DAVID FOSTER WALLACE'S SCREAMS, STUTTERS, AND STAMMERS: THE 'VISIONS' AND 'AUDITIONS' OF A 'GREAT' 'MINOR' WRITER

Thesis Submitted for the Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

ARGHYA GANGULY

Registration Number: ACSSS1100616/2015-16

Supervisors: Dr. Rosinka Chaudhuri (Professor, Cultural Studies, CSSSC)
Dr. Soumyabrata Choudhury (Associate Professor, School of Arts and Aesthetics, JNU)

Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta

Jadavpur University

700032

2023

Certified that the Thesis entitled

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submitted by me for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts at Jadavpur University is based upon my work carried out under the Supervision of ----------

PROF. ROSINKA CHAUDHURI AND

DR. SOUMYABRATA CHOUDHURY

And that neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted before for any degree or diploma anywhere / elsewhere

17/8/23

Professor
CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN
SOCIAL SCIENCES, CALCUTTA

Countersigned by the Supervisor

Dated : 3/8/2023

Candidate : Arghya

Dated : 18/08/2023

Associate Professor
कला एवं सौन्दर्य शास्त्र संस्थान
School of Arts and Aesthetics
जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय
Jawaharlal Nehru University
नई दिल्ली / New Delhi-110067

Acknowledgement

I want to thank my father, the yoga artist (Rudra Narayan Ganguly); mother, the rabindra-sangeet artist (Bishnupriya Ganguli); and sister, the teacher (Reetuparna Ganguly), for their help; and for putting up with my sudden inexplicable screams, stutters, stammers, murmurs, quivers, tremolos, and vibratos. I also want to thank my supervisors, Rosinka Chaudhuri (for guiding me since MPhil), and Soumyabrata Choudhury (for gifting me the philosopher, Gilles Deleuze).

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INTRODUCTION

In a 1987 lecture titled, 'What is a Creative Act?,' Gilles Deleuze begins by asking (himself and those gathered): What does it mean to have an idea? What happens when you say that you have an idea?

The French philosopher tells the audience that getting an idea is tantamount to a celebration—it's an uncommon event (Deleuze, *Two* 312). And when an idea occurs to you, it is not "general" in nature; an idea—like the person in the grip of an idea—always has association with a certain field: an idea in a novel, or in painting, or in philosophy, and so on (312). Ideas are already twined with a particular "mode of expression" from which it cannot be separated, which is why you cannot declare that you have an idea in general (312).

Akira Kurosawa, for instance, has an idea in his films that corresponds to the idea in novels of Fyodor Dostoevsky. Deleuze calls this encounter between Kurosawa and Dostoevsky "felicitous" (317). Often, something strange happens to Dostoevsky's characters; something that can come from a small detail. A character may exit his house, walk into the streets and say, "Tanya, the woman I love, has called for my help. I must hurry; she will die if I do not go to her" (317). But then he comes across a friend, sees a dying dog on the street, and forgets that Tanya is waiting for him (317). He may engage in long talks with the friend, go to his house, have a cup of tea, and again erupt that Tanya is waiting for him, and that he must go (317).

While Dostoevsky's characters are embroiled in life-and-death-type emergencies, there is always a more urgent question to attend to, but the characters do not know what the urgent question is, and hence this is what stops them (317). Deleuze refers to this as the formula of the Idiot: "No, there is something more urgent. I am not budging until I know what it is…I am not sure what it is. But leave me alone. Let everything rot… this more urgent problem must be found" (317). Kurosawa shares this concern with Dostoevsky; Kurosawa's characters (in many of his films) also find themselves in a sort of desperate Dostoevskyian situations, where worst emergencies come as though enmeshed in other problems/questions more urgent. The characters of Kurosawa are in search

of the questions, the problems; they must know (317). Kurosawa, in other words, has an idea in cinema; he adapts Dostoevsky with whom he shares a problem (318).

Lucas Thompson in his book *Global Wallace* points out the ideas in Wallace's short story "Good Old Neon" that correspond to the ideas in Tolstoy's novella *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*. Wallace shares concerns—problems—with Tolstoy. In the very first line of "Good Old Neon," Neal confesses that he has been a "fraud" his entire life (*Oblivion* 141); the more effort Neal puts into trying to impress other people, the less impressive he feels inside; he sees himself as a fraud; he feels lonely (147). This has an affinity, says Thompson, with Ivan Ilych's awareness of the growing divide between him and his family, between him and authorities; affinity with his awareness of how, in several ways, he has been deceiving himself. In Wallace's archived copy of *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, he has underlined the passage where Ivan Ilych confesses that he wants "someone to feel sorry for him just as if he were a sick child"; beside the same passage, Wallace has also written "FALSITY"—a quality that Ivan Ilych shares with Neal (Thompson 109).

Thompson feels that Wallace distorts time just as Tolstoy does toward the end of his novella. In the second-last page of "Good Old Neon," which is a forty-page story, a character named David Wallace is introduced; he scans through the yearbook and sees the photo of Neal, and tries to imagine what Neal may have been through, what may have driven him to commit suicide; and in the microseconds that David Wallace is scanning and imagining, the previous thirty-nine pages unfold, where Neal is going on at length—speaking to you from the grave—about his fraudulence and how time plays out once you die. Likewise, on his death bed, Ivan Ilych has an epiphany of being a fraudulent, of having lived his life the wrong way, of having been deceptive toward himself, his wife and daughter—the narrator tells you that "all this happened in a single instant, and the meaning of that instant suffered no change thereafter," but for "those present his agony lasted another two hours" (111).

There is also one other way that Wallace borrows (an idea) from Tolstoy, according to Thompson. Neal inherits from her stepmother a pocket watch, which she had inherited from her maternal grandfather; the pocket watch has the Latin inscription "RESPICE FINEM," meaning "LOOK TO THE END" (110). When Ivan Ilych qualifies for the Civil Service, from the money his father gives him, he purchases a pocket watch with the same inscription. The pocket watch, the matching inscriptions, the meaning of the inscription, signify the redemptions of both Neal (after his death) and Ivan Ilych (on his death-bed); the fact that the pocket watch belonged to Neal's stepmother's maternal grandfather is Wallace's way of saying that Neal has a direct relation with Ivan Ilych himself; and with Neal's post-death first-person narration ending with the words borrowed from the Latin inscription, "THE END," it gestures toward the end of Ivan Ilych's descendants, says Thompson (110).

In my thesis, Wallace has ideas in the novels/stories/essays that correspond to the ideas in the diary/novel/stories/essays of Tolstoy and William Gass (Chapter 1); Anton Chekhov (Chapter 3); Deleuze and Felix Guattari (Chapters 2 and 3).

Chapter 1

In Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, James Incandenza, Sr. pulls up his son for mistreating a garage door; he tells his son to treat the garage door gently, respectfully (*Infinite* 157). The father tells his son that he knows that his son has looked at their garage door many times but now he wants him to "see" it (159).

In the first part of the first chapter, I plug Wallace's literary machine—Incandenza, Sr.'s monologue on the everyday arts of treating everyday objects—into machines of writers (Tolstoy, Karl Ove Knausgaard), and acting teachers (Constantin Stanislavsky, Stella Adler). In their works, too, you can hear echoes of Incandenza, Sr.'s words: the everyday objects you know about and look at, many times, but do not see.

Orbiting his room, cleaning this and that furniture, Tolstoy suffers a brain fade after turning a full circle: The Russian author writes in his diary on March 1,

1897, about being unsure whether he has dusted the sofa (Shklovsky 80). His sofa diary entry implies that Tolstoy cleans his room, frequently; and since dusting involves habitual and unconscious bodily movements, Tolstoy has the have-I-or-have-I-not conundrum when he approaches the sofa—a forgetting that walks hand-in-hand with habit. But Tolstoy feels that if, after dusting the sofa, he has forgotten whether he has dusted it, then it is equivalent to not dusting (80).

The Russian formalist, Viktor Shklovsky, reading Tolstoy's sofa-diary entry in his essay "Art as Device," remarks that life itself is a casualty of habit, and that mechanical circular routine movements expunge life. For a person operating on auto-mode, like the room-dusting Tolstoy on March 1, 1897, his clothes and his furniture, his partner and his apprehension about the coming war, get devoured; his life begins to get eaten away—recede, disappear, become nothing—by "automatization" (80). On auto-mode, you stop seeing.

To compel you to see, to protract your perception, art complicates forms, makes it complex; and it achieves all these through what Shklovsky calls the device of "ostranenie"—an artistic device that makes things strange, that de-automatizes things (80). "Things that have been experienced several times begin to be experienced in terms of recognition: a thing is in front of us, we know this, but we do not see it…," writes Shklovsky. "This is why we cannot say anything about it. Art has different ways of de-automatizing things" (81). Shklovsky highlights one of these methods that Tolstoy uses in his essay on corporal punishment: "Shame!" Tolstoy describes a thing, or an event, not by its name, but as though he is seeing it for the very first time, as though it is happening for the very first time; he de-automatizes the thing or event (81-82). While describing a thing, instead of referring to it by its conventional name, Tolstoy names "corresponding parts of other things" (82).

In his essay "Shame!" Tolstoy estranges the familiar concept of "flogging": "people who have broken the law are denuded, thrown down on the floor, and beaten on their behinds with sticks," and "lashed across their bare buttocks" (82). Tolstoy questions this method of punishment, terms it "stupid" and savage, and calls for another form of inflicting pain—like needling the shoulders or some other part of the body, or squeezing the hands or feet in a vise (82). Tolstoy, thus,

attempts to transmute the familiar act of flogging into something unfamiliar, both descriptively and by proposing that there has to be a change in the form of flogging and not its "essence" (82). Tolstoy's goal in his essay is to prolong the perception, by complicating the form: "The process of perception is its own end in art and must be prolonged," writes Shklovsky (80).

If you read Shklovsky's interpretation of "Shame!" before reading Tolstoy's essay, then you might mistakenly believe that Tolstoy sort of totally avoids the verb "flog," and its verbal variants; in fact, he uses flog, flogging, or flogged, at least twenty times in his essay of wrath and lamentation. In between, Tolstoy estranges the act.

