

Introduction:

David Foster Wallace between philosophy and literature

Allard den Dulk, Pia Masiero, and Adriano Ardivino

literature (among other things) is 'exemplary': it always is, says, does something other, something other than itself, an itself which moreover is only that, something other than itself. For example or par excellence: philosophy.

Jacques Derrida, 'Passions'

Nothing is more important though than the construction of fictional concepts, which will teach us at last to understand our own.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*

This is what I see. Can you see it too?

Toril Moi, 'The Adventure of Reading'

This collection aims to show that David Foster Wallace's work originates from and functions in the space between philosophy and literature. Indeed the philosophical dimension of his work is not a mere supplement or decoration, a finishing touch to perfect his literary writing. Nor is it the other way around: a pre-established truth which Wallace sees the literary merely serving to illustrate. Rather Wallace intertwines the two discursive modes in a never-ending process of reciprocal cross-fertilization. By suggesting that Wallace's texts, characters, story-worlds, linguistic and formal choices, plots and concepts should be read as between philosophy and literature,

we are not imposing a preconceived methodology or theoretical context on his oeuvre that univocally homogenizes each individual reading in the collection; rather, our approach offers an investigative perspective, allowing for a variety of theories and methods that shed light on the constitutive in-betweenness of his work.

What does it mean to say that Wallace's work originates from and functions in the space between philosophy and literature? In this introductory chapter we will first briefly address Wallace's relation to and career switch between philosophy and literature. Then we will look at the general relation between these two discursive modes – not by going back to Plato and Aristotle (a path already well-trodden in discussions of the relation between literature and philosophy) but by briefly outlining three aspects in which philosophy and literature both differ and overlap, namely: firstly, as activities or practices; secondly, with regards to their instruments, which is to say, their forms of language and communication; and, thirdly, with regards to their purposes, or the experiences and possible understandings they generate. In all three aspects the discursive modes we call philosophy and literature offer different ways of interacting with, articulating, and apprehending the world that present many zones of contact but do not fully dissolve into one another.¹ Again this brief overview should not be seen as a unifying methodology or theoretical framework. Rather it is a general sketching out of different ways in which the philosophical and literary modes may be seen to differ from and overlap with each other, and which thus also allow texts, authors, and readers to operate 'in between' them and bring aspects of their varying practices, languages, and purposes to bear on each other. There is perhaps no better example of this fruitful cross-pollination than the work of David Foster Wallace. Below we will outline first this theoretical framework, then the chapters making up this collection and the thematic groupings in which we have decided to present them.

It is widely noted that David Foster Wallace's oeuvre develops along philosophical lines and themes, presenting not so much a sustained conceptual or theoretical reflection but rather an expression and experience of some of the most pressing existential issues in contemporary Western life. The possibility of pursuing this kind of immersive experience seems to have been an important reason why Wallace switched from philosophy to literature during his academic

career. After studying mathematical logic and philosophy of language from 1980 to 1985, Wallace abandoned academic study of philosophy to devote himself to literature. Wallace later explained this shift in terms of no longer feeling the ‘click’ he had initially experienced in ‘proof-completions, or maybe algorithms’: he realized that ‘the click existed in literature, too’ and that he was ‘able to get it in fiction’ after he stopped getting ‘the click from math logic’ (McCaffery, 2012: 35). Literature ‘felt like it was using 97 percent of me’, he also observed, compared to philosophy’s use of only ‘50 percent’ (Lipsky, 2010: 261). We could speculate about which tendencies in himself Wallace may have been referring to with these percentages. One could argue that the activity of philosophizing, with its argumentative leanings, might be experienced as more monological and directed towards rational closure, and thus mainly occupied with – or even fortifying of – the self: the enjoyment of one’s own mind in having crafted a persuasive argument. The activity of literature, on the other hand, might feel comparatively open, dialogical, and vulnerable (the ‘success’ of one’s description being more ambiguously reliant on the response of the reader) – and, as such, more self-forgetting and other-directed. While these are generalizations, these latter qualities are indeed thematized, advocated, and instantiated throughout Wallace’s literary work.

