hire her to design this book, and will let you know when I hear.

Forgive my characterization of "Joseph Frank's Dostoevsky" as negative, of course it isn't. I was thinking of the two deleted pieces and just roped it in, perhaps thinking of the wonderfully unkind remarks about poor translations of D's work in the past.

I did not intend to send you the edited manuscript as the edits are too few to warrant the postage. You'll see them in combination with the copy editor's remarks. The only question that came up repeatedly was whether readers would enjoy the book more if the pieces did not often remind them of their origins in magazines and newspapers. There are a couple pieces where such references come out clean but in general they're connected in by so many tendrils—and often so humorously—that in the end I decided not to try excising them. If you think otherwise please let me know.

I saw the *Atlantic*'s "Host," and admired their layout, but understand your concerns and we will do all we can to get text and inserts onto the same page. We'll show you whatever design we come up with right away.

With thanks,

Michael

1271 Avenue of the Americas New York NY 10020
Tel 212.522.8027 Fax 212.522.6263 michael.pietsch@twbg.com
A Time Warner Book Group Company

"Michael Pietsch fax to David Foster Wallace, 03/31/05, (Harry Ransom Center's David Foster Wallace Archive (Michael Pietsch collection, Box 2.4).

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Figure 3.4

HOST

Long & Short Nonfiction

<------David Foster Wallace
c/o F. Hill B. Nadell Literary Agency
8899 Beverly Blvd. Suite 805
Los Angeles 90048 CA

------->Mr. Michael Pietsch
Editorial—Little, Brown & Co.
1271 Avenue of the Americas
New York City 10020 NY

December 2004

(1) Big Red Son.....1
(2) Certainly the End of *Something* or Other, One Would Sort of Have to Think.....56
(3) Some Remarks on Kafka's Funniness From Which Probably Not Enough Has Been Removed.....67
(4) Authority and American Usage.....74
(5) Rhetoric and the Math Melodrama.....140
(6) The View From Mrs. Thompson's.....162
(7) How Tracy Austin Broke My Heart.....179
(8) Up, Simba.....197
(9) Consider the Lobster.....290
(10) Form and Crapola.....313
(11) Joseph Frank's Dostoevsky.....329
(12) Host.....351

for Bonnie Nadell

INSTITUTIONAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The following pieces were originally published in edited, heavily edited, or (in at least one instance) bowdlerized form in the following periodicals. N.B.: In those cases where the fact that the author was writing for a particular organ is important to the essay itself—i.e., where the commissioning magazine's name keeps popping up in ways that can't now be changed without screwing up the whole piece—the entry is marked with an asterisk. A single case in which the essay was written to be delivered as a speech, plus another one where the original article appeared bipseudonymously and now for odd and hard-to-explain reasons doesn't quite work if the "we" and "your correspondents" thing gets singularized, are further tagged with what I think are called daggers. To wit:

*† "Big Red Son" in *Premiere*.
"Certainly the End of *Something* . . ." in *The New York Observer*.
† "Some Remarks on . . ." and "Authority and American Usage" in *Harper's*.
* "Rhetoric and the Math Melodrama" in *Science*.
"The View From Mrs. Thompson's" and * "Up, Simba" in *Rolling Stone*.
"How Tracy Austin . . ." in *The Philadelphia Enquirer* [or *W. Post BW* ??]
* "Consider the Lobster" in *Gourmet*.
* "Form and Crapola" in *Rain Taxi*.
* "Joseph Frank's Dostoevsky" in *The Village Voice Literary Supplement*.
* (at least a tiny bit) "Host" in *The Atlantic Monthly*.

"David Foster Wallace fax to Michael Pietsch, December 2004," Harry Ransom Center Archive (David Foster Wallace Collection, Box 5.4)

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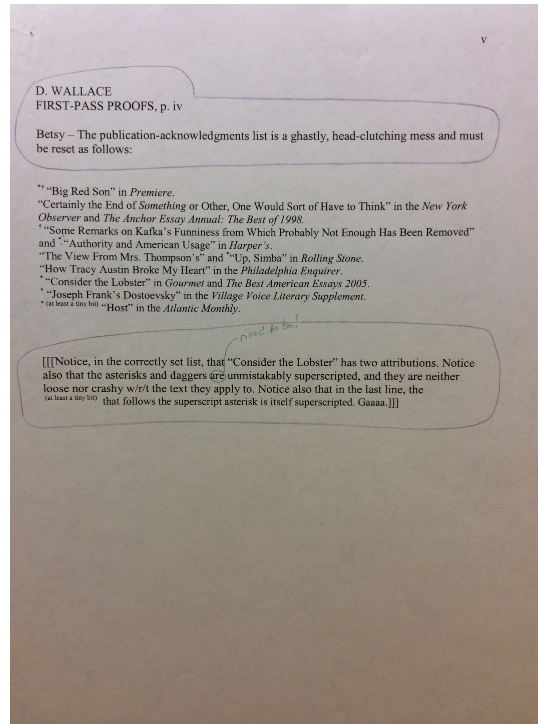
Figure 3.5



v

D. WALLACE
FIRST-PASS PROOFS, p. iv

Betsy – The publication-acknowledgments list is a ghastly, head-clutching mess and must be reset as follows:

*† "Big Red Son" in *Premiere*.
"Certainly the End of *Something* or Other, One Would Sort of Have to Think" in the *New York Observer* and *The Anchor Essay Annual: The Best of 1998*.
† "Some Remarks on Kafka's Funniness from Which Probably Not Enough Has Been Removed" and *"Authority and American Usage" in *Harper's*.
"The View From Mrs. Thompson's" and *"Up, Simba" in *Rolling Stone*.
"How Tracy Austin Broke My Heart" in the *Philadelphia Enquirer*.
* "Consider the Lobster" in *Gourmet* and *The Best American Essays 2005*.
* "Joseph Frank's Dostoevsky" in the *Village Voice Literary Supplement*.
* (at least a tiny bit) "Host" in the *Atlantic Monthly*.

[[[Notice, in the correctly set list, that "Consider the Lobster" has two attributions. Notice also that the asterisks and daggers are unmistakably superscripted, and they are neither loose nor crashy w/r/t the text they apply to. Notice also that in the last line, the (at least a tiny bit) that follows the superscript asterisk is itself superscripted. Gaaaa.]]]

"David Foster Wallace letter to Betsy Uhrig, 8/05," Harry Ransom Center Archive (David Foster Wallace Collection, Box 6.2).