Wallace's narrator Incandenza, Sr. (like Tolstoy) names the object first—the garage door—before he begins to name its corresponding parts (*Infinite* 157). This section of *Infinite Jest*, which occurs in a flashback, in the winter of 1960, starts with Incandenza, Sr. expressing his displeasure at the way his ten-year-old son James Incandenza, Jr. opens their garage door. Incandenza, Jr. bends down, stiffly, from the waist, and yanks the door open; his father tells him to bend instead from his knees, and gently pull the door, and not to put needless force, and to think of all garage doors as well-lubricated doors of a broiler, with meat broiling, and heat seeping out (157). "…this is our door in the garage. I know you know. I know you've looked at it before, many times. Now…now see it, Jim. See it as body," says Incandenza, Sr (158-9).

The crapulous father magnifies, using words, the garage door for his son: the dull color of its handle; the latch that opens clockwise (which latch Incandenza, Sr. tells his son to twist with one hand only); the dead bug that is protruding through the paint; the sun-induced cracks; the multiple decorative concave squares that Incandenza, Sr. tells his son to count (159). These observational exercises by Incandenza, Sr. are to train his son to make him see the surrounding objects; see them as if he is seeing them for the very first time, each time.

In one of his books on material reality, *Autumn*, Karl Ove Knausgaard attempts to get non-familiar with the everyday-life objects of the world, to see the world as if he has just been introduced to it. The book begins with a letter

written by the Norwegian writer to his unborn daughter. In the letter, Knausgaard mentions that you can easily "lose sight of" objects in the world—like the trees swaying in the wind, the blood circulating through the veins, the growing grass, the colors, red and green (4-5). Which is why Knausgaard has been writing the book, *Autumn*, for his daughter: he aspires to show her the world "as it is, all around us, all the time"; and by doing so, he expects to see the everyday-life objects himself (5).

Knausgaard is conscious of the close surrounding objects becoming "obvious" as you age—as life ages and coarsens you (5). The house, the garden, the floor, the water tap and the sink, the chair close to the wall beneath the kitchen window, the water, the trees—they become obvious (5-6). For the children, though, objects are not obvious, for they are immersed in the world; there is no distance between their own "selves" and the world (5). On the other hand, since you have outgrown the children's way of being immersed in the world, since you no longer think of the world and yourself as indistinguishable, the world as if escapes you, becomes obvious (5-6). Opening the door does not carry any meaning for you, laments Knausgaard; it is something that you mechanically do to move from one room to another (just as cleaning the sofa is something that you unconsciously do) (6).

What Incandenza, Sr. in *Infinite Jest* is trying to impart to his son is what the fictional theatre director Tortsov is also imparting to his students in Constantin Stanislavsky's *An Actor Prepares*. Tortsov gives the aspiring actors exercises not just to make them look at objects, but to see them—anew—on the stage; by turning their focus of attention from the auditorium to the stage's objects; by training them to find solitude behind the footlights when thousands of eyes train on them (Stanislavsky, ch. 5).

Tortsov gives his student actors an object each to notice in the light as an exercise; to notice means, in the director's book, is to carefully scan the object's "form, lines, colors, detail, characteristics," but the actors get only thirty seconds for this activity; the lights go out at the end of the time, and they have to describe their objects without seeing it; the director then switches on the light to find out whether the actors' descriptions tally with the features of the objects (ch. 5).

When the actors in the class get it wrong, they are asked to repeat the exercise; the director forces the actors to study their objects with less number of seconds available to them with each passing round, and the exercise continues till the actors get the descriptions of the objects right to the very last detail (ch. 5).

Stella Adler (the acting teacher of Marlon Brando) declares to her class in *Art of Acting* that she knows the chair in her hand, thoroughly: what color it is; how many nicks are on its back; where the paint is peeling off; where the springs are peeking through the upholstery; what part of the chair needs fixing; what the chair demands of her; does the chair make her sit with her spine erect, or does it allow her to slouch and slide into the chair, making her back convex (Adler, ch. 2). The stage's chair, aloof and unattended and dead, has to be completely understood by an actor to give back to the spectators a sentient chair, to surprise them with the chair's aliveness (ch. 2).

In a scene in *Infinite Jest*, Hal Incandenza lists things that are blue in the waiting room of the headmaster (508). Stephen Burn, author of *David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest*, tells you that the scene is an allusion to the list of blue things that Gass makes at the beginning of *On Being Blue* (ch. 2n. 17). That should not be surprising, since Wallace is an admirer of Gass's work: in his book-length interview with Bryan Garner, *Quack This Way*, Wallace describes Gass's writing to be a paradigm of "incredibly clear, beautiful, alive, urgent, crackling-with-voltage prose" (Garner 60); in the list of "direly underappreciated" novels, Wallace includes Gass's first novel, "Omensetter's Luck," and calls it "bleak but gorgeous, like light through ice" (*Both* 203); and in his first short story collection *Girl with Curious Hair*, Wallace pays homage to Gass in "John Billy" (Max 106).

Some of the blue things that Hal catalogues in the abovementioned scene in the headmaster's office are the shag carpet's checks, the two plush chairs out of six, some magazine covers, two bendable lamps, the tennis-ball-shaped vase, the sills and crosspieces of the two windows, the braid around the bill of Michael Pemulis's yachting cap, the chassis of Alice Moore's word processor, as well as her fingertips and lips are blue; the sky-border visible in the framed photos of the tennis Academy's students are also blue (*Infinite* 509).

The photos in the frame in *Infinite Jest* are also enumerated in an endnote, a list within a list, a blue-less list within a list: Ted Schacht can be seen adjusting his wristbands; Carol Spodek negotiating a volley at net; Marlon Bain, following-through, after hitting a big forehand, is on his follow-through; Ortho Stice doing a headstand; Yardguard attempting a low backhand; Wayne sliding on red clay; the ball's tossed up and Hal is going to serve; Pemulis and Stice, both cross-armed, standing against a fence; Shaw posing mustache-less (1034n. 209). And the list in the endnote goes on and on; the space of the headmaster's waiting room keeps erupting, opening out—bodies distending, shaking, running, gliding, sweating, shimmering; opening out and out like the space of the cousin's wedding in Gass's *The Tunnel*, published a year before *Infinite Jest* in 1995.

The unbearable and noisy relatives keep turning up at the wedding in a section called "They Should Live So Long: The Old Folks" of *The Tunnel*: lean uncles, pale aunts, rheumatic grandmothers and grandfathers; shrill cousins, cousins playing with mashed potato by letting it slide down their wrists; aunts moving in the house wearing hats, aunts starching and ironing linens, flagellating rugs, opening the door for dogs, swatting flies; uncles and great-uncles spitting tobacco while rocking; nieces and nephews wetting their pants, throwing up, bawling; arguing uncles, grunting uncles. And in the same section of *The Tunnel*, like *Infinite Jest*, Gass's narrator creates a list within a list as he segues into photographs present in the wedding space of: violet-brown babies, black mummies; girls wearing high-necked blouses; shiny-haired men with Rilke-like mustaches; and the narrator's father posing with a snake in his hand as if it's a fish. After the inventory of the photographs, the narrative moves back to the main list, but then again segues into the pictorial history of World War I in a book: Marne's taxis, Italian soldiers moving their cannons, piles of something dead in the pools of trenches, the German soldiers parading in long lines with spikes on their hats.

Hal's enumeration of things that are blue in headmaster's waiting room is also reminiscent of the list-making penchant of the French author Georges Perec. In the early nineties, Wallace's interest in application of mathematical structures to fiction makes him gravitate toward a group of writers and mathematicians

interested in formal word games and self-imposed constraints in writing (Burn, ch. 2). The group is called OUvroir de LItterature POtentielle (OuLiPo) or "the workshop for potential literature," and one of its key members is Perec, who constructs his 300-page novel, *A Void*, without using the letter 'e.' (A name of a character in *Infinite Jest* is Luria Perec. Does Wallace have Georges Perec in his mind?) Burn is of the opinion that the form of Wallace's "A Radically Condensed History of Postindustrial Life," the constraints that Wallace puts on himself in the story—writing in a pattern of twos and threes (three characters, two paragraphs, three commas, two clauses, and so on)—are adoptions from the OuLiPo writers (ch. 2). But the cataloguing of blue things in the headmaster's waiting room is not a literature of constraint; it is not unlike Perec's unconstrained cataloguing of the objects that are on his work-table:

> A desk-lamp, a cigarette box, a bud vase, a matchbox holder, a cardboard box containing little multi-colored index cards, a large carton bouilli inkwell incrusted with tortoiseshell, a glass pencil-box, several stones, three hand-turned wooden boxes, an alarm-clock, a push-button calendar, a lump of lead, a large cigar box (with no cigars in, but full of small objects), a steel spiral into which you slide letters that are pending, a dagger handle of polished stone, account books, exercise books, loose sheets, multiple writing instruments or accessories, a big hand-blotter, several books, a glass full of pencils, a small gilded wooden box (Perec 146).

It is not important whether Wallace borrows the literary strategy of listing from Gass or Perec or both; what is important to note, though, that by using this rhetorical form, Wallace—like Gass and Perec—is also attempting to exhaust a place, to create "a sense of abundance, overflow, excess," in the scene of listing blue things in the headmaster's waiting room (Gass, *Reader* ch. 45). Listing is not the only rhetorical strategy to create excess; you can also make words overflow—you can add endlessly, you can make humongous piles—through the use of conjunction "and," Gass points out (*Reader* ch. 47).

In the second half of the first chapter, I pluck out two long sentences (sample sentences #1 and #2) from a section of *Infinite Jest* and read them through Gass's concept of "and." In his essay "And," Gass tells you that the dictionary contains the word 'and' only because it wants to show its fidelity to tradition, to put up a show of being complete; no one actually checks the entry on 'and': "It [and] passes through the ear, the eye, the mind, unheard, unseen, and unremarked… As a word, 'and' is an amiable nothing" (*Reader* ch. 47). The 'and' is anonymous and invisible; and, at the same time, it is a vital word for excess and thus induces breathlessness (ch. 47). In sample sentences #1 and #2, Wallace creates an excess—makes you gasp for breath—by using 13 and 28 'and's respectively.