So far most scholars who have situated Wallace’s work at the intersection of philosophy and literature have resorted either to a reconstructive perspective dictated by Wallace’s own biographical-intellectual trajectory or read philosophy and literature as two distinct and partly incompatible traditions – the former more abstract, rational, and universal, and the latter more vital, emotional, and particular (and often hierarchically related: with philosophy preceding and explaining literature). These approaches are certainly legitimate, but the chapters in our collection have in mind and attempt to work towards another interpretative approach – one that moves beyond the distinctiveness of the discursive realms of the philosophical and the literary, with their corresponding analytical tools and vocabulary, to approach Wallace’s work instead as originating from and constituted by the space between philosophy and literature. For Wallace philosophy and literature are co-originating ways of confronting reality: philosophical works, styles, and concepts trigger literary experiences, while literary works, styles, and genres trigger

philosophical questioning. Both appear within and amplify each other from the start.

In this Introduction our aim is not to theorize the relation between philosophy and literature. That would inevitably imply some disciplinary bias or impose some sort of methodology – perhaps indebted to ‘philosophy of literature’ or to ‘literary theory’ – regarding how best to conceive of such a relation. Our contributors, like we ourselves as editors, come from different disciplinary backgrounds that we cannot and do not want to absorb into one view.² Wallace’s trajectory as a writer calls for attention to how this relationship was entrenched in his unique way not only of being a writer but of living. The intermingling and cross-fertilization of philosophy and literature belongs to Wallace’s way of apprehending the world and making meaningful sense of it through his writing. Analogously we as readers and scholars are called less to systematizing his work than to attending to the different ways in which it enables access to the potentials of this fertile in-between space.

Philosophy and literature are primarily activities, that is, they both envelop sets of discursive practices possessing their own formational rules produced by the historical and social contexts in which they emerged and developed. As such they manifest within particular orders of discourse, employ specific conceptual tools, and express themselves in recognizable writing styles. Western philosophical practice – with its recognizable themes, language, and resources – has a long history. Before Plato it had other names. Indeed, much more than definitions, discourses, practices, and institutions, philosophy and literature are forms of experience and expression, of apprehending and articulating the world.

Against this broad backdrop Wallace’s fictional and non-fictional corpus helps to foreground that the relationship between philosophy and literature, and the fluid in-between space their intersection creates, takes at least three different forms or can be seen from three different perspectives: firstly, it can be understood as a discursive practice, a language game that arises from and blends different sources and desires, from the (personal, biographic) particular to the (speculative, conceptual) universal; secondly, it is a specific linguistic form, a discourse that inhabits the intersection of literary writing and philosophical inquiry; thirdly, it is an experience and exchange that can substantially transform the author, text, and reader constituting the discursive project in question.

The first perspective calls us to keep in mind that philosophy and literature are activities or practices with both authors and readers as participants (or users). Philosophy was institutionalized, as a practice and as a discipline, with the birth of institutions such as the university in the Middle Ages and the profession of philosophy in the nineteenth century: indeed, whereas Descartes was a mathematician and Kant taught geography, with Hegel the figure of the professor began to crystallize in a definitive way, socially and politically. Recent decades have seen a partial return to (or increased visibility of) philosophical practices with communal dimensions external to academic discourse and discourses that are not strictly scientific, but more personal and linked to the experience of individuals. This process could also be said to include an increased prevalence of philosophical connections in literary discourses, or rather, greater stylistic contamination and greater hybridization of content.

In turn it was only in modern times that the word *literature* stopped designating all culture and knowledge related to writing (which is the meaning of its Latin root, *litteratura*) and began referring to a specific writing practice recognizable in well-defined texts bearing a certain artistic value (the so-called *belles lettres*, placed next to the *beaux arts*). Distribution of these texts and their compositional styles into rather stable genres and the shaping of institutionalized approaches and disciplines to study these particular practices – such as literary history, criticism, and theory – later followed.