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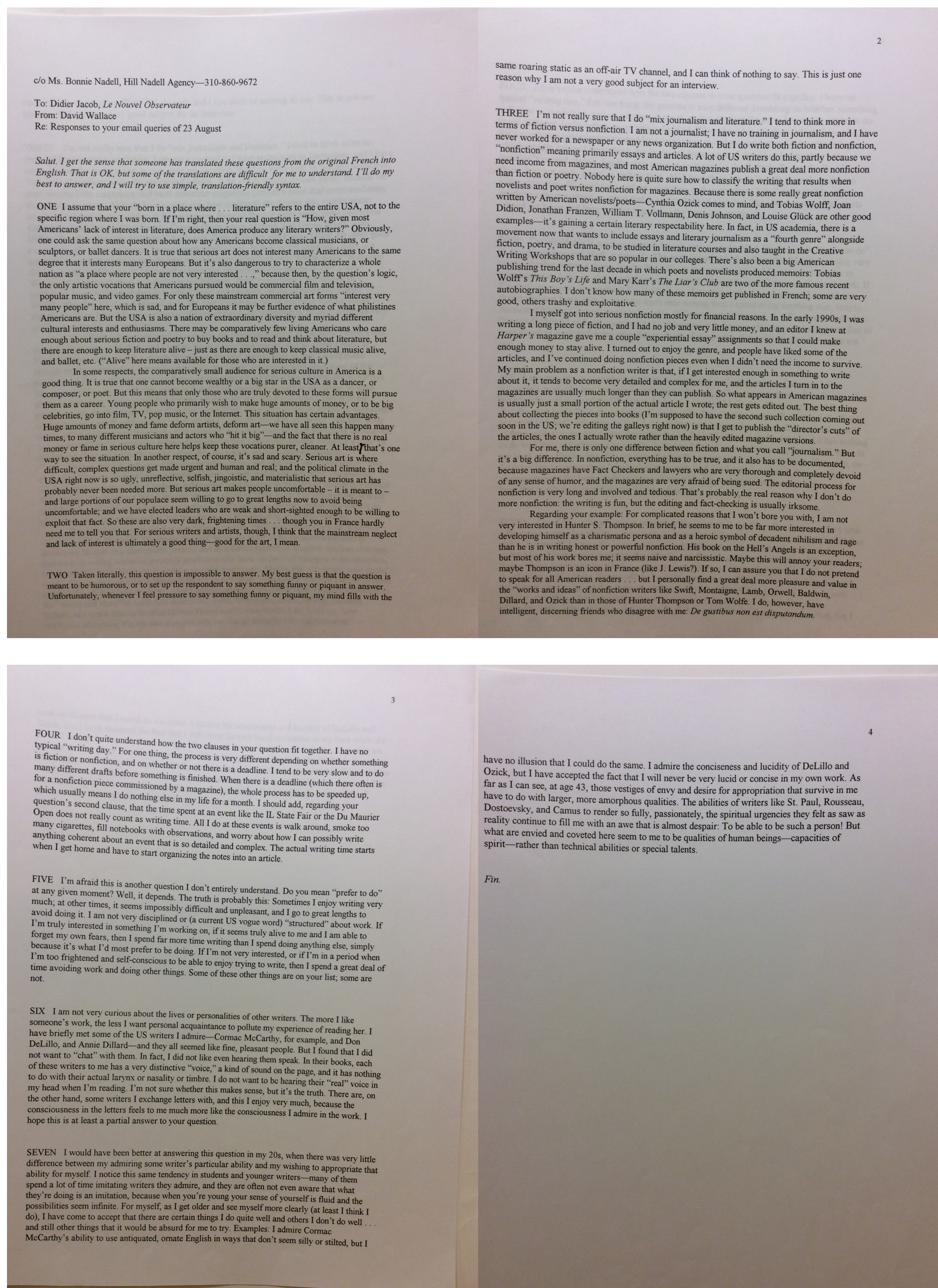
Figure 3.6



c/o Ms. Bonnie Nadell, Hill Nadell Agency—310-860-9672

To: Didier Jacob, *Le Nouvel Observateur*
From: David Wallace
Re: Responses to your email queries of 23 August

Salut. I get the sense that someone has translated these questions from the original French into English. That is OK, but some of the translations are difficult for me to understand. I'll do my best to answer, and I will try to use simple, translation-friendly syntax.

ONE I assume that your "born in a place where . . . literature" refers to the entire USA, not to the specific region where I was born. If I'm right, then your real question is "How, given most Americans' lack of interest in literature, does America produce any literary writers?" Obviously, one could ask the same question about how any Americans become classical musicians, or sculptors, or ballet dancers. It is true that serious art does not interest many Americans to the same degree that it interests many Europeans. But it's also dangerous to try to characterize a whole nation as "a place where people are not very interested . . .," because then, by the question's logic, the only artistic vocations that Americans pursued would be commercial film and television, popular music, and video games. For only these mainstream commercial art forms "interest very many people" here, which is sad, and for Europeans it may be further evidence of what philistines Americans are. But the USA is also a nation of extraordinary diversity and myriad different cultural interests and enthusiasms. There may be comparatively few living Americans who care enough about serious fiction and poetry to buy books and to read and think about literature, but there are enough to keep literature alive – just as there are enough to keep classical music alive, and ballet, etc. ("Alive" here means available for those who are interested in it.)

In some respects, the comparatively small audience for serious culture in America is a good thing. It is true that one cannot become wealthy or a big star in the USA as a dancer, or composer, or poet. But this means that only those who are truly devoted to these forms will pursue them as a career. Young people who primarily wish to make huge amounts of money, or to be big celebrities, go into film, TV, pop music, or the Internet. This situation has certain advantages. Huge amounts of money and fame deform artists, deform art—we have all seen this happen many times, to many different musicians and actors who "hit it big"—and the fact that there is no real money or fame in serious culture here helps keep these vocations purer, cleaner. At least, that's one way to see the situation. In another respect, of course, it's sad and scary. Serious art is where difficult, complex questions get made urgent and human and real; and the political climate in the USA right now is so ugly, unreflective, selfish, jingoistic, and materialistic that serious art has probably never been needed more. But serious art makes people uncomfortable – it is meant to – and large portions of our populace seem willing to go to great lengths now to avoid being uncomfortable; and we have elected leaders who are weak and short-sighted enough to be willing to exploit that fact. So these are also very dark, frightening times . . . though you in France hardly need me to tell you that. For serious writers and artists, though, I think that the mainstream neglect and lack of interest is ultimately a good thing—good for the art, I mean.

TWO Taken literally, this question is impossible to answer. My best guess is that the question is meant to be humorous, or to set up the respondent to say something funny or piquant in answer. Unfortunately, whenever I feel pressure to say something funny or piquant, my mind fills with the

2

same roaring static as an off-air TV channel, and I can think of nothing to say. This is just one reason why I am not a very good subject for an interview.

THREE I'm not really sure that I do "mix journalism and literature." I tend to think more in terms of fiction versus nonfiction. I am not a journalist; I have no training in journalism, and I have never worked for a newspaper or any news organization. But I do write both fiction and nonfiction, "nonfiction" meaning primarily essays and articles. A lot of US writers do this, partly because we need income from magazines, and most American magazines publish a great deal more nonfiction than fiction or poetry. Nobody here is quite sure how to classify the writing that results when novelists and poet writes nonfiction for magazines. Because there is some really great nonfiction written by American novelists/poets—Cynthia Ozick comes to mind, and Tobias Wolff, Joan Didion, Jonathan Franzen, William T. Vollmann, Denis Johnson, and Louise Glück are other good examples—it's gaining a certain literary respectability here. In fact, in US academia, there is a movement now that wants to include essays and literary journalism as a "fourth genre" alongside fiction, poetry, and drama, to be studied in literature courses and also taught in the Creative Writing Workshops that are so popular in our colleges. There's also been a big American publishing trend for the last decade in which poets and novelists produced memoirs: Tobias Wolff's *This Boy's Life* and Mary Karr's *The Liar's Club* are two of the more famous recent autobiographies. I don't know how many of these memoirs get published in French; some are very good, others trashy and exploitative.