In sample sentence #1, Don Gately is about to burgle a house along with his associate; in the dark bedroom, they search for a safe with flashlights before discovering that Guillaume DuPlessis, the owner of the house is, unfortunately, present. The Gately-sections in *Infinite Jest* overflow with the coordinating conjunction, 'and': heaps of 'and's; heaps by 'and's; heaps to make you breathless.

In the sample sentence #1 of Wallace, you become a burglar too, seeing DuPlessis's dark bedroom's objects as if with a high-filter flashlight, studying the objects one at a time: a bottle and a glass and another bottle and magazines and specs and a box and vaporizer and bureau and chiffonnier. The slew of 'and's reminds you, again and again, that it's a dark room, and that the flashlights can catch only one object at a time in its circumference.

Wallace places the 'and's, meticulously, between objects not only for you, the burglar/reader, to see the objects, but also for you to see the 'and's; not to let the objects (as Incandenza, Sr. tells his son above) and 'and's go unstudied. In the circumference of the flashlight, therefore, the burglar/reader catches, along with the objects, the 'and's.

The unwatched 'and' does not carry any meaning, reports Gass; the 'and' plops on the page as it pleases, while the writer is sweating through nouns and verbs, etching and erasing them (*Reader* ch. 47). Conversely, the watched 'and' has multiple meanings and functions of the most profound sort. The 'and' is

swarming with surprising lessons on language if only you care to watch it, Gass tells you (ch. 47).

In sample sentence #2, for instance, three conjunctions are 'and's of cause, two are 'and's of consequence, six are adverbial 'and's ("how" is the question these 'and's answer), and three 'commas' are not 'commas' at all, but covert 'and's; in other words, these 'and's are ghostly and bodiless.

In the third chapter, I return to the concept of "and," as theorized by French philosophers, Deleuze and Guattari. I show how Wallace establishes the logic of "and" by making the language grow grass-like from the middle of the sentence, by making the language stutter and stammer, and by creating a tension in language: "and…and…and…"

Chapter 2

In the opening scene of *Infinite Jest*, Hal Incandenza gives silent responses to the Deans' questions. Hal appears not to be altogether there in the room; he prefers someone narrating his story for him, to him (*Infinite* 3). Hal flails, wriggles, and waggles; he emits animalistic sounds and noises (14).

According to Wallace's biography, *Every Love Story is a Ghost Story*, Wallace deliberately structures the Hal-episodes in a way to preclude the reader from dwelling on any one of the above possibilities for too long, too assuredly; and, thus, the what-has-happened-to-Hal question gets asked, again and again, without a single firm unequivocal possibility—answer—emerging (Max 193). In a letter to his *Infinite Jest* editor, Wallace writes:

> Any sort of conventional linear ending for this stuff is in my opinion going to seem either linearily thrillerish in a way that doesn't go with the rest of the book; or else incredibly prolix and complicated (193).

The author also tells his editor that he is aiming for: "an almost Artaud-ish blackout-type ending…. One that might look truncated or even violently ablated" (193).

There are three endings in *Infinite Jest*. First, on page 1079 the book ends with the 388th endnote. Second, the main text ends on page 981, in November 2009. Third, the chronological end of the novel is on page 17 in November 2010. Again, before the Hal-episode in the novel's opening, which takes place in November 2010, you can locate Hal for the last time in November 2009. What exactly happens in the last days of November 2009, at the end of the novel, when Hal's face begins to project "various expressions ranging from distended hilarity to scrunched grimace, expressions that seem[s] unconnected to anything that [is] going on" (*Infinite* 966)? What happens between November 2009 and November 2010—no one can tell with certitude either. Because these twelve months in the book are absent.

How do you read a novel that is deliberately structured in a way to make you hit a cul-de-sac whenever you pursue the what-has-happened-to-Hal question?

I propose reading the Hal-episodes of *Infinite Jest* through Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "novella." The French philosophers tell you in '1874: Three Novellas, or "What Happened"' (a chapter in *A Thousand Plateaus*) that the literary genre of novella revolves around the question: '"What happened? Whatever could have happened"' (*Thousand* 225)? The year in the title of their chapter—1874—refers to the publication year of the French writer Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly's story collection, *Diaboliques*. In this collection, the novella "The Crimson Curtain" compels you to ask at certain hairpin bends of the narrative, "Did I miss something? Something has surely happened for things to have come to this?"

In "The Crimson Curtain," one day, at dinner, Brassard finds Albertine sitting next to him at the table (instead of her usual position between her mother and father); and she begins to make advances toward him under the table (d'Aurevilly 28). What happens for the indifferent Albertine to fall for the vain Brassard—the one she does not pay attention to for a whole month? wonder Deleuze and Guattari (*Thousand* 226).

The next day, when Albertine seeks out Brassard's hand under the table, Brassard slips into her hand a note. Albertine, though, does not give a reply to his

letter; in fact she takes her previous position of sitting between her mother and father at the table. “And why this change? What had happened? What had I missed? Had the mother and father deduced something? There were at least twenty-five different questions in my eyes,” Brassard asks himself these questions (d’Aurevilly 33).

Suddenly, Albertine comes to Bressard’s room one night, and then continues to come for the next six months (38-39). Albertine comes to his room barefooted, and every night Bressard warms her cold feet first (45). But one night, he fails to make blood flow into Albertine’s feet, and her embrace loosens; she dies (45-46). What happens to Albertine? What exactly does she die from? It remains unknowable (*Thousand* 226).

Bressard decides to desert Albertine’s corpse and run to his colonel (d’Aurevilly 49-50). The colonel asks him to immediately get out of the town, and tells Bressard that he, colonel, will meet Albertine’s parents, and will write to Bressard about it (50). But the colonel soon dies in a war; and so, again, you’ll never know what happens after Bressard leaves the town, and how the colonel takes care of things vis-à-vis Albertine’s death (*Thousand* 226).

The whole move of the novella, as theorized by Deleuze and Guattari, has nothing to do with reflecting on something from the past: the novella puts you in touch with things that cannot be known (227). Can it be that “nothing” really has happened? This, too, is a possibility in a novella (227). A “nothing” produces “something,” or makes “something” happen (227). What is this “nothing”? It is a secret (227). Deleuze and Guattari tell you that the concept of novella has an umbilical relation to secrecy; but the form of this secret is impenetrable (227). Whatever has happened to Hal in *Infinite Jest*—the form of Hal’s secret—remains unknowable, similarly. Or, perhaps, the “nothing” that makes “something” happen in the opening as well as the end sections of Hal-episodes is of the future, rather than of the impenetrable past: the invisible forces of the future.

In *The Logic of Sensation*, Deleuze tells you that Francis Bacon paints the scream because he establishes an alliance “between the visibility of the scream (the open mouth) and invisible forces” of the future; the scream detects the diabolical/invisible forces of the future (61). In a letter, Franz Kafka writes:

“Diabolical powers, whatever their message might be, are knocking at the door and already rejoicing in the fact that they will arrive soon” (181n. 5). Each and every scream in Bacon’s paintings, writes Deleuze, is a composition of the “diabolical powers”: these powers—call it “forces”—knock at your door, on your body and head, but they are invisible (61). How do you make forces visible? Painting a scream is one of the ways (60).

The screaming mouth strikes an association with forces in Bacon’s paintings: the forces yield the scream; the forces sustain the scream; the forces make the body go into a spasm, reckon Deleuze (60). But it does not mean that this is some sort of a horror show, a “visible spectacle,” because of which Bacon’s figures are screaming; nor are they screaming before objects they can sense and perceive: there are no visible objects there that are regulating their feelings, their pain; the figures are screaming as the target of unable-to-be-seen forces (60).

Deleuze declares that the fact that Bacon does not show the horror in his scream paintings, does not show why someone is screaming, preclude these paintings from turning into a spectacle; the scream paintings of Bacon simply captures—reveals—invisible forces (181).

Bacon’s Pope screams from behind the curtain; he cannot see, nor can he be seen; his only function is to make visible the invisible forces that are making him scream (61). Bacon’s pope is screaming at death (61). “The phrase ‘to scream at’…suggests the coupling of forces, the perceptible force of the scream and the imperceptible force that makes one scream,” says Deleuze (61).

The forces produce sounds and noises in Hal that, if not out and out screams, border on screams: The sounds and noises are animalistic (*Infinite* 14). The forces also effect out of kilter gestures in Hal: his arms writhe and waggle (14). The forces are knocking on Hal’s body, and Hal’s visible body is grappling with the invisible forces, and it is within this visibility that Hal’s body struggles, creates a possibility of winning; by emitting scream-grade noises, by writhing and waggling, he is battling the invisible forces.

The mouth does more than just scream in Bacon’s paintings; the mouth also smiles. The hysterics, according to Deleuze, foist their presence on things and beings, and, also, for them the circumambient beings and things are

overpoweringly present: "*too* present"; and the hysterics convey the surfeit of presence to every being (*Logic* 50). The hysterical (involuntary) smile, likewise, is endlessly present; beneath and beyond the face, the hysterical smile continues insisting (51).

Hal's face begins to dismantle as the face starts displaying its own intentions in November 2009: now hilarious, now amusing, now mirthful, now cachinnating: The involuntary hysterical ambiguous smile continues insisting (*Infinite* 875-6). Hal's face functions in a hilarious manner; Hal's expression suggests that he is almost having trouble pronouncing the words due to laughter (875). Hal consciously attempts to make his face circumstance-appropriate (875). But the smile continues to persist: the eyes are still crinkly; the gums still showing (876). Hal tells you that he intends to check his face in the mirror: Is it still broadcasting hilarity, unintentionally (896)? The hysterical smile persists, rendering the invisible forces visible, rendering Hal slightly arrhythmic, slightly off, in a milieu. Hal, broadcasting a hysterical smile, appears to be overpoweringly present.

In the opening scene of *Infinite Jest*, in November 2010—exactly a year after the above incidents of involuntary hysterics and their endless presence—Hal again looks to have only slight control over his face; the hysterical smile re-emerges. When Hal projects a smile, the deans see it as the expression of someone grimacing; it's a strange disquieting smile of Hal—an abominable smile—rendering invisible forces visible.