Though it is certainly true that the practices of (and as we will see below, the languages and objectives relating to) philosophy and literature changed and acquired distinctive tonalities over time, they have none the less continued to nourish each other – from a period well before Plato to our contemporary era. Therefore the following questions (still) resonate with us today: what do we do when we engage with – that is, write and read – philosophy and/or literature? Is it possible – or perhaps, as authors such as Richard Rorty have suggested, even necessary – to do philosophy through literature? Is it possible to produce literature that does not merely engage with philosophical themes but enters into a more essentially ‘philosophical’ mode? Do quintessentially philosophical issues exist? Or should we rather say that the crucial issues concerning our existence are the same across the two disciplinary boundaries and that the differences between them reside only in their respective institutional structures and languages? Different literary forms – from poetry to drama,

from epistolary writing to allegorical tales – have been employed as part of philosophical practice, with results that are counted as great philosophical achievements; this makes the development of philosophical thought difficult to separate from literary practice in a definite, abstract way. On the other hand, the literary tradition – from ancient epics to the contemporary novel, passing through tragedy and poetry – has reached great heights in presenting human experience as motivated by and pulsating with core existential questions, and thus cannot be isolated from philosophical practice either.

This brings us to the second aspect or perspective, namely the languages of philosophy and literature, which constitute their existence as mainly verbal communications: the songs of poets and rhapsodists, the words of actors, dialogue, speech, written texts, etcetera. As mentioned above, such forms and genres and their communicative strategies and participants (authors and audiences) shape the intersection of the philosophical and literary in manifold ways.

If, on the one hand, it is true that philosophical inquiry has often made use of markedly literary forms, giving birth to a veritable ‘literary philosophy’, on the other it is similarly indisputable that literary practice has always been distinctively open to linguistic experimentation. In the boundless formal diversity of genres and texts – from poetry to the modern novel – and its endless staging of what Wittgenstein would call specific ‘language games’, the encounter between an author who narrates a world, oneself, and the human condition, and a reader who incorporates and transforms that narrated world through her own distinctive interpretation takes place within a formal space that activates a profound and intense first-person engagement. Words, in the literary context, are the necessary, irreplaceable vehicle for this engagement; their role is not merely instrumental or accessory. This linguistic specificity, stemming from both convention and experimentation, is always tightly interwoven with ambiguity and suspension. As such it has traditionally signalled the principal distinction between literary narrative and philosophical argumentation. Literature is, in all respects, a field in which knowledge is transformed into stories. The centrality of the narrative dimension and of fictionality, that is, of the invention and articulation of imaginary worlds, brings us to the third aspect or perspective of the fertile cross-pollination of philosophy and literature.

The third aspect regards the purposes of philosophy and literature: the experience of them and their possible transformation of our understanding of the themes and problems with which they deal. Through the literary text readers fine-tune their abilities to detect and understand the most idiosyncratic aspects of existence and the values and backgrounds that sustain them. The role of the imagination is crucial here, because it connects individual and intersubjective experience with the question of what is verisimilar or not, of what is fantasy or falsification, and foregrounds the many paradoxes of existence that Wallace explores and revels in. Obviously imagination is crucial for philosophers too. As Kant famously maintained, imagination coincides with neither knowledge nor ethics but supports both. In a work of art, however, the imagination is arguably unfettered from preceding understanding or subsequent action, connecting the aesthetic subject – be it artist or viewer – to the artistic object itself.

If we consider Wallace's oeuvre we cannot help but acknowledge the centrality of the imagination, from both a philosophical and a literary perspective. Wallace's work illustrates how far literary imagining can go and invites us to test this imagining extra-textually. If we assume that a literary text (unlike most traditional philosophical texts) necessarily revolves around; firstly, the continuous and non-linear modification of expectations while writing or reading; secondly, the dynamic negotiation between feeling and writing or reading; thirdly, the activation of what is inside and outside the text (a separation that runs along porous and ever-changing lines); fourthly, the (re)configuration of the different experiences and discourses the text initiates; and, finally, fifthly, the progressive establishment of an imaginative becoming which takes the shape of, or makes room for, an other (the author, the reader) – then it becomes clear that the imagination plays a role in each of these steps of writing, reading, narrating, and listening. In this sense it becomes important not to fully equate theoretical and definitional philosophical discourses, which inevitably offer (though to varying degrees) abstract reflections on this or that issue, with literary discourses offering an experience and understanding dependent on the lived experience prompted by the text. Whereas the former wants and needs to operate with models, the latter is rooted in an actual – if fictional – experience stemming from a specific and individualized deictic field.