I myself got into serious nonfiction mostly for financial reasons. In the early 1990s, I was writing a long piece of fiction, and I had no job and very little money, and an editor I knew at *Harper's* magazine gave me a couple "experiential essay" assignments so that I could make enough money to stay alive. I turned out to enjoy the genre, and people have liked some of the articles, and I've continued doing nonfiction pieces even when I didn't need the income to survive. My main problem as a nonfiction writer is that, if I get interested enough in something to write about it, it tends to become very detailed and complex for me, and the articles I turn in to the magazines are usually much longer than they can publish. So what appears in American magazines is usually just a small portion of the actual article I wrote; the rest gets edited out. The best thing about collecting the pieces into books (I'm supposed to have the second such collection coming out soon in the US; we're editing the galleys right now) is that I get to publish the "director's cuts" of the articles, the ones I actually wrote rather than the heavily edited magazine versions.

For me, there is only one difference between fiction and what you call "journalism." But it's a big difference. In nonfiction, everything has to be true, and it also has to be documented, because magazines have Fact Checkers and lawyers who are very thorough and completely devoid of any sense of humor, and the magazines are very afraid of being sued. The editorial process for nonfiction is very long and involved and tedious. That's probably the real reason why I don't do more nonfiction: the writing is fun, but the editing and fact-checking is usually irksome.

Regarding your example: For complicated reasons that I won't bore you with, I am not very interested in Hunter S. Thompson. In brief, he seems to me to be far more interested in developing himself as a charismatic persona and as a heroic symbol of decadent nihilism and rage than he is in writing honest or powerful nonfiction. His book on the Hell's Angels is an exception, but most of his work bores me; it seems naive and narcissistic. Maybe this will annoy your readers; maybe Thompson is an icon in France (like J. Lewis?). If so, I can assure you that I do not pretend to speak for all American readers . . . but I personally find a great deal more pleasure and value in the "works and ideas" of nonfiction writers like Swift, Montaigne, Lamb, Orwell, Baldwin, Dillard, and Ozick than in those of Hunter Thompson or Tom Wolfe. I do, however, have intelligent, discerning friends who disagree with me: *De gustibus non est disputandum.*

3

FOUR I don't quite understand how the two clauses in your question fit together. I have no typical "writing day." For one thing, the process is very different depending on whether something is fiction or nonfiction, and on whether or not there is a deadline. I tend to be very slow and to do many different drafts before something is finished. When there is a deadline (which there often is for a nonfiction piece commissioned by a magazine), the whole process has to be speeded up, which usually means I do nothing else in my life for a month. I should add, regarding your question's second clause, that the time spent at an event like the IL State Fair or the Du Maurier Open does not really count as writing time. All I do at these events is walk around, smoke too many cigarettes, fill notebooks with observations, and worry about how I can possibly write anything coherent about an event that is so detailed and complex. The actual writing time starts when I get home and have to start organizing the notes into an article.

FIVE I'm afraid this is another question I don't entirely understand. Do you mean "prefer to do" at any given moment? Well, it depends. The truth is probably this: Sometimes I enjoy writing very much; at other times, it seems impossibly difficult and unpleasant, and I go to great lengths to avoid doing it. I am not very disciplined or (a current US vogue word) "structured" about work. If I'm truly interested in something I'm working on, if it seems truly alive to me and I am able to forget my own fears, then I spend far more time writing than I spend doing anything else, simply because it's what I'd most prefer to be doing. If I'm not very interested, or if I'm in a period when I'm too frightened and self-conscious to be able to enjoy trying to write, then I spend a great deal of time avoiding work and doing other things. Some of these other things are on your list; some are not.

SIX I am not very curious about the lives or personalities of other writers. The more I like someone's work, the less I want personal acquaintance to pollute my experience of reading her. I have briefly met some of the US writers I admire—Cormac McCarthy, for example, and Don DeLillo, and Annie Dillard—and they all seemed like fine, pleasant people. But I found that I did not want to "chat" with them. In fact, I did not like even hearing them speak. In their books, each of these writers to me has a very distinctive "voice," a kind of sound on the page, and it has nothing to do with their actual larynx or nasality or timbre. I do not want to be hearing their "real" voice in my head when I'm reading. I'm not sure whether this makes sense, but it's the truth. There are, on the other hand, some writers I exchange letters with, and this I enjoy very much, because the consciousness in the letters feels to me much more like the consciousness I admire in the work. I hope this is at least a partial answer to your question.

SEVEN I would have been better at answering this question in my 20s, when there was very little difference between my admiring some writer's particular ability and my wishing to appropriate that ability for myself. I notice this same tendency in students and younger writers—many of them spend a lot of time imitating writers they admire, and they are often not even aware that what they're doing is an imitation, because when you're young your sense of yourself is fluid and the possibilities seem infinite. For myself, as I get older and see myself more clearly (at least I think I do), I have come to accept that there are certain things I do quite well and others I don't do well . . . and still other things that it would be absurd for me to try. Examples: I admire Cormac McCarthy's ability to use antiquated, ornate English in ways that don't seem silly or stilted, but I

4

have no illusion that I could do the same. I admire the conciseness and lucidity of DeLillo and Ozick, but I have accepted the fact that I will never be very lucid or concise in my own work. As far as I can see, at age 43, those vestiges of envy and desire for appropriation that survive in me have to do with larger, more amorphous qualities. The abilities of writers like St. Paul, Rousseau, Dostoevsky, and Camus to render so fully, passionately, the spiritual urgencies they felt as saw as reality continue to fill me with an awe that is almost despair: To be able to be such a person! But what are envied and coveted here seem to me to be qualities of human beings—capacities of spirit—rather than technical abilities or special talents.

Fin.

"David Foster Wallace email exchange with Didier Jacob," Harry Ransom Center Archive (David Foster Wallace Collection, Box 31.8).