The deans variously describe Hal's animalistic sounds in the opening scene of *Infinite Jest* as: "Like some sort of animal with something in its mouth"; "Sounded most of all like a drowning goat. A goat, drowning in something viscous"; "This strangled series of bleats" (14).

The deans are as horrified as the chief clerk is on hearing the sounds that issue from Gregor Samsa's mouth in Kafka's novella, "The Metamorphosis." When Samsa wakes up one morning, he notices his metamorphosis into an insect. His voice, Samsa notices, carries a constant "twittering squeak," which rises up and reverberates around the words and dismantles their "sense," so that the chief clerk and Samsa's family members are not sure of the words Samsa is using

(*Collected* ch. 22). When Samsa cries out from inside his locked room, giving an excuse of illness for not catching the early morning train to work, the chief clerk asks Samsa's mother whether she has been able to understand even a word of what Samsa is saying. "That was no human voice," declares the chief clerk (ch. 22). Samsa's words or his cries cannot be said to have affiliations anymore to a "language of sense," Deleuze and Guattari point out in their book, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*; though his "nonsense"—Samsa's whining, warbling, crying, twittering, squeaking—is born out of language of sense (*Kafka* 21). Nonsense erupts from a language of sense.

Analogous to the chief clerk and Samsa's family members, the deans are unable to understand Hal in the opening scene of *Infinite Jest* because his words—though Hal articulates, slowly and distinctly, like Samsa—do not belong to a language of sense anymore. For the deans, Hal's words are merely a voice carrying serial sounds of a goat's bleating: nonsense (*Infinite* 14); it is the situation of a becoming-animal of a man, or the becoming-goat of a man, not unlike Samsa's becoming-beetle of a man.

Thompson in his chapter on Kafka in the book *Global Wallace* also draws an analogy between the opening scene of "The Metamorphosis" and *Infinite Jest*; but Thompson reads Samsa's becoming of an animal as a "biological descent" into an insect; and, similarly, reads Hal's act as a downward climb of "the evolutionary tree" into an animalistic state (153). In Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming-animal, though, you do not undergo a "process of biological devolution," and turn—as if finally reaching the logical destination/conclusion—into a beetle (Samsa) or a goat (Hal) (Thompson 154). It is not a case of Samsa and Hal "being an animal" and exiting the human territory completely; nor are they becoming "like" an animal; nor are they being "like" an animal. "It is a *becoming-animal* and not a *being-animal* because it is hybrid. We begin from what is not animal, neither animal nor human,'" says Claire Colebrook, in her book on Deleuze (133).

In the situation of becoming-animal, Hal and Samsa establish a virtual alliance with a goat and beetle, and enter into a proximity to the goat and beetle, respectively. What Hal and Samsa assume are not really the powers of a goat and

beetle; but something equivalent to it. This alliance with an animal either increases their powers or gifts them with newer ones; and they become more than the person they are by forming what the Australian philosopher Paul Patton refers to in his book on Deleuze as an "inter-individual body": a provisional body forms in alliance with the "real" or "imaginary" powers of the animal concerned (Patton 79-80).

In the situation of becoming-animal, the whining sound takes possession of Samsa's voice and makes his words of defense blurry, incomprehensible; his words become nothing but "intensities," as the whining sound deterriorializes the language or language of sense (*Kafka* 22). Samsa's words cease to mean anything in the "proper," or "figurative," or "symbolic" sense; the sound sweeps away the words. (22). The animal stories—the becoming-animal of humans, and the becoming-human of animals—are where Kafka makes an intensive use of language; or where metamorphosis occurs through intensive language, through sounds that blur the words.

In the situation of becoming-animal, likewise, the bleating sounds capture Hal's voice and make his words of defense blurry; his words, which are incomprehensible to the deans, are not being used in a "proper" or "symbolic" or "figurative" sense; his words become nothing but "a distribution of states": intensities (*Kafka* 22). The sounds—bleating in Hal's case and whining in Samsa's—make the sequences of words tremble and, by doing so, unbinds every word from its standard rules, opens every word onto unpredictable intensities, which is an internal component or range of the word itself (22).

Metamorphosis puts two deterritorializations in conjunction: the human foists the animal to run off or to be in the service of the human; but also the animal, in its turn, puts forward to the human certain ways of escape that the human can never think of by himself, Deleuze and Guattari tell you (35). The man is out of his original territory ("absolute deterritorialization") in the situation of becoming-animal. This is not a relative ejection of man out of his own territory, which the man brings upon himself by indulging in shifting (in his chair or from one room to another or from one house to another, etc.), or travelling (intra-city, city-to-city, country-to-country, Earth-to-space, etc.); the becoming-animal of the

human involves what Deleuze and Guattari call an "immobile voyage": a voyage that you undertake by staying in one place (35). In this immobile voyage, becoming-animal lives as an intensity only; only as intensity can you comprehend becoming-animal (35). You escape in an immobile voyage in becoming-animal; you deterritorialize through becoming-animal. About immobile voyage and becoming-animal, Deleuze and Guattari write:

> To become animal is to participate in movement, to stake out the path of escape in all its positivity, to cross a threshold, to reach a continuum of intensities that are valuable only in themselves, to find a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone (13).

Becoming-animal is a zone of escape; an escape that an animal proposes to the human by indicating to them the lines of flight—means of getting out, getting away.

Samsa in "'The Metamorphosis" becomes an animal—a beetle—to get out. What does Samsa want to escape? Samsa becomes an animal, Deleuze and Guattari reckon, to find a way out; find a way to get out, where his father has been unable to, or does not know of finding one (*Kafka* 13): the father, as a bank messenger, even sleeps in his uniform, so that it appears that he is still in submission—still with his head lowered—to the powers of his office superiors at home; and that he is ready to provide his services round the clock (14).

Samsa, a commercial traveler, becomes an animal, because he wants to escape the firm's chief and the chief clerk; the bureaucrats and the system (13)—to flee those who begin to look at Samsa, suspiciously, when he does not reach the firm on time one day; they quickly forget his daily unrelenting fidelity. Samsa becomes a beetle and enters the zone where only a warble or whining—a sort of humming, twittering, squeaking—issue from his mouth, and no words; his voice produces wordless sounds (13). Samsa traces, intensely, a way out vis-à-vis the bureaucratic system: the oppressors, the visible diabolical powers (14).

The different ways of Samsa and his father, the ways in which they handle the bureaucratic or commercial system kind of mirrors the ways of Kafka and his

father. Kafka's understanding of freedom is different from his father's. Kafka's father, a Czech Jew, migrates from the countryside to take up residence in the city; this is indeed a procedure of leaving a territory, of deterritorialization; but the procedure falters again and again as Kafka's father, according to Deleuze and Guattari, enters a new territory, reterritorializes, in his business, where he operates with his head lowered, submitting to diabolical powers, and is driven into a corner (12-13). The father is unable to dismantle the "impasse" (11). In literature, Kafka is able to—by becoming an animal.

Becoming an animal is one of the ways to counter the diabolical powers knocking at your door, at your body, Deleuze and Guattari reckon:

> To the inhumanness of the 'diabolical powers,' there is the answer of a becoming-animal: to become a beetle, to become a dog, to become an ape, 'head over heels and away,' rather than lowering one's head and remaining a bureaucrat, inspector, judge, or judged (12).

Hal's wordless bleating in the opening scene achieves three things simultaneously: 1) It shows that Wallace—Bacon-esque—decides to confront the invisible forces. While Bacon does it by showing his figures screaming at invisible forces, Wallace does it through scream-grade noises and sounds: bleating. Wallace makes life—makes Hal—'scream' at invisible forces. It shows that Wallace reckons that a life can not only detect the invisible forces—diabolical powers of the future—but is also capable of capturing, defeating, or even befriending them, and rendering them visible through the cry: the scream. 2) With language being used in an intensive manner (and not in a "proper," or "figurative," or "symbolic" sense), with the sound blurring the words that Hal utters, the language deterritorializes—disorganizes, comes apart; or, in other words, the language escapes its own territories. 3) By bleating, by establishing an alliance with an animal, Hal deterritorializes; he escapes his own original territory, becoming more than the person he is by forming an inter-individual body in alliance with the "real" or "imaginary" powers of a goat.

Sitting on the chair, in the office of admission in the opening scene of *Infinite Jest*, Hal makes an immobile voyage in the face of forces. Hal escapes without movement, by staying in one place, through stationary flight of intensity.

Chapter 3

While the second chapter looks at intensive use of language—the deterritorialization of language—mainly through Hal-episodes; in the third chapter I return, through other sections of *Infinite Jest* and a non-fiction work of Wallace, to the topic of language escaping its own territory, the stuttering and stammering of language, the dismantling and decomposing of language. I claim Wallace to be a "great" writer precisely because he is a "minor" writer, the one who minorizes the major language.

In *Global Wallace*, in the chapter 'Wallace and Russia,' Thompson explicates Wallace's obsession with Dostoevsky, which begins when the American author is working in the 90s on a review of Joseph Frank's biographical series of the titan of Russian literature (93). Thompson shows Wallace's tendency to find in his own milieu—the late-twentieth-century America—similarities with Dostoevsky's milieu—the mid-nineteenth century Russia (94). The materialism and selfishness and nihilism in Russia are, for instance, visible to Wallace in his own context (96). Also, Wallace finds aspects of his own character in Dostoevsky's fiction. In his review of Frank's biography, he calls Pavel Smerdyakov from *The Brothers Karamazov* "unbelievably repellent" and "that living engine of slimy resentment in whom I personally see parts of myself I can barely stand to look at" (*Consider* 265). In the archived copy of the third volume of Frank's Dostoevsky biography, Thompson finds that Wallace has written his name's initials, "DFW," beside an analysis of the narrator of *Notes from Underground* quoted below (*Global* 98):

> The underground man's vanity convinces him of his own superiority and he despises everyone; but since he desires such superiority to be *recognized* by others, he hates the world for its indifference and falls into self-loathing at his own humiliating dependence (98).

The scheming narrator of *Notes*—the one who deceives himself—resembles him, Wallace recognizes.

But not just Doestoevsky; I claim that Anton Chekhov, too, illuminates aspects of Wallace's character.