The contributions to this volume explore these subtle and fluid interconnections between the philosophical and the literary as they manifest in Wallace's work. Their scholarly engagements with this multi-layered and kaleidoscopic interrelation mirrors the many negotiations and interpretations at work in Wallace's writing, especially with regard to the three elements of practice, language, and experience or understanding sketched out above. The chapters collected here explore how Wallace's literary practice is both linguistically peculiar and experience-oriented, demonstrating – we hope – the relevance of an in-between approach.

Given his early predilection for philosophical studies, Wallace opted for a fiction practice that mingled philosophical jargon with literary writing, giving rise to texts centring on markedly philosophical issues – from solipsism to freedom, free will to time – but deploying markedly literary strategies. Wallace was intrigued by a mode of writing that borrowed philosophical technicalities; he created a rich interpenetration across the divide of fiction and non-fiction, always on the lookout for ways to interrogate and engage with the existential predicaments of contemporary life. Indeed his textual experimentation was recognizably experiential, resulting in multi-layered reader involvement. In this sense his work turned philosophy into a first-person, fully embodied matter.

Wallace wanted to 'reaffirm' that fiction is 'about what it is to be a fucking *human being*' and constitutes a 'living transaction between humans' (McCaffery, 2012: 131), 'that writing is an act of communication between one human being and another' (Wallace, 1997: 144). These statements reiterate how, for Wallace, philosophy and literature are interrelated. Wallace's fiction aims to contribute to our philosophical understanding of concrete human existence, not by offering conclusive truths but by requiring the reader to 'put in her share of the [work]' (McCaffery, 2012: 138), by negotiating through the problems and perspectives it presents. As such Wallace's oeuvre represents an original and relevant philosophical discourse, turning literature into philosophy and using philosophy as the inner propeller of literary practice. This 'in-betweenness' represents the propulsive force of Wallace's work.

The chapters in this volume approach Wallace's textual richness and multi-layered in-betweenness starting from different perspectives and privileging one or more of the aspects mentioned above. Together they

represent a multifaceted engagement with the philosophical-literary in-betweenness of Wallace's oeuvre, eschewing a monolithic interpretation of what philosophy and literature are and paying close attention to Wallace's fictional and philosophical ideas without subsuming them under one, broad philosophical framework. The volume aims to explore the myriad ways in which Wallace mobilizes the philosophical dimension not merely as a supplement or embellishment but as a discursive mode that is always already intertwined with the literary through a never-ending process of reciprocal cross-fertilization.

Through a series of fresh readings of Wallace's oeuvre the chapters that follow will offer a plurality of interpretations of and responses to the open question regarding Wallace's engagement with philosophy and literature. We decided to organize this multiplicity of approaches into three parts. The first one provides general perspectives on the building blocks of David Foster Wallace's macro text – his aesthetics, interest in performativity, formal choices, sociology, and ethics – that extend beyond the precincts of the primary texts they employ as case studies. The second and third parts delve in more focused ways into two thematic blocks: 'Consciousness, self, and others' and 'Embodiment, gender, and sexuality'. Both thematic blocks have already elicited conversation in Wallace scholarship, but both are far from being exhausted.