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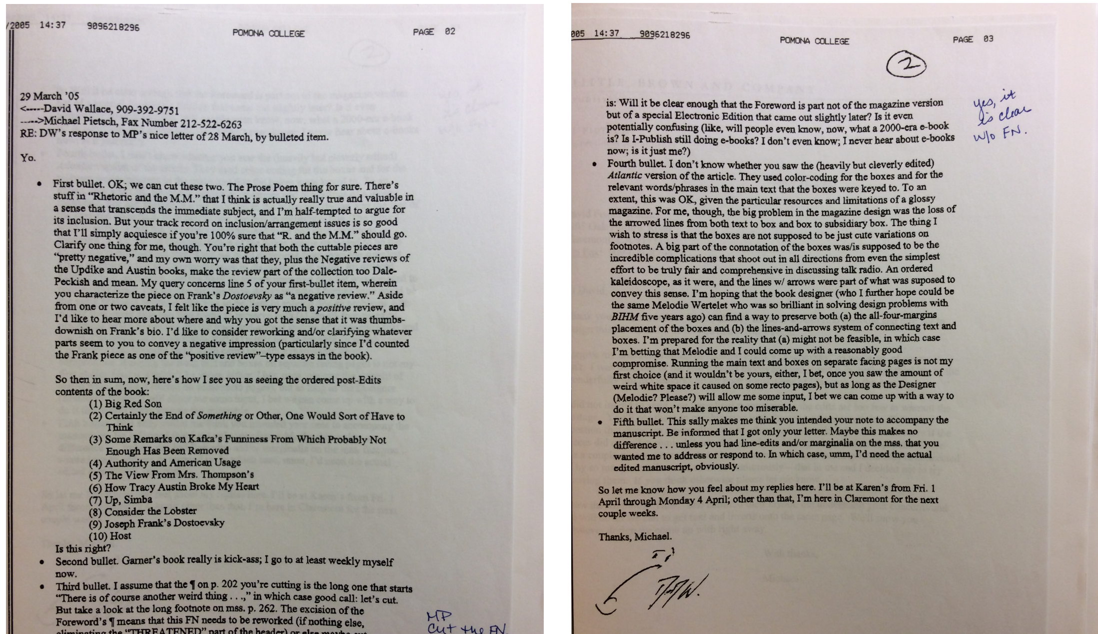
Figure 3.7



/2005 14:37 9096218296 POMONA COLLEGE PAGE 02

29 March '05
<-----David Wallace, 909-392-9751
----->Michael Pietsch, Fax Number 212-522-6263
RE: DW's response to MP's nice letter of 28 March, by bulleted item.

Yo.

- First bullet. OK; we can cut these two. The Prose Poem thing for sure. There's stuff in "Rhetoric and the M.M." that I think is actually really true and valuable in a sense that transcends the immediate subject, and I'm half-tempted to argue for its inclusion. But your track record on inclusion/arrangement issues is so good that I'll simply acquiesce if you're 100% sure that "R. and the M.M." should go. Clarify one thing for me, though. You're right that both the cuttable pieces are "pretty negative," and my own worry was that they, plus the Negative reviews of the Updike and Austin books, make the review part of the collection too Dale-Peckish and mean. My query concerns line 5 of your first-bullet item, wherein you characterize the piece on Frank's *Dostoevsky* as "a negative review." Aside from one or two caveats, I felt like the piece is very much a *positive* review, and I'd like to hear more about where and why you got the sense that it was thumbs-downish on Frank's bio. I'd like to consider reworking and/or clarifying whatever parts seem to you to convey a negative impression (particularly since I'd counted the Frank piece as one of the "positive review"–type essays in the book).

  So then in sum, now, here's how I see you as seeing the ordered post-Edits contents of the book:
  (1) Big Red Son
  (2) Certainly the End of *Something* or Other, One Would Sort of Have to Think
  (3) Some Remarks on Kafka's Funniness From Which Probably Not Enough Has Been Removed
  (4) Authority and American Usage
  (5) The View From Mrs. Thompson's
  (6) How Tracy Austin Broke My Heart
  (7) Up, Simba
  (8) Consider the Lobster
  (9) Joseph Frank's Dostoevsky
  (10) Host
  Is this right?
- Second bullet. Garner's book really is kick-ass; I go to at least weekly myself now.
- Third bullet. I assume that the ¶ on p. 202 you're cutting is the long one that starts "There is of course another weird thing . . .," in which case good call: let's cut. But take a look at the long footnote on mss. p. 262. The excision of the Foreword's ¶ means that this FN needs to be reworked (if nothing else, eliminating the "THREATENED" part of the header) or else maybe cut

MP
cut the FN.

005 14:37 9096218296 POMONA COLLEGE PAGE 03

(2)

is: Will it be clear enough that the Foreword is part not of the magazine version but of a special Electronic Edition that came out slightly later? Is it even potentially confusing (like, will people even know, now, what a 2000-era e-book is? Is I-Publish still doing e-books? I don't even know; I never hear about e-books now; is it just me?)

yes, it is clear w/o FN.

- Fourth bullet. I don't know whether you saw the (heavily but cleverly edited) *Atlantic* version of the article. They used color-coding for the boxes and for the relevant words/phrases in the main text that the boxes were keyed to. To an extent, this was OK, given the particular resources and limitations of a glossy magazine. For me, though, the big problem in the magazine design was the loss of the arrowed lines from both text to box and box to subsidiary box. The thing I wish to stress is that the boxes are not supposed to be just cute variations on footnotes. A big part of the connotation of the boxes was/is supposed to be the incredible complications that shoot out in all directions from even the simplest effort to be truly fair and comprehensive in discussing talk radio. An ordered kaleidoscope, as it were, and the lines w/ arrows were part of what was suposed to convey this sense. I'm hoping that the book designer (who I further hope could be the same Melodie Wertelet who was so brilliant in solving design problems with *BIHM* five years ago) can find a way to preserve both (a) the all-four-margins placement of the boxes and (b) the lines-and-arrows system of connecting text and boxes. I'm prepared for the reality that (a) might not be feasible, in which case I'm betting that Melodie and I could come up with a reasonably good compromise. Running the main text and boxes on separate facing pages is not my first choice (and it wouldn't be yours, either, I bet, once you saw the amount of weird white space it caused on some recto pages), but as long as the Designer (Melodie? Please?) will allow me some input, I bet we can come up with a way to do it that won't make anyone too miserable.
- Fifth bullet. This sally makes me think you intended your note to accompany the manuscript. Be informed that I got only your letter. Maybe this makes no difference . . . unless you had line-edits and/or marginalia on the mss. that you wanted me to address or respond to. In which case, umm, I'd need the actual edited manuscript, obviously.

So let me know how you feel about my replies here. I'll be at Karen's from Fri. 1 April through Monday 4 April; other than that, I'm here in Claremont for the next couple weeks.

Thanks, Michael.

"David Foster Wallace fax to Michael Pietsch, 03/29/05," (Harry Ransom Center's David Foster Wallace Archive (Michael Pietsch collection, Box 2.4).