In a 1993 interview with Larry McCaffery, Wallace declares that the purpose of art is "love"; it's what separates "good art" from "so-so art"; and that novelists must find a way to love, instead of hankering for love in their work (*Conversations* 50). The stellar writers of fiction—and in this list Wallace includes Chekhov, Raymond Carver, Flannery O'Connor, Tolstoy, Thomas Pynchon—always gift something to the readers; their writings benefit the readers when they (the readers) profoundly engage with it, pay attention to it (50). The readers emerge from these real works of art "heavier" than they go into it; they emerge "fuller," because these writers open themselves up, spiritually and emotionally, despite the risk of coming across as "banal or melodramatic or naïve or unhip or sappy"—the selfless loving generous writers take this risk so that it affects the readers in some manner (50). Wallace confesses that he is not brave enough to undertake this kind of project (50). Six years later, in 1999, in 'Authority and American Usage,' a 61-page essay on Bryan A. Garner's *A Dictionary of Modern American Usage (ADMAU),* Wallace does find the courage; he constructs the usage essay in the manner of Chekhov; the usage essay is a work of good art because both Wallace and the reader are able to extract "value" from it (51).

In the essay*,* Wallace praises Garner for displaying "Democratic Spirit" in the usage dictionary: it is a quality that is a combination of "rigor and humility, i.e., passionate conviction plus a sedulous respect for the convictions of others" (*Consider* 72). The democratic spirit is hard to practice, maintain, on certain vexed issues such as "correctness" in contemporary American usage; you have to look at yourself, honestly, and to question yourself, continually, about what motivates you to believe in something, declares Wallace (72). What strategy does Wallace employ to tackle the "highly charged" issue of American usage (72)? In the essay—which is "part narrative, part argumentative, part meditative, part experiential"—what persona does Wallace project (Garner 78)? At the beginning of the essay, Wallace declares himself to be a language fanatic (a "snoot" as he

calls it), and that he is a prescriptivist (a "linguistic conservative"); but then the American author distances himself from prescriptivists (or variants of it) on occasion; he even portrays himself, on one occasion, as a descriptivist (a "linguistic liberal") (*Consider* 79).

In the first part of the third chapter, I read Wallace's usage essay the way another American author, George Saunders, reads Chekhov's short story, 'Gooseberries.' (In *A Swim in a Pond in the Rain*, Saunders explicates seven Russian nineteenth-century short stories and 'Gooseberries' is one of them. Apart from Chekhov, the book features stories of Tolstoy, Ivan Turgenev, and Nikolai Gogol.)

In the usage essay, I claim, Wallace displays a persona not unlike Chekhov in 'Gooseberries.' Though Chekhov and Wallace write on disparate subjects, though 'Gooseberries' is a short story and Wallace's text an essay, the structure of their arguments appears kindred; namely, both the structures sidestep one-dimensionality—a value that readers can extract from the texts of Chekhov and Wallace; a value that makes the readers heavier, fuller.

The structure of 'Gooseberries' thinks, says Saunders, in terms of '"on the other hand"' declarations: Ivan loathes happiness, happy people; on the other hand, he is rapturous while swimming in a river in the rain; Ivan's gestures in the water are self-centered; on the other hand, Burkin's constant tendencies to rein in Ivan ("You've had enough!") are also irritating; Alyohin is living a frugal life in his farm; on the other hand, Alyohin blackens the water due to his excessive neglect of personal hygiene; it may be petty to spend a disproportionate amount of time obsessing over owning a gooseberry-filled farm like Nikolay; on the other hand, Nikolay is at least passionate about something, even if it is a fruit of a particular type; on the other, other hand Alyohin is not responsible for someone's death (like Nikolay is for his wife) for practicing frugality (Saunders, ch. 6).

The structure of Wallace's usage essay, similarly, thinks in terms of a series of "on the other hand" statements. Wallace creates a persona in the essay who keeps qualifying himself, and, thus, strives to sidestep one-dimensionality: Wallace declares himself to be a prescriptivist—a snoot (*Consider* 71n. 8); on the other hand, he is not a dogmatic snoot, the kind who finds no need to explain to

the students about why Standard Written English (SWE) is a desirable dialect to master (106); Wallace criticizes the descriptivists for thinking of themselves as "scientists," for thinking they are observing "scientific phenomena" of the way people use language, when what they are merely observing are "moronic" behaviors of human beings and tabulating it (89); on the other hand, he finds a number of traditional prescriptive rules to be "stupid," like splitting infinitives, and those endorsing it to be "contemptible and dangerous " type of snoots (100); Wallace lashes out at the editor of the *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (*W3*), Philip Gove, who proclaims that language changes constantly and change being quite a normal thing (83); on the other hand, he acknowledges that conventions of usage and English itself change from time to time, and if it didn't, you'd all still be communicating like Chaucer (75); Wallace sort of laments that students are being taught to write descriptively in school, to write abandoning "systematic grammar, usage, semantics, rhetoric, etymology" (81); on the other hand, he is not an admirer of the prescriptive columnists or pop snoots (who grumble about English language blunderers) (79); Wallace finds certain dismissals of Standard Black English (SBE), facile and disturbing (80-1); on the other hand, he gives injunction to his students of color that they cannot use their native dialect—SBE—in their essays in his English class (108); on the other, other hand Wallace uses nonstandard English of Rural Midwestern with his peers, not just to be accepted in the group, but also because he finds some of the "RMisms" to be superior than their SWE equivalents (99).

In his usage essay, Wallace gives an injunction to his black students about not using SBE in their essays (108). The black students, in other words, are not to disturb the equilibrium—the homogenous system, the constant terms and relations, the grammar—of SWE. On the other hand, though, Wallace himself puts the homogenous system of SWE in disequilibrium in his fictional and non-fictional works.

In the second part of the last chapter, I show how Wallace decomposes—destructs—English, the major language, through creation of syntax: through agrammaticality, digression, repetition; how he makes the language stutter and stammer; how he makes a minor use of the major language.

In a section of *Infinite Jest*, Molly Notkin mentions to her interrogators that the myth about the purported existence of a lethally entertaining movie—*Infinite Jest*—illustrates Deleuze's philosophy of "commodity as the escape-from-anxieties-of-mortality-which-escape-is-itself-psychologically-fatal" (792). Notkin claims that this theory is clearly explicated in Deleuze's posthumous work, "*Incest and the Life of Death in Capitalist Entertainment*" (792). Deleuze has not written a book by this name; but the mention of the French philosopher might be an indication to read the Notkin-section through him; to especially read a long passage—containing two incomplete subordinate clauses—through Deleuze's theory of agrammaticality. In other words, Wallace has an idea in the novel that corresponds to the idea in a philosophical book of Deleuze.

In one of his essays on Herman Melville, Deleuze looks at a line from the first stanza of E. E. Cummings's Poem 29 of *50 Poems* to define grammatical anomaly, or "agrammaticality": "he danced his did" (*Essays* 69). Following the linguist Nicolas Ruwet, Deleuze tells you that "a series of ordinary grammatical variables" have "an agrammatical formula as their limit"; for example, Cummings's words, "he danced his did," is the agrammatical limit of the grammatically correct expressions: "he did his dance, he danced his dance, he danced what he did" (69).

In the same vein, in the section of Molly Notkin in *Infinite Jest*, by breaking off the syntax of the subordinate clause, Wallace provides the agrammatical limit: "whose physical vigor through the peephole" (*Infinite* 794)… Instead of the verb, an adverb is positioned ("through"). When Simon de Bourcier, in "They All Sound Like David Foster Wallace," provides the missing verbs ("he had observed" "he had envied"), he is making a series of correct expressions (Bourcier 7). Just as another agrammatical construction in Wallace's same sentence—"through which, late at night—claiming to Mother a case of skitters from all the holiday nibbles—hunched atop the sink, every night…"—Wallace's agrammaticality (with the missing verb) stands as the limit of a list of correct expressions—"through which, late at night, he peeked at them" "through which, late at night, he cursed at them silently" "through which, late at night, he eavesdropped on them," etc.

Wallace's sentences—the whole of *Infinite Jest*—are not beautifully, nor organically, composed: as you enter his sentences, you often lose your path and thus have to retrace it; as you accompany the sprouting em-dashes and parentheses and prolongations and digressions and ruptures and bifurcations and leaps of associations, you often forget where you are at in the narrative. Many of Wallace's sentences in *Infinite Jest* appear to be collections of patchwork; their beauty—their charm—lies in their apparent crudeness: the syntactical madness, the syntactical convulsion, take apart what Wallace refers to in his usage essay as the SWE, the major language of America, the language used by hyper-educated Wasp (*Consider* 107-8).

This is literature's effect on language; on the site of literature, language is dismantled. Deleuze, following Marcel Proust, tirelessly declares in many of his works, but especially *Essays Critical and Clinical*, that masterpieces—great literature—are created through torturing—contorting, deforming—the syntax; through placing the grammar in disequilibrium. Through creation of syntax, the writer pioneers "a new language within language"; for the new language to be born, the initial language is sort of forcefully yanked outside of its confinement: the standard rules (*Essays* V). Deleuze writes:

> As Proust says, it [literature] opens up a kind of foreign language within language, which is neither another language nor a rediscovered patois, but a becoming-other of language, a minorization of this major language, a delirium that carries it off, a witch's line that escapes the dominant system… Syntactic creation or style—this is the becoming of language (5).

The incomplete subordinate clauses in his sentence exemplify Wallace's syntactical creations. To invent this syntax, Wallace does not collate two different major languages in his sentence; does not even collate a minor language (for example, SBE) with a major one (SWE); rather, he makes a minor use of the major language; sculpts "a foreign language *within* his own language"; effects a becoming-other of language through agrammaticality (110).

Deleuze and Guattari tell you in *A Thousand Plateaus* that it is clear to everyone that language, in its essence, is a "heterogeneous, variable reality"; which is why the French philosophers criticize the scientific endeavor of linguists to create a structure defined by homogeneity and standardization, by invariables and constants—phonological, syntactical, and semantic constants; or, to put it differently, defined by the "power (*pouvoir*) of constants" (*Thousand* 118).