In 'Absorbing art: the Hegelian project of *Infinite Jest*', Adam Kelly argues that the project of reading Wallace's fiction between philosophy and literature 'means passing through Hegel', whose role has been largely neglected in Wallace scholarship so far. Kelly maintains that Hegel is key to understanding what has been called Wallace's 'socialist phenomenology', that is, his belief in human beings as 'always already existing in a norm-based relation to one another'. Kelly's aim is to mobilize Hegelian categories – most notably that of absorption (*Aufhebung*) – to map some crucial aesthetic principles and effects structuring Wallace's masterpiece. Kelly's reading of *Infinite Jest* focuses mainly on James Incandenza's filmography and especially on Joelle van Dyne's viewing of the film *Pre-Nuptial Agreement of Heaven and Hell*. Joelle's attitude becomes the key to demonstrating how the notion of absorption – and, more specifically, what Kelly calls 'refractive absorption' – is 'an important principle in Wallace's broader aesthetic project', which reads sincerity as 'a social achievement that required a new aesthetic form'.

Jeffrey Severs's 'Stages, Socrates, and the performer stripped bare: David Foster Wallace as philosopher-dramatist' reflects on Wallace's writing about performance, not so much in the mannerisms of actors and other artists (and their audiences) but, more subtly, in the ways dramatic form has seeped into the very texture of Wallace's way of handling philosophy. According to Severs, Wallace consistently stages philosophical performances that take one of two forms: 'scenes of dialogue that mark a twist on the Platonic dialogues and their dramatic staging of philosophical conflict' or 'moments that conjure ... a particularly abject stage performer' and allow Wallace to demonstrate his awareness that there is ultimately no way to escape 'the artifices of performance' – a stance he tries to explore from within the space of performing vulnerability.

Ar dovino's and Masiero's "A matter of perspective": "Good Old Neon" between literature and philosophy' argues that Wallace's most famous short story thematizes what literature is about according to David Foster Wallace. Ar dovino and Masiero follow the tripartite layers structuring the short story – centred on the respective protagonists of Neal, David Wallace, and David Foster Wallace – to demonstrate the centrality to its development of imagination, which, in Wallace's competent hands, becomes both the space of caring and an empty space of suspension in which truth about the other may dwell.

Paolo Pitari's 'The influence of Christopher Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism* on David Foster Wallace' demonstrates Lasch's influence on Wallace to be much broader and deeper than has yet been acknowledged. Pitari patiently reconstructs the consistent agreement between the two writers with respect to three different areas: sociology, literary criticism, and philosophy. Well beyond the somewhat unsurprising overlappings that emerge from a comparison of Lasch's book with 'E Unibus Pluram', Pitari tries to unearth how these shared concerns shape Wallace's criticism of contemporary fiction and more broadly underpin his sociology and ethics.

The second section, devoted to 'Consciousness, self, and others', opens with Allard den Dulk's "What all she'd so painfully learned said about her": a comparative reading of Wallace's "The Depressed Person" and Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*. As suggested by its title, Den Dulk's chapter outlines the aspects Wallace cherished in Dostoevsky which seeped into his own work: namely 'Dostoevsky's

analysis of the societal problems of his time and exploration of alternatives' and his 'ability to cast these theoretical ideas into fiction and still create stories and characters that are real, human, and lifelike'. In both Dostoevsky's and Wallace's texts the main problem of the narrative revolves around the narrator's excessive self-consciousness, which results in a solipsistic sickness that can be addressed only through empathetic understanding of the other – which both narrators resist but both texts can be seen to encourage in the reader. This is the blueprint for Wallace's conception of the relation between philosophy and literature: literary exploration of philosophical themes above and beyond conceptual and theoretical means that are meant to be realized through readers' experience.

In '*Infinite Jest's* "trinity of You and I into We": Wallace's "click" between Joyce's literary consubstantiality and Wittgenstein's family resemblance', Dominik Steinhilber offers a persuasive comparative reading of Joyce and Wallace via Wittgenstein. Steinhilber deftly mobilizes two interrelated concepts – the aesthetic of the trinity and the theological concept of consubstantiality, employed by Joyce in *Ulysses*, to read *Infinite Jest*. According to Steinhilber, Wallace situates Joyce's trinity and literary version of consubstantiality in dialogue with Wittgenstein's public language game philosophy, offering this combination as an antidote to both solipsism and endless deconstruction. Steinhilber explores the ways in which Wallace stages possible countermeasures to solipsistic dysfunction in the Incandenza family and how, more broadly, his view literary practice infused with philosophical elements reconceptualizes the vital relationship between author and reader.