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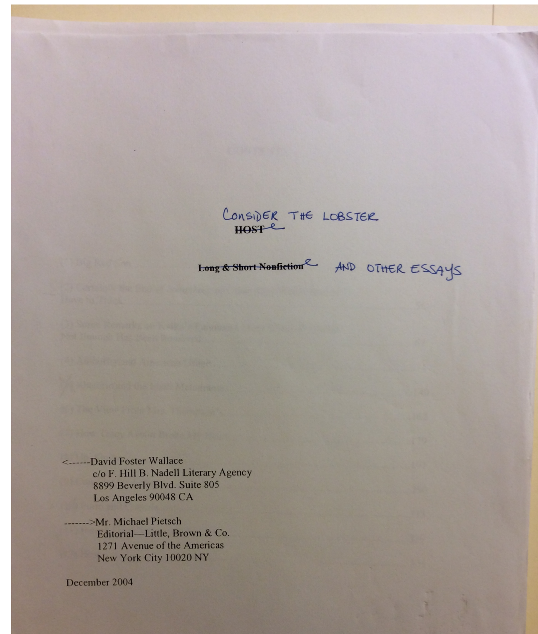
Figure 3.8



CONSIDER THE LOBSTER

~~HOST~~

~~Long & Short Nonfiction~~ AND OTHER ESSAYS

<------David Foster Wallace
c/o F. Hill B. Nadell Literary Agency
8899 Beverly Blvd. Suite 805
Los Angeles 90048 CA

------->Mr. Michael Pietsch
Editorial—Little, Brown & Co.
1271 Avenue of the Americas
New York City 10020 NY

December 2004

"David Foster Wallace fax to Michael Pietsch, December 2004," Harry Ransom Center Archive (Stephen Moore Collection, Box 1.8).

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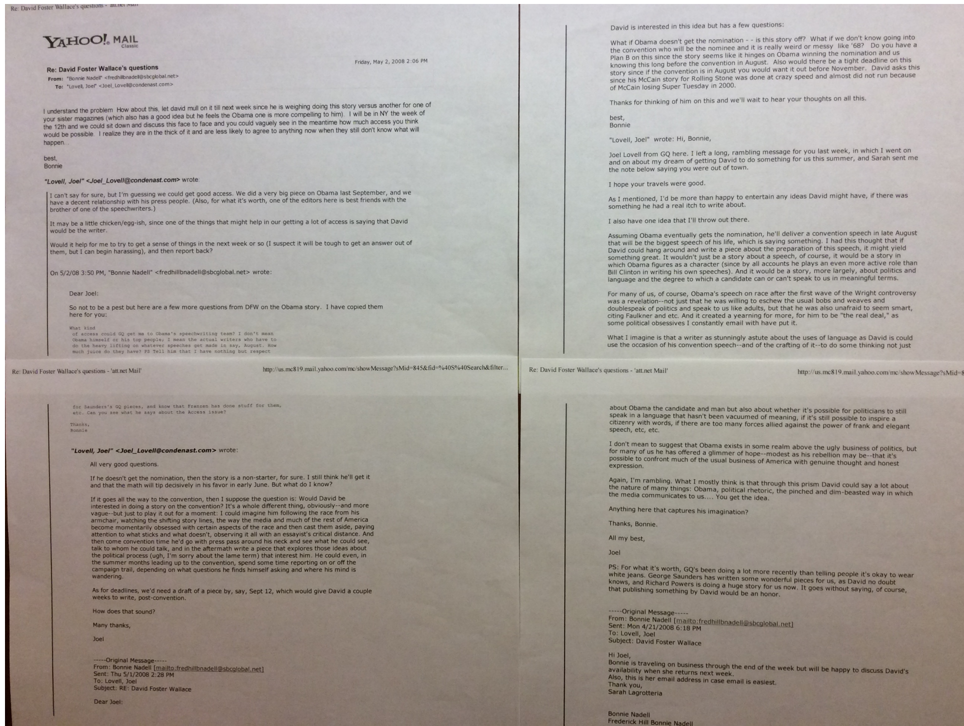
Figure 3.9



Re: David Foster Wallace's questions - att.net Mail

YAHOO! MAIL Classic

Re: David Foster Wallace's questions
Friday, May 2, 2008 2:06 PM
From: "Bonnie Nadell" <fredhillbnadell@sbcglobal.net>
To: "Lovell, Joel" <Joel_Lovell@condenast.com>

I understand the problem How about this, let david mull on it till next week since he is weighing doing this story versus another for one of your sister magazines (which also has a good idea but he feels the Obama one is more compelling to him). I will be in NY the week of the 12th and we could sit down and discuss this face to face and you could vaguely see in the meantime how much access you think would be possible. I realize they are in the thick of it and are less likely to agree to anything now when they still don't know what will happen...

best,
Bonnie

"Lovell, Joel" <Joel_Lovell@condenast.com> wrote:

I can't say for sure, but I'm guessing we could get good access. We did a very big piece on Obama last September, and we have a decent relationship with his press people. (Also, for what it's worth, one of the editors here is best friends with the brother of one of the speechwriters.)

It may be a little chicken/egg-ish, since one of the things that might help in our getting a lot of access is saying that David would be the writer.

Would it help for me to try to get a sense of things in the next week or so (I suspect it will be tough to get an answer out of them, but I can begin harassing), and then report back?

On 5/2/08 3:50 PM, "Bonnie Nadell" <fredhillbnadell@sbcglobal.net> wrote:

Dear Joel:

So not to be a pest but here are a few more questions from DFW on the Obama story. I have copied them here for you:

What kind of access could GQ get me to Obama's speechwriting team? I don't mean Obama himself or his top people; I mean the actual writers who have to do the heavy lifting on whatever speeches get made in say, August. How much juice do they have? PS Tell him that I have nothing but respect

Re: David Foster Wallace's questions - 'att.net Mail' http://us.mc819.mail.yahoo.com/mc/showMessage?sMid=845&fid=%40S%40Search&filter...

for Saunders's GQ pieces, and know that Franzen has done stuff for them, etc. Can you see what he says about the Access issue?

Thanks,
Bonnie

"Lovell, Joel" <Joel_Lovell@condenast.com> wrote:

All very good questions.

If he doesn't get the nomination, then the story is a non-starter, for sure. I still think he'll get it and that the math will tip decisively in his favor in early June. But what do I know?

If it goes all the way to the convention, then I suppose the question is: Would David be interested in doing a story on the convention? It's a whole different thing, obviously--and more vague--but just to play it out for a moment: I could imagine him following the race from his armchair, watching the shifting story lines, the way the media and much of the rest of America become momentarily obsessed with certain aspects of the race and then cast them aside, paying attention to what sticks and what doesn't, observing it all with an essayist's critical distance. And then come convention time he'd go with press pass around his neck and see what he could see, talk to whom he could talk, and in the aftermath write a piece that explores those ideas about the political process (ugh, I'm sorry about the lame term) that interest him. He could even, in the summer months leading up to the convention, spend some time reporting on or off the campaign trail, depending on what questions he finds himself asking and where his mind is wandering.

As for deadlines, we'd need a draft of a piece by, say, Sept 12, which would give David a couple weeks to write, post-convention.

How does that sound?