The scientific model of studying language—of abstracting constants from variables—is entwined with the political model; because in the political model, too, "language is homogenized, centralized, standardized, becoming a language of power, a major or dominant language" (117). The prerequisite for submitting to the laws of the society, for declaring yourself as a sane person, is to write grammatically correct sentence; someone committing solecisms is fit as though for the mental health institution, Deleuze and Guattari state sardonically (117-118).

Your mother tongue does not have hold over you as much as the dominant or the major language, Deleuze and Guattari point out; and the dominant language's assumption of control proceeds sometimes along a localized and sometimes massive area; sometimes at various centers simultaneously; sometimes conceivably and sometimes inconceivably: the dominant language, SWE for example, finds various ways to percolate—infiltrate—and to homogenize, centralize (118).

The scientific model of abstracting constants and maintaining constant terms and relations always allies with the political model of foisting these constants—the standards—on speakers (118). In his usage essay, Wallace too tells his black students, about the politics of the major language—SWE. Wallace gives injunction to his black students that they cannot write in SBE in the essays; and that in his English class the black students must master the rules of SWE; and that, instead of SWE standing for "Standard Written English," it might just as well stand for "Standard White English," because white people are not only the developers of the language but they also use it, especially educated and influential white people in America (*Consider* 108-109).

If one kind of language is termed a major language—a language which has a mighty hold on your tongue, and which is used with cunning to move you about, and which is defined by power (*pouvoir*) of constants; the second kind of language is termed a "minor" language; it is defined by the power (*puissance*) of continuous variation; the minor language puts the major language—the standard, the constants—into variation (*Thousand* 118).

A minor language, therefore, does not exist independently of a major language; they exist only in relation to a major language (122). A writer's strength working in the realm of major language lies in carving a minor language—turning his own major language into a minor one. The writers who are able to do this are anointed "minor" and the "only greats" by Deleuze and Guattari (122). These writers are bi- or multilingual in their own language; they set out to conquer their own language, in the hope of finding previously unseen or unknown minor languages (122). When writers invent a minor language, they begin to write as a foreigner or a minor in their own language (122). This foreign language does not mean a different language, not even a marginalized one, but a becoming-minor, becoming-other of the major language itself through syntactic creation.

Apart from making minor use of language through agrammaticality (the limit of language), Wallace also minorizes the major language through "stuttering" (a tension in language) in *Infinite Jest*: It is not merely the character that stutters in his novel, but the language also stutters, or Wallace makes the language stutter.

In his essay, "He Stuttered," Deleuze begins by writing about how mediocre novelists attempt to embellish the dialogic attribution (he said/she said); they use expressions such as, "he murmured," "he stammered," "he sobbed," "he giggled," "he cried," "he stuttered"—these dialogic markers indicate the different voice modulations of characters' speeches; these markers "tell" you that a character is murmuring, stammering, stuttering, and so on (*Essays* 107).

But Deleuze is not interested in novels where authors merely tell you that the character is stuttering, tell you about their various intonations of speech; rather he is keen on authors who do not just tell you, but also show you; show you how the form of expression (he stuttered) replays—sort of doubles—in the

corresponding form of content. Or, to put it differently, the stutter transfers from one plane of language to another plane; from the form of expression to the form of content. Defining the form of content, Deleuze writes:

> [It's] an atmospheric quality, a milieu that acts as the conductor of words—that brings together within itself the quiver, the murmur, the stutter, the tremolo, or the vibrato, and makes the indicated affect reverberate through the words (108).

The aforementioned incomplete subordinate clauses (in the Notkin-section of *Infinite Jest*) do not just indicate agrammaticality, it also indicates that Notkin is stuttering. But it is not just the character who stutters; Wallace does not merely "tell" you that Notkin is stuttering and leave it at that, at the level of speech. Wallace also "shows" the stuttering; he becomes a stutterer himself, as the stuttering goes beyond speech or "individual discourse" (*parole*) toward the "collective system" (*langue*) (Lecercle 231).

By contorting the syntax of the sentence, by keeping subordinate clauses incomplete, Wallace, writing in the third person, indicates Notkin's stutter (or Madam Psychosis's father's stutter). Here, the stuttering is at the level of parole; but Wallace also shows the affect of stutter on speech's contents, on non-linguistic elements, on *langue*. At a party given by Notkin, her academic friends, who have nasal voices and habitually stutter at the beginning of their sentences, do the stuttering dance: they slow down the Mambo, a hip-intensive dance requiring nimble intricate footwork, to a minimal movement; and they appear to be just short of "standing still," and almost dancing, and possibly snapping their fingers or hinting at it (*Infinite* 229). At the same party, Joelle van Dyne (aka Madame Psychosis) thinks of the unreleased movie, *Infinite Jest*, which uses a stuttering, automatically wobbling lens (230).

While the actions, the gestures, and the attitudes of the minimally dancing academicians, are the qualities of the atmosphere, the milieu that coalesces within itself the stutter of Notkin; in the latter case, it is the object of the wobbly lens that gathers within itself the affect, or Notkin's stutter.

The language and speech stutter; the language, its interior elements—phonological, semantic, and syntactical—are put through a continuous variation and it effects the non-linguistic components as well: The actions, passions, gestures, attitudes, objects, and so on, are also put through a continuous variation. About this coupling, the linguistic plus non-linguistic, Deleuze writes in 'One Less Manifesto':

> One cannot treat the elements of language and speech as so many interior variables without placing them in a reciprocal relation with exterior variables, in the same continuity, in the same flux of continuity (*Mimesis* 248).

The minorization of the major dominating language entails escaping the confinement of the power of constants or standard grammatical rules; and, similarly, or in the same movement, actions and gestures escape the dominating system that organizes it (248): the dancers contravene the grammar of Mambo steps; the dancers display stiff gestures; and the camera lens of the unreleased movie, *Infinite Jest*, operating as though its machine is rusty, also work stiffly.

Through agrammaticality and stuttering, the writer carves a new language that is not outside language but "outside of language" (*Essays* 112). The new language, the syntactical contortion, is what Deleuze refers to as:

> A painting or a piece of music, but a music of words, a painting with words, a silence in words, as if the words could now discharge their content: a grandiose vision or sublime sound. What is specific to the drawings and paintings of great writers (Hugo, Michaux…) is not that these works are literary, for they are not literary at all; they attain pure visions, but visions that are still related to language in that they constitute an ultimate aim, an outside, an inverse, an underside, an inkstain, or unreadable handwriting… Words create silence (113).

In the opening section of *Infinite Jest* itself, Wallace creates music of words, creates silence; he attains visions and auditions of the outside of the language. According to the testimony of the deans, Hal makes animalistic sounds and noises when he attempts to speak; Hal bleats like a goat; it is his form of expression (*Infinite* 14). Wallace confirms Hal's bleating through transferring of the form of expression to a corresponding form of content: the uncontrollable waggling, wriggling, and flailing of Hal's arms (14).

In the opening section of "The Metamorphosis," Kafka too creates music of words, attains visions and auditions of an inverse of the language. Samsa, as he metamorphoses into a giant insect, notices that his voice, though his own, is squeaking rather than speaking; the chief clerk tells Samsa's mother that Samsa's voice is not the voice of a human; it's animalistic (*Collected* ch. 22). Kafka, says Deleuze, confirms the twittering squeaking voice of Samsa with the corresponding helpless waving—the ceaseless uncontrollable waving in several directions—of his numerous legs and his rocking, hard-to-maneuver body (*Essays* 108).

These great writers strain the language to such an extent, they build up such a pressure, that, not speech, but language itself begins trembling: stuttering, stammering, bleating, squeaking, murmuring. And then the entire language is yanked to the limit, the outside, the outside of the language—where language encounters silence (113).

What is the style of a great writer? In the documentary *Gilles Deleuze: From A to Z*, Deleuze declares that style means to deform the syntax of the language in which the author writes and speaks; the great stylists make the language stutter or stammer; they burrow a new language within a language (02:03-04:38). Through the process of syntactical contortion, the stylists dig the language out of its straight furrows and carry the language to a frontier that separates it not only from silence but also music, mentions Deleuze in the documentary (04:39-05:11).

When writers create a new or foreign language in one language (*langue*), the language in its entirety (*langage*) gets driven to the outside of language comprising "Visions and Auditions," which are not part of any language (*Essays* 5). What are accessible to the great and minor writers like Wallace, in the intervals of

language, are visions and auditions: silence in words; music of words; painting with words; ideas (5). The great stylists are the seers and hearers of literature; through their original syntactic treatment of language, they are able to release ideas and life (5). This is what it means to have an idea.

In a television interview with Wallace, Charlie Rose asks the author about the three-hundred-and-eighty-eight footnotes that take up ninety-six pages in *Infinite Jest*. Wallace tells him that the reality in which he lives appears to him to be "fractured"; and that it is difficult to write about this reality because the text is "linear" and "unified"; and that he is constantly looking to fracture his texts that does not disorient the readers too much: the footnotes are analogous to a "second voice" in his head, Wallace tells Rose (17:51-19:28).

In *Infinite Jest*, a mid-sentence fracture on page 311 takes eighteen pages to complete; or rather you are able to come back to the primary text after you read eighteen pages of endnote 110.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari constantly create an opposition between two absolutely different methods of thinking: the rhizome (grass) and the tree. Whereas the tree thinks in terms of filiations, hierarchy, roots, origins, points, future and past; the rhizome thinks in terms of alliance. The rhizome thinks not in straight lines that go from point to point, but lines that pass between the points; the rhizome does not concern itself with the future and past, but present-becoming, like becoming-animal—in which a man establishes an alliance with an animal and becomes neither man nor animal; both the animal and the man are pushed out of their own original territory.

The tree gives the logic of the verb "to be" or "IS"; while rhizome gives the logic of conjunction "AND" (*Thousand* 26). While "IS" acts as the "constant" in language; the "AND" puts the language in continuous variation, carves a minor use of language, makes the language stutter and stammer in itself: "and…and…and…" (26). The entirety of grammar maintains the subordination of "AND" to "IS"; Deleuze asks you, instead, to replace "IS" with "AND"; he asks you not to think "IS," but to think with "AND": "A *and* B" (*Dialogues II* 57).