The association of Wallace to Wittgenstein is well known but always worth reflecting upon. Guido Baggio's 'Solipsism, loneliness, alienation: David Foster Wallace as interpreter of Wittgenstein' proposes a rather original take on Wittgenstein, arguing against the default interpretation of Wallace's indebtedness to Wittgenstein that claims Wallace managed to fight and overcome the abyss of solipsism thanks to the Austrian philosopher. Baggio contends that Wallace did not win the battle against solipsism through Wittgenstein – or through any other literary or philosophical discourse, for that matter. Rather, according to Baggio, solipsism is what actually wins out in Wallace's work.

Daniel South's "“This is just my opinion”": modelling a public sphere in *The Pale King*' reflects on one of Wallace's main interests in the second half of his career: the public sphere. More specifically, South strives to illuminate the kind of political writing we can find in *The Pale King*, which he presents as a blueprint of Wallace's more general take on political-philosophical inquiry. Via fiction writing, literature can (and should) play an important role in reversing the hyper-partisan tones of current political conversations and inject the public sphere with dialogue, nuance, and complexity – the nuts and bolts of literary aesthetics. Habermas provides South with an interpretative framework for detecting elements of the public sphere in Wallace's posthumous novel. South highlights how Wallace paradigmatically stages his belief in the interconnections among individual agency and societal structures, the limits of the former and overwhelming presence of the latter, while affirming 'literature as a potential curative for the contemporary public sphere's ills' – not so much by writing as by reading.

In his chapter 'Pioneers of consciousness: hypothesis for a diptych', Lorenzo Marchese highlights the stories 'Incarnations of Burned Children' and 'Another Pioneer' as emblematic of Wallace's attention to negativity and psychological despair in his late work. Marchese's parallel close readings consider the two stories as a narrative diptych that illustrates 'Wallace's narrative approach to analysis of the intermittent relation between self-consciousness and the limits of communicative language'. The two stories concern burned children, and stage, despite their many differences, a shared outcome deriving from misunderstanding and idiocy. Marchese fruitfully reflects on the incommunicability of consciousness that the two short stories present, drawing on but taking distance from Thomas Nagel's reflections on the issue of other minds. Marchese shows that both children may be considered pioneers who show the limits of empathy and identification, and consequently, of language and discourse.

In 'The problem of other minds in "Good Old Neon"', Matt Prout mobilizes Wittgenstein's treatment of this much-vexed issue to discuss how Stanley Cavell's tackling of the problem of other minds – which draws heavily on Wittgenstein – can shed light on Neal's predicament, which lies at the centre of Wallace's short story. Most notably, Prout's reading employs Cavell's notion of 'crucifying

the intellect' and his notion of 'acknowledgment' to illuminate the many dangers and enticements of sceptical thinking.

Clare Hayes-Brady's "'I am in here": heads and bodies in David Foster Wallace' opens the third part of this volume, which is devoted to 'Embodiment, gender, and sexuality'. Hayes-Brady's chapter sets out to address how linguistic experience is rooted in our bodily existence. More specifically she explores 'the ways in which our embodied experiences, as represented in Wallace's writing, shape and often foreclose our linguistic engagement with the world'. Using the lens of affect theory, Hayes-Brady offers a fine-grained analysis of the opening of *Infinite Jest* and 'Brief Interview #20' to demonstrate how the body and embodied experience are antecedent to communication.