Many thanks,

Joel

-----Original Message-----
From: Bonnie Nadell [mailto:fredhillbnadell@sbcglobal.net]
Sent: Thu 5/1/2008 2:28 PM
To: Lovell, Joel
Subject: RE: David Foster Wallace

Dear Joel:

David is interested in this idea but has a few questions:

What if Obama doesn't get the nomination - - is this story off? What if we don't know going into the convention who will be the nominee and it is really weird or messy like '68? Do you have a Plan B on this since the story seems like it hinges on Obama winning the nomination and us knowing this long before the convention in August. Also would there be a tight deadline on this story since if the convention is in August you would want it out before November. David asks this since his McCain story for Rolling Stone was done at crazy speed and almost did not run because of McCain losing Super Tuesday in 2000.

Thanks for thinking of him on this and we'll wait to hear your thoughts on all this.

best,
Bonnie

"Lovell, Joel" wrote: Hi, Bonnie,

Joel Lovell from GQ here. I left a long, rambling message for you last week, in which I went on and on about my dream of getting David to do something for us this summer, and Sarah sent me the note below saying you were out of town.

I hope your travels were good.

As I mentioned, I'd be more than happy to entertain any ideas David might have, if there was something he had a real itch to write about.

I also have one idea that I'll throw out there.

Assuming Obama eventually gets the nomination, he'll deliver a convention speech in late August that will be the biggest speech of his life, which is saying something. I had this thought that if David could hang around and write a piece about the preparation of this speech, it might yield something great. It wouldn't just be a story about a speech, of course, it would be a story in which Obama figures as a character (since by all accounts he plays an even more active role than Bill Clinton in writing his own speeches). And it would be a story, more largely, about politics and language and the degree to which a candidate can or can't speak to us in meaningful terms.

For many of us, of course, Obama's speech on race after the first wave of the Wright controversy was a revelation--not just that he was willing to eschew the usual bobs and weaves and doublespeak of politics and speak to us like adults, but that he was also unafraid to seem smart, citing Faulkner and etc. And it created a yearning for more, for him to be "the real deal," as some political obsessives I constantly email with have put it.

What I imagine is that a writer as stunningly astute about the uses of language as David is could use the occasion of his convention speech--and of the crafting of it--to do some thinking not just

Re: David Foster Wallace's questions - 'att.net Mail' http://us.mc819.mail.yahoo.com/mc/showMessage?sMid=845...

about Obama the candidate and man but also about whether it's possible for politicians to still speak in a language that hasn't been vacuumed of meaning, if it's still possible to inspire a citizenry with words, if there are too many forces allied against the power of frank and elegant speech, etc, etc.

I don't mean to suggest that Obama exists in some realm above the ugly business of politics, but for many of us he has offered a glimmer of hope--modest as his rebellion may be--that it's possible to confront much of the usual business of America with genuine thought and honest expression.

Again, I'm rambling. What I mostly think is that through this prism David could say a lot about the nature of many things: Obama, political rhetoric, the pinched and dim-beasted way in which the media communicates to us.... You get the idea.

Anything here that captures his imagination?

Thanks, Bonnie.

All my best,

Joel

PS: For what it's worth, GQ's been doing a lot more recently than telling people it's okay to wear white jeans. George Saunders has written some wonderful pieces for us, as David no doubt knows, and Richard Powers is doing a huge story for us now. It goes without saying, of course, that publishing something by David would be an honor.

-----Original Message-----
From: Bonnie Nadell [mailto:fredhillbnadell@sbcglobal.net]
Sent: Mon 4/21/2008 6:18 PM
To: Lovell, Joel
Subject: David Foster Wallace

Hi Joel,
Bonnie is traveling on business through the end of the week but will be happy to discuss David's availability when she returns next week.
Also, this is her email address in case email is easiest.
Thank you,
Sarah Lagrotteria

Bonnie Nadell
Frederick Hill Bonnie Nadell

"Joel Lovell email exchange with Bonnie Nadell, 03/05/08," Harry Ransom Center's David Foster Wallace Archive (Bonnie Nadell collection, Box 1.3.)

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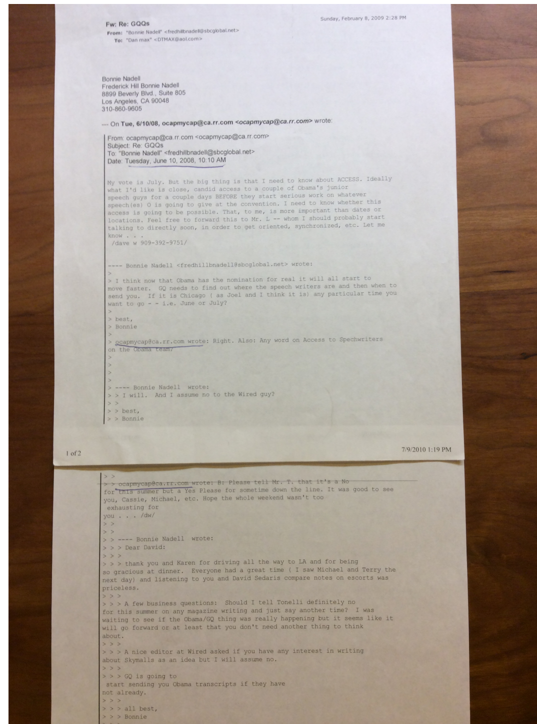
Figure 3.10



Fw: Re: GQQs
From: "Bonnie Nadell" <fredhillbnadell@sbcglobal.net>
To: "Dan max" <DTMAX@aol.com>

Sunday, February 8, 2009 2:28 PM

Bonnie Nadell
Frederick Hill Bonnie Nadell
8899 Beverly Blvd., Suite 805
Los Angeles, CA 90048
310-860-9605

--- On **Tue, 6/10/08, ocapmycap@ca.rr.com *<ocapmycap@ca.rr.com>*** wrote:

From: ocapmycap@ca.rr.com <ocapmycap@ca.rr.com>
Subject: Re: GQQs
To: "Bonnie Nadell" <fredhillbnadell@sbcglobal.net>
Date: Tuesday, June 10, 2008, 10:10 AM

My vote is July. But the big thing is that I need to know about ACCESS. Ideally what I'd like is close, candid access to a couple of Obama's junior speech guys for a couple days BEFORE they start serious work on whatever speech(es) O is going to give at the convention. I need to know whether this access is going to be possible. That, to me, is more important than dates or locations. Feel free to forward this to Mr. L -- whom I should probably start talking to directly soon, in order to get oriented, synchronized, etc. Let me know . . .
/dave w 909-392-9751/

---- Bonnie Nadell <fredhillbnadell@sbcglobal.net> wrote:
>
> I think now that Obama has the nomination for real it will all start to move faster. GQ needs to find out where the speech writers are and then when to send you. If it is Chicago (as Joel and I think it is) any particular time you want to go - - i.e. June or July?
>
> best,
> Bonnie
>
> ocapmycap@ca.rr.com wrote: Right. Also: Any word on Access to Spechwriters on the Obama team?
>
>
>
>
> ---- Bonnie Nadell wrote:
> > I will. And I assume no to the Wired guy?
> >
> > best,
> > Bonnie