The conjunction—"AND"—is powerful enough to root out the "to be" verb. There are some questions that automatically turn false, turn useless, when you write/think with the art of the "And" (*Thousand* 26). Questions like: "Where are you going? Where are you coming from? What are you heading for" (26)? These questions are of no purpose to the writers writing with "AND," especially American and English writers, who begin differently from their French counterparts, states Deleuze in the essay that endorses the superiority of Anglo-American literature (*Dialogues II* 39).

The French writers are interested in tabula rasa, in beginning again (anew); they look for a base or a foundation or a certain point from which to begin and to anchor (39). The Anglo-American writers, on the other hand, take up a line that has come to a halt, say before two rocks, and they attach it to another segment to make it pass between the two rocks (39). The Anglo-American writers move and travel from and through the middle; they come and go rather than start and finish; they operate between things, establishing the logic of "AND," cancelling out beginnings and endings, obliterating bases (*Thousand* 27).

This is a procedure that Wallace employs in the right-wing radio essay "Host" (in the collection *Consider the Lobster*), which pullulates with box notes. Wallace makes the primary text's sentence grow from the middle by placing himself in the middle of the sentence; he interrupts a line in the text and joins a segment (a box note) to it, and interrupts the sentence in the box note too and joins another segment (another box note) to it, and pushes language to its limit.

The limit, which is outside of language and not outside language, contains visions and auditions that do not belong to any language, but which language alone helps to see and hear. The great minor writers, the writers that make a minor use of language, create another language within language, and take the entire language system and make it communicate with its own outside: the limit. The writers, who minorize the language they write and speak in and thus become a foreigner in their own language, paint (with words), compose music (of words), and show silence (in words). Wallace belongs to this pantheon. Through agrammaticality, through digression, through repetition, through syntactical stuttering, Wallace conquers fragmentary visions that pass through a poet's

words, a painter's color, and a musician's sound. It is through words, between words—in the interstices of language—that Wallace sees and hears—not fantasies, but veritable ideas.

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1

The 'Everyday Arts' of David Foster Wallace

In David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, James Incandenza, Sr. pulls up his son for mistreating a garage door: the son bends down at the waist stiffly and yanks at door's handle, so that the door rolls up jerkily. Incandenza, Sr. asks his son to treat the garage door gently, respectfully (*Infinite* 157). The father tells his son that he knows that his son has looked at their garage door many times but now he wants him to "see" it (159). In the first part of this chapter, I plug Wallace's literary machine—Incandenza, Sr.'s monologue on the "everyday arts" of treating "everyday objects" (157)—into machines of writers (Leo Tolstoy, Karl Ove Knausgaard), and acting teachers (Constantin Stanislavsky, Stella Adler). In their works, too, you can hear echoes of Incandenza, Sr.'s words: the everyday objects you know about and look at, many times, but do not see.

In the second half of the chapter, I pluck out two long sentences (sample sentences #1 and #2) from a section of *Infinite Jest* and read them through American novelist and essayist William Gass's concept of "and." In his essay, "And," Gass tells you that the dictionary contains the word 'and' only because it wants to show its fidelity to tradition, to put up a show of being complete; no one actually checks the entry on 'and': "It [and] passes through the ear, the eye, the mind, unheard, unseen, and unremarked… As a word, 'and' is an amiable nothing" (*Reader* ch. 47). The 'and' is anonymous and invisible; and, at the same time, it is a vital word for excess and thus induces breathlessness (ch. 47). In sample sentences #1 and #2, Wallace creates an excess—makes you gasp for breath—by using 13 and 28 'and's respectively. In sample sentence #1, Wallace places the 'and's, meticulously, between objects, not only for you to see the objects, but also for you to see the 'and's; not to let the objects and 'and's go unstudied, unwatched. For when you really pay attention to it, 'and' does not appear to be 'and' at all (*Reader* ch. 47). In sample sentence #2, for instance, three conjunctions are 'and's of cause, two are 'and's of consequence, six are adverbial

‘and’s (“how” is the question these ‘and’s answer), and three ‘commas’ are not ‘commas’ at all, but covert ‘and’s (i.e. the ‘and’s are ghostly and bodiless).

PART I
RELATIONS WITH THE EVERYDAY OBJECTS

Orbiting his room, cleaning this and that furniture, Leo Tolstoy suffers a brain fade after turning a full circle: The Russian author writes in his diary on March 1, 1897, about being unsure whether he has dusted the sofa (Shklovsky 80).

His sofa diary entry implies that Tolstoy cleans his room, frequently; and since dusting involves habitual and unconscious bodily movements, Tolstoy has the have-I-or-have-I-not conundrum when he approaches the sofa—a forgetting that walks hand-in-hand with habit. But Tolstoy feels that if, after dusting the sofa, he has forgotten whether he has dusted it, then it is equivalent to not dusting (80). If a person has been witnessing Tolstoy dusting the sofa, then this fact is verifiable; if, however, no one has been a witness to his dusting, or has seen his act but without paying attention, then, Tolstoy reckons, people are living their life unconsciously; and that such lives amount to nothing—it is as though these lives have never been (80).

In the same year as Tolstoy makes his sofa-diary entry, Anton Chekhov’s story, “In the Cart,” shows how an enforced habit makes a schoolteacher unresponsive to natural objects’ generous warmth (285). Maria Vasilyevna is returning from the town after collecting her salary; she has been making this journey for thirteen years now (285). The winter, evil and long, has recently come to an end, and there has been a sudden onset of spring; but neither the warmth, nor the flock of birds flying over the puddles, nor the clear sky, has anything new and interesting to offer to Maria (285). Whether it is spring, or winter, or rainy autumn, it is all the same for her: Maria’s interest does not lie in anything else apart from reaching her destination. The schoolteacher feels that she has been living there for hundred years, and that she knows every stone and tree on the road from town to her school (285). On this road, she merely passes by unconsciously.

This back and forth, from town to school and school to town, in the cart, has been a routine in her past and present; and Maria cannot think of a future where she will be able to break away from it, from this enforced habit. And, thus, it is implied that Maria will continue traveling on this uneven potholed road, oblivious to her surroundings, until her retirement as a teacher.

Does Tolstoy read "In the Cart"? Yes. In a brief entry on his diary, on December 21, 1897, Tolstoy does not concentrate on any one aspect of his existence; he catalogues the speedy thoughts and associations that fly through his head: the unproductive five days gone by; the novella *Hadji Murat* and the low confidence it evokes; the publishing of *On Art* and the feeling of clear-headedness due to it; the receipt of a letter with a threat of murder; the wife's crisis; skating; and about the schoolteacher's story of Chekhov (*Diaries* vol. 2). Tolstoy finds Chekhov's descriptions to be "excellent," but reckons that the younger writer lapses into rhetoric as soon as he attempts to provide a meaning to "In the Cart" (vol. 2).

And what does Tolstoy feel about Maria's existence? You do not know; he does not have an entry on this. But going by the yardstick that he draws in the aforementioned sofa-diary entry for everyday life, going by how furious he is with himself for not paying unilateral attention to objects, you can make an educated guess about Tolstoy's estimate of Maria's cart journey: That Maria's everyday life is floating by unconsciously; and that Maria needs to be apprised, urgently, about the necessity to look at ambient objects consciously; and that she should not be living a life being insensitive to the charms of objects, leading a life which might in the end be said to have been unlived.

The Russian formalist, Viktor Shklovsky, reading Tolstoy's sofa-diary entry in his essay "Art as Device," remarks that life itself is a casualty of habit, and that mechanical circular routine movements expunge life. For a person operating on auto-mode, like the room-dusting Tolstoy on March 1, 1897, his clothes and his furniture, his partner and his apprehension about the coming war, get devoured; his life begins to get eaten away—recede, disappear, become nothing—by "automatization" (Shklovsky 80). On auto-mode, you stop seeing.

Which is why, according to Shklovsky, there is art: it exists in order to resuscitate the sensation of life, to make you feel the objects, so that you can feel the stone as stony; it exists to resurrect you from the numbness that you develop regarding the things you are surrounded by, things you move swiftly around by simply "recognizing" but not "seeing" them (80). To compel you to see, to protract your perception, art complicates forms, makes it complex; and it achieves all these through what Shklovsky calls the device of "ostranenie"—an artistic device that makes things strange, that de-automatizes things (80).

"Things that have been experienced several times begin to be experienced in terms of recognition: a thing is in front of us, we know this, but we do not see it…," writes Shklovsky, "This is why we cannot say anything about it. Art has different ways of de-automatizing things" (81). Shklovsky highlights one of these methods that Tolstoy uses in his essay on corporal punishment: "Shame!" Tolstoy describes a thing, or an event, not by its name, but as though he is seeing it for the very first time, as if it is happening for the very first time; he de-automatizes the thing or event (81-82). While describing a thing, instead of referring to it by its conventional name, Tolstoy names "corresponding parts of other things" (82).

According to Shklovsky, in the essay "Shame!," Tolstoy estranges the familiar concept of "flogging": "people who have broken the law are denuded, thrown down on the floor, and beaten on their behinds with sticks," and "lashed across their bare buttocks" (82). Tolstoy questions this method of punishment, terms it "stupid" and savage, and calls for another form of inflicting pain—like needling the shoulders or some other part of the body, or squeezing the hands or feet in a vise (82). Tolstoy, thus, attempts to transmute the familiar act of flogging into something unfamiliar, both descriptively, and by proposing that there has to be a change in the form of flogging and not its "essence" (82). Tolstoy's goal in his essay is to prolong the perception, by complicating the form: "The process of perception is its own end in art and must be prolonged," writes Shklovsky (80).

If you read Shklovsky's interpretation of "Shame!" before reading Tolstoy's essay, then you might mistakenly believe that Tolstoy sort of totally avoids the verb "flog," and its verbal variants; in fact, he uses flog, flogging, or flogged, at

least twenty times in his essay of wrath and lamentation. In between, Tolstoy estranges the act.