Mara Mattoscio's "'The interstices of her sense of something": David Foster Wallace, the quest for affect, and the future of gendered interactions' offers a feminist reading of affect theory that takes Lauren Berlant's notion of 'cruel optimism' as its point of departure. Mattoscio focuses on two short stories as key texts for exploring Wallace's interest in gendered and sexed relationships: 'Datum Centurio' and 'Octet', both from *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*. Both texts are read as explorations of 'the socio-structural nature of affects' and of what Mattoscio dubs Wallace's 'wry pessimism'. Mattoscio understands these texts as presenting Wallace's invitation to the readers 'to "invest" in their own structural affective inadequacies in attempt to track apparently irretrievable emotions down in the "interstices" of our gender-constrained world'.

In "'You are loved": race, love, and language in early Wallace', Lola Boorman offers a much-needed reflection on how the pervasive references to love and communication in Wallace's work (and corresponding scholarship) are shaped and transformed when race enters the conversation. The primary texts that Boorman considers, and which should be viewed as just the first stage of a reflection worth further expanding, are 'Girl with Curious Hair' and *Signifying Rappers*. Analysis of these early texts paves the way for us to understand Wallace as espousing 'a model of political consensus and universality in his later writing'. Boorman first reflects on Wallace's employment of race 'to develop a logic of distance and separation' in 'Girl with Curious Hair' and 'Lyndon', via James Baldwin's take on love in *The Fire Next Time*. She then

maps Wallace's transition to a more profound awareness of 'the limitation of his exploration of difference in his early writing' in *Signifying Rappers*.

Chiara Scarlato proposes an intriguing reflection on pornography – a rather pervasive theme in Wallace's work. The chapter argues that Wallace uses the addictive and entertaining practice of viewing pornography as a sort of reverse mirror that allows him to reflect on another, more authentic form of intimacy between author and reader: what Scarlato dubs 'anti-Entertainment' and contends is Wallace's antidote to solitude. "They remain just bodies": on pornography in David Foster Wallace (1989–2006)' traces this thread by making reference to archival documents concerning Wallace's unpublished 1989 commissioned piece for *Playboy*, fictional works – namely *Infinite Jest* and the two stories 'Adult World (I)' and 'Adult World (II)' – and the non-fictional essay 'Big Red Son'.

Angelo Grossi's "Something staring back at you": an anamorphic reading of *Infinite Jest*', which closes the third part and thereby the volume, reflects on how Wallace's novel 'thematizes a radical questioning of the philosophical dualities implied in the Cartesian subject by evoking two rival models of modern visuality – Renaissance perspectivalism and the baroque'. According to Grossi, Wallace mobilizes baroque visual rhetoric both thematically and formally to disrupt the utilitarian liberal ideology that dominates the novel. To explain this mobilization Grossi turns to Lacan's mature concept of the gaze, highlighting how it resonates with Wallace's blurring of the boundaries between the autonomous (liberal) subject and (passive, inert) object.

Notes

- 1 For a classical analysis of the various dimensions relating to discursive practices see Foucault, 1972. Therein Foucault presents a crucial analysis of 'the system of emergence of objects, the system of the appearance and distribution of enunciative modes, the system of the placing and dispersion of concepts, the system of the deployment of strategic choices' (79).
- 2 For another nuanced and comprehensive attempt to work in this vein – though one still recognizably rooted in the approaches of analytical philosophy – see, for example, Lamarque, 2009.

References

- Derrida, J. (1995). *On the Name*. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press.
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The Archeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language*. New York NY: Pantheon Books.
- Lamarque, P. (2009). *The Philosophy of Literature*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lipsky, D. (2010). *Although of Course You End Up Becoming Yourself: A Road Trip with David Foster Wallace*. New York NY: Broadway Books.
- McCaffery, L. (2012). 'An Expanded Interview with David Foster Wallace', 21–57. In Stephen J. Burn ed., *Conversations with David Foster Wallace*. Jackson MS: University of Mississippi Press.
- Moi, T. (2011). 'The Adventure of Reading: Literature and Philosophy, Cavell and Beauvoir', in *Literature & Theology* 25:2, 125–40.
- Wallace, D. Foster. (1997). *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again: Essays and Arguments*. New York NY: Back Bay Books.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1998). *Culture and Value. A Selection from the Posthumous Remains*, ed. G. H. von Wright. Oxford: Blackwell.