1 of 2 7/9/2010 1:19 PM

> >
> > ocapmycap@ca.rr.com wrote: B: Please tell Mr. T. that it's a No for this summer but a Yes Please for sometime down the line. It was good to see you, Cassie, Michael, etc. Hope the whole weekend wasn't too exhausting for you . . . /dw/
> >
> >
> > ---- Bonnie Nadell wrote:
> > > Dear David:
> > >
> > > thank you and Karen for driving all the way to LA and for being so gracious at dinner. Everyone had a great time (I saw Michael and Terry the next day) and listening to you and David Sedaris compare notes on escorts was priceless.
> > >
> > > A few business questions: Should I tell Tonelli definitely no for this summer on any magazine writing and just say another time? I was waiting to see if the Obama/GQ thing was really happening but it seems like it will go forward or at least that you don't need another thing to think about.
> > >
> > > A nice editor at Wired asked if you have any interest in writing about Skymalls as an idea but I will assume no.
> > >
> > > GQ is going to start sending you Obama transcripts if they have not already.
> > >
> > > all best,
> > > Bonnie

“David Foster Wallace email exchange with Bonnie Nadell, 06/10/08,” Harry Ransom Center’s David Foster Wallace Archive (Bonnie Nadell collection, Box 1.3).

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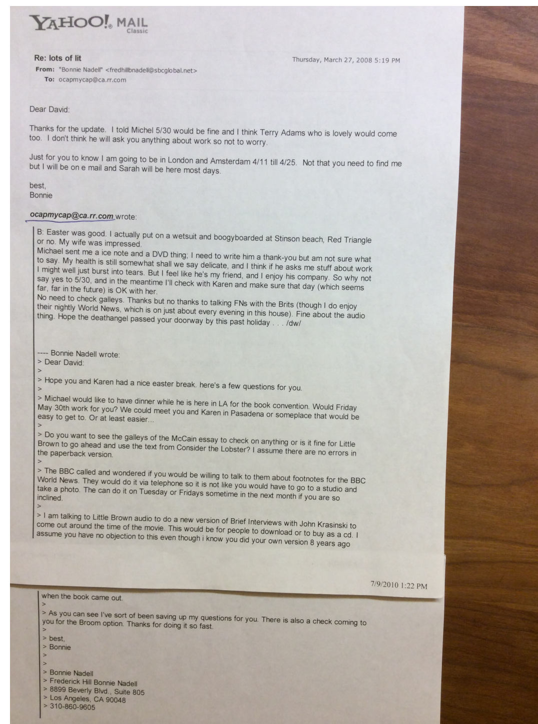
Figure 3.11



YAHOO! MAIL Classic

Re: lots of lit
Thursday, March 27, 2008 5:19 PM
From: "Bonnie Nadell" <fredhillbnadell@sbcglobal.net>
To: ocapmycap@ca.rr.com

Dear David:

Thanks for the update. I told Michel 5/30 would be fine and I think Terry Adams who is lovely would come too. I don't think he will ask you anything about work so not to worry.

Just for you to know I am going to be in London and Amsterdam 4/11 till 4/25. Not that you need to find me but I will be on e mail and Sarah will be here most days.

best,
Bonnie

ocapmycap@ca.rr.com wrote:

B: Easter was good. I actually put on a wetsuit and boogyboarded at Stinson beach, Red Triangle or no. My wife was impressed.
Michael sent me a ice note and a DVD thing; I need to write him a thank-you but am not sure what to say. My health is still somewhat shall we say delicate, and I think if he asks me stuff about work I might well just burst into tears. But I feel like he's my friend, and I enjoy his company. So why not say yes to 5/30, and in the meantime I'll check with Karen and make sure that day (which seems far, far in the future) is OK with her.
No need to check galleys. Thanks but no thanks to talking FNs with the Brits (though I do enjoy their nightly World News, which is on just about every evening in this house). Fine about the audio thing. Hope the deathangel passed your doorway by this past holiday . . . /dw/

---- Bonnie Nadell wrote:
> Dear David:
>
> Hope you and Karen had a nice easter break. here's a few questions for you.
>
> Michael would like to have dinner while he is here in LA for the book convention. Would Friday May 30th work for you? We could meet you and Karen in Pasadena or someplace that would be easy to get to. Or at least easier...
>
> Do you want to see the galleys of the McCain essay to check on anything or is it fine for Little Brown to go ahead and use the text from Consider the Lobster? I assume there are no errors in the paperback version.
>
> The BBC called and wondered if you would be willing to talk to them about footnotes for the BBC World News. They would do it via telephone so it is not like you would have to go to a studio and take a photo. The can do it on Tuesday or Fridays sometime in the next month if you are so inclined.
>
> I am talking to Little Brown audio to do a new version of Brief Interviews with John Krasinski to come out around the time of the movie. This would be for people to download or to buy as a cd. I assume you have no objection to this even though i know you did your own version 8 years ago

7/9/2010 1:22 PM

when the book came out.
>
> As you can see I've sort of been saving up my questions for you. There is also a check coming to you for the Broom option. Thanks for doing it so fast.
>
> best,
> Bonnie
>
>
> Bonnie Nadell
> Frederick Hill Bonnie Nadell
> 8899 Beverly Blvd., Suite 805
> Los Angeles, CA 90048
> 310-860-9605

"David Foster Wallace email exchange with Bonnie Nadell, 03/27/08," Harry Ransom Center's David Foster Wallace Archive (Bonnie Nadell collection, Box 1.3.)

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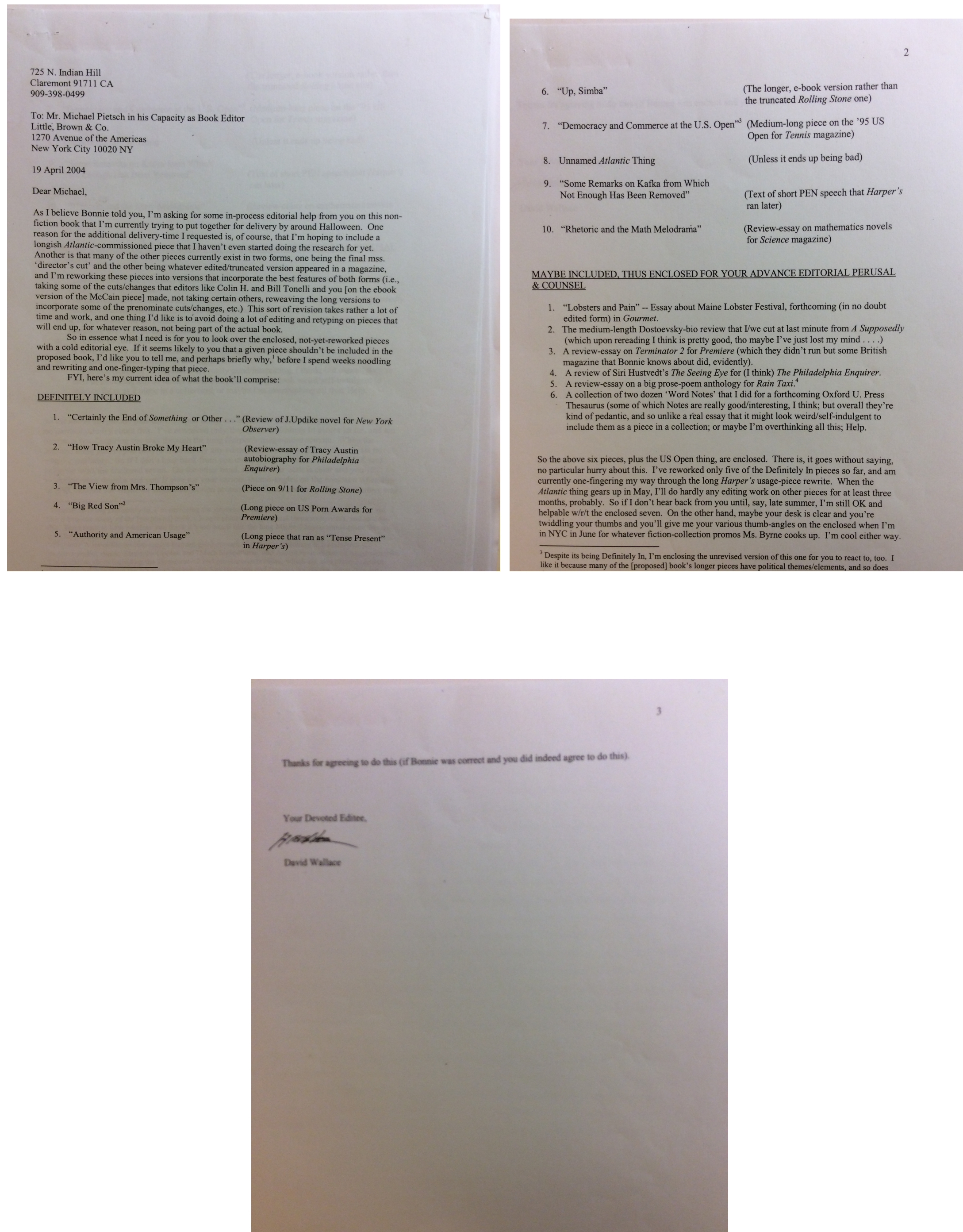
Figure 3.12



725 N. Indian Hill
Claremont 91711 CA
909-398-0499

To: Mr. Michael Pietsch in his Capacity as Book Editor
Little, Brown & Co.
1270 Avenue of the Americas
New York City 10020 NY

19 April 2004

Dear Michael,

As I believe Bonnie told you, I'm asking for some in-process editorial help from you on this non-fiction book that I'm currently trying to put together for delivery by around Halloween. One reason for the additional delivery-time I requested is, of course, that I'm hoping to include a longish *Atlantic*-commissioned piece that I haven't even started doing the research for yet. Another is that many of the other pieces currently exist in two forms, one being the final mss. 'director's cut' and the other being whatever edited/truncated version appeared in a magazine, and I'm reworking these pieces into versions that incorporate the best features of both forms (i.e., taking some of the cuts/changes that editors like Colin H. and Bill Tonelli and you [on the ebook version of the McCain piece] made, not taking certain others, reweaving the long versions to incorporate some of the prenominate cuts/changes, etc.) This sort of revision takes rather a lot of time and work, and one thing I'd like is to avoid doing a lot of editing and retyping on pieces that will end up, for whatever reason, not being part of the actual book.

So in essence what I need is for you to look over the enclosed, not-yet-reworked pieces with a cold editorial eye. If it seems likely to you that a given piece shouldn't be included in the proposed book, I'd like you to tell me, and perhaps briefly why,[1] before I spend weeks noodling and rewriting and one-finger-typing that piece.

FYI, here's my current idea of what the book'll comprise:

<u>DEFINITELY INCLUDED</u>

1. "Certainly the End of *Something* or Other . . ." (Review of J.Updike novel for *New York Observer*)
2. "How Tracy Austin Broke My Heart" (Review-essay of Tracy Austin autobiography for *Philadelphia Enquirer*)
3. "The View from Mrs. Thompson's" (Piece on 9/11 for *Rolling Stone*)
4. "Big Red Son"[2] (Long piece on US Porn Awards for *Premiere*)
5. "Authority and American Usage" (Long piece that ran as "Tense Present" in *Harper's*)

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6. "Up, Simba" (The longer, e-book version rather than the truncated *Rolling Stone* one)
7. "Democracy and Commerce at the U.S. Open"[3] (Medium-long piece on the '95 US Open for *Tennis* magazine)
8. Unnamed *Atlantic* Thing (Unless it ends up being bad)
9. "Some Remarks on Kafka from Which Not Enough Has Been Removed" (Text of short PEN speech that *Harper's* ran later)
10. "Rhetoric and the Math Melodrama" (Review-essay on mathematics novels for *Science* magazine)

<u>MAYBE INCLUDED, THUS ENCLOSED FOR YOUR ADVANCE EDITORIAL PERUSAL & COUNSEL</u>

1. "Lobsters and Pain" -- Essay about Maine Lobster Festival, forthcoming (in no doubt edited form) in *Gourmet*.
2. The medium-length Dostoevsky-bio review that I/we cut at last minute from *A Supposedly* (which upon rereading I think is pretty good, tho maybe I've just lost my mind . . . .)
3. A review-essay on *Terminator 2* for *Premiere* (which they didn't run but some British magazine that Bonnie knows about did, evidently).
4. A review of Siri Hustvedt's *The Seeing Eye* for (I think) *The Philadelphia Enquirer*.
5. A review-essay on a big prose-poem anthology for *Rain Taxi*.[4]
6. A collection of two dozen 'Word Notes' that I did for a forthcoming Oxford U. Press Thesaurus (some of which Notes are really good/interesting, I think; but overall they're kind of pedantic, and so unlike a real essay that it might look weird/self-indulgent to include them as a piece in a collection; or maybe I'm overthinking all this; Help.

So the above six pieces, plus the US Open thing, are enclosed. There is, it goes without saying, no particular hurry about this. I've reworked only five of the Definitely In pieces so far, and am currently one-fingering my way through the long *Harper's* usage-piece rewrite. When the *Atlantic* thing gears up in May, I'll do hardly any editing work on other pieces for at least three months, probably. So if I don't hear back from you until, say, late summer, I'm still OK and helpable w/r/t the enclosed seven. On the other hand, maybe your desk is clear and you're twiddling your thumbs and you'll give me your various thumb-angles on the enclosed when I'm in NYC in June for whatever fiction-collection promos Ms. Byrne cooks up. I'm cool either way.

[3] Despite its being Definitely In, I'm enclosing the unrevised version of this one for you to react to, too. I like it because many of the [proposed] book's longer pieces have political themes/elements, and so does

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Thanks for agreeing to do this (if Bonnie was correct and you did indeed agree to do this).

Your Devoted Editee,

David Wallace

"David Foster Wallace fax to Michael Pietsch, 04/19/04," Harry Ransom Center's David Foster Wallace Archive (Michael Pietsch collection, Box 2.2.

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