In "Shame!," Tolstoy refers to a decade in Russia, between 1820 and 1830, when the Semenof regiment decides to do away with corporal punishment. When a soldier steals a comrade's boots, and sells them in exchange for alcohol, Serge Ivanovich Muravief lets him go without punishment, but not without a brief moralizing lecture: "You know that in my company we neither strike men nor flog them, and I am not going to punish you. I shall pay, with my own money, for the boots you stole; but I ask you, not for my sake, but for your own, to think over your way of life, and to amend it" (Tolstoy, *Marxists.org*). The same soldier again gets drunk and fights and again escapes punishment; he is only exhorted to mend his ways by Muravief, and this time it works. The drunkard changes; he changes into a paradigm of a soldier.

After seventy-five years, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the educated Russians, though, discuss, calmly and unabashedly, whether a man (be it a father or a grandfather of a family), has to be flogged and, if so, how many times, points out Tolstoy in "Shame!" On hygienic grounds, they decide to flog only those peasants who have not gone through certain courses in the school; and they also decide that if the order to flog a peasant clashes with the date of the Tsar's wedding, then they'll pardon the peasant. To disturb Russia's fin de siècle calmness vis-à-vis flogging (the act seen many times anesthetically), Tolstoy de-automatizes flogging in a sentence or two—by almost encircling the object, by naming its corresponding parts—to prolong the perception of flogging.

In David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, James Incandenza, Sr.'s whiskey-sodden and impassioned monologue has echoes of Tolstoy's March diary jotting: the "everyday objects" you know about and look at, many times, but do not see; the inattentiveness to the "everyday arts" of the garage door, the flask, the tennis ball, the Mercury Montclair car, the heavy physics book; the wasted life, the imprisonment of life, due to this inattentiveness, carelessness (*Infinite* 157).

Incandenza, Sr., as in "Shame!," names the object first—the garage door—before he begins to name its corresponding parts (157). This section of *Infinite*

Jest, which occurs in a flashback, in the winter of 1960, starts with Incandenza, Sr. expressing his displeasure at the way his ten-year-old son James Incandenza, Jr. opens their garage door. Incandenza, Jr. bends down, stiffly, from the waist, and yanks the door open; his father tells him to bend instead from his knees, and gently pull the door, and not to put needless force, and to think of all garage doors as well-lubricated doors of a broiler, with meat broiling, and heat seeping out (157). "…this is our door in the garage. I know you know. I know you've looked at it before, many times. Now…now see it, Jim. See it as body," says Incandenza, Sr (158-9).

The crapulous father magnifies, using words, the garage door for his son: the dull color of its handle; the latch that opens clockwise (which latch Incandenza, Sr. tells his son to twist with one hand only); the dead bug that is protruding through the paint; the sun-induced cracks; the multiple decorative concave squares that Incandenza, Sr. tells his son to count (159). These observational exercises by Incandenza, Sr. are to train his son to make him "see" the surrounding objects; see them as if he is seeing them for the very first time, each time.

Incandenza, Sr. asks his son to have a look at the car—the 1956 Mercury Montclair parked in the garage—which his son knows so well (159). The car is going to respond, the father tells his son, if he treats it with "artful care"; it is not enough to just sit inside the car; you have to be inside much more, you have to "feel" it (159). The car will respond to someone who treats its body just like he treats his own; who feels the steel body he is inside; who, unknown to others in the car, feels the plastic grip of the gear next to the wheel when he shifts; who feels the pistons and rubber when he shifts, just as he can feel his own body's skin, sinew, flesh, muscle, bone, nerves (159). The car is an object—"a body"—and it will not remain "mute," if the son artfully handles it (159).

The objects surrounding you are bodies, says Incandenza, Sr., and so are you—a body, a machine, just another object among objects; even your head is a body, and the thoughts occurring to you are merely "the sound of your head"—i.e. your body "revving," spasming neurally (159). There are bodies everywhere, but Incandenza, Sr. considers a tennis ball to be the "ultimate body" (160). The

tennis ball is “perfectly round,” and, though its mass is evenly distributed, the tennis ball’s inside is a vacuum; it is prone to “forces,” and does not have a character of its own; it reveals the character of the person playing with it (160).

Incandenza, Sr. asks his son to see the ball, a body, and feel its weight, and tells him that he has to learn to treat the tennis ball with “love,” and it will reciprocate (160). What great tennis players have in common—and here Incandenza, Sr. asks his son to recollect the previous lessons about the technique of opening the garage door—is how they “touch the ball” (160). When Incandenza, Jr. drops the heavy physics book he is carrying, carelessly, on the ground, raising a dust, his father tells him that it has to be seen that he does not drop a book so that it raises dust; it is to be “placed, guided, with senses on Full” (161).

And, therefore, like Shklovsky’s Tolstoy’s de-automatization of flogging to prolong the act’s perception by describing its corresponding parts, the crapulous father also does the same: descriptions of the handle and its color, the latch and its clockwise movement, the bug underneath the paint, the cracks, the squares, are given to estrange the garage door for the young boy, who treats it carelessly. Descriptions of the car, the tennis ball, the book, and the flask, are also given to serve a similar purpose of protracting the perception, to make the son see the garage door: “…just wanted to introduce you to the broiler’s garage,” says Incandenza, Sr. to his son (162). Of course, you can argue that the car, the tennis ball, the book, and the flask, are not objects used to merely estrange the garage door; these objects are also being estranged, as the father asks the son to heft them, feel them, treat the objects as a body. Incandenza, Jr. is being given a lesson by his father to prepare him (the son) to see the objects surrounding him for the very first time, anew.

In his book on the life and works of Norwegian painter, Edvard Munch, Karl Ove Knausgaard reckons that people remember Munch now for only a handful of paintings, out of the 1700-plus paintings that he has left behind (*Longing* 10). Those handfuls have become so familiar that, Knausgaard feels, they are more

like “emblems of themselves,” and, therefore, impossible to penetrate, and can be seen as only that—an emblem (10).

One of the handfuls is, of course, *The Scream*, which occupies a place in the pantheon of great paintings (10). Frequently, in various mediums, you run into the sunflowers of Vincent van Gogh, the water lilies of Claude Monet, the Guernica of Pablo Picasso, and the dancing women of Matisse (10). Along with these chefs-d’oeuvre, Munch’s *The Scream* is one of the most encountered, most recognizable, most iconic effigies of our age.

If you have a smart-phone, there is high possibility that one of your emoticons (or emojis) is a character with hollowed-out eyes, appearing to scream with its teethless mouth open and hands against its ears: It is Munch’s fin-de-siecle—*The Scream*. And, therefore, this artwork that is everywhere—on TV, internet, phone, paraphernalia, clothing, and so on—cannot be seen, says Knausgaard, as though you are seeing it for the very first time (10-11). *The Scream* is everywhere and hence familiar. Which familiarity proves to be ruinous for the artwork of Munch since he creates *The Scream*, precisely, to convey “alienation”; to convey the response of someone seeing the world as if for the very first time, someone non-familiar with the world (11).

In his books on material reality, Knausgaard attempts to get non-familiar with the everyday objects of the world, to see the world as if he has just been introduced to it. Knausgaard’s “personal encyclopedia” of his “close surroundings” is put together in his four books on the seasons—*Autumn*, *Winter*, *Spring*, *Summer*. Except for *Spring*, which is a novel, all the other three books have short essays concentrating on a single object.

The first book of the quartet begins with a letter written by Knausgaard to his unborn daughter. In the letter Knausgaard mentions that you can easily “lose sight of” objects in the world—like the trees swaying in the wind, the blood circulating through the veins, the growing grass, the red farm building behind Knausgaard’s house standing amidst the green foliage, the color red and green (*Autumn* 4-5). Which is why Knausgaard has been writing *Autumn* for his daughter: he aspires to show her the world “as it is, all around us, all the time”; and by doing so, he expects to see the everyday objects himself (5).

Knausgaard is conscious of the close surrounding objects becoming "obvious" as you age—as life ages and coarsens you (5). The house, the garden, the floor, the water tap and the sink, the chair close to the wall beneath the kitchen window, the water, the trees—they become obvious (5-6). For the children, though, objects are not obvious, for they are immersed in the world; there is no distance between their own "selves" and the world (5). On the other hand, since you have outgrown the children's way of being immersed in the world, since you no longer think of the world and yourself as indistinguishable, the world as if escapes you, becomes obvious (5-6). Opening the door does not carry any meaning for you, laments Knausgaard; it is something that you mechanically do to move from one room to another (just as cleaning the sofa is something that you unconsciously do) (6). For Knausgaard, the feeling that merely opening the door evokes in him makes life worth living. The whole exercise of pressing down the door handle and pushing the door open, and the door opening either inward or outward on its hinges, "like a wing," and the act of walking into another room makes the Norwegian author's life worthwhile (5).

His descriptions to his unborn daughter of how he treats a door, how objects are to be treated, and what feeling it evokes in him, gives off a strong impression that Knausgaard might be thinking in Incandenza, Sr.'s diction in *Infinite Jest* (5).

For Knausgaard, the flask is a receptacle for the "most democratic and classless drink," coffee, but you need to be careful, Knausgaard writes to his unborn daughter, about where you carry your flask; it might become an index of a "threat" (197-198). There is no threat when you take it to your workplace, or out in the forest, or in the bus, but it does become one when you decide to carry your own coffee in your flask into the neighbor's drawing room; the neighbor's "sovereignty" is challenged by the presence of this alien thermos flask (198).

In Knausgaard's *Autumn*, the flask is also a churner of "memories and associations": of boating trips, of hiking in the mountains and forests, of car journeys, during which the flask is ever present; the flask fastens the external world with the world within the bounds of the house (198). That the flask

occupies an integral aspect in his family, Knausgaard finds out only later through photographs; in the images, the flask serves as a totem of the family: in the images, the flask, through its presence, sort of binds the family together, the family which is now in fragments (198-9).

In *Infinite Jest*, the silver flask is used for storing the alcoholic Incandenza, Sr.'s amber liquid. The flask is first introduced into this section of the novel when Incandenza, Sr. offers drink to his son Incandenza, Jr. (*Infinite* 161). Soon, however, the Incandenza, Sr. uses the flask for imparting lessons in tennis. The commonality between great tennis players, Incandenza, Sr. says, is the way they "touch" the ball: like the tennis ball, if you touch the flask with love and care and consideration, it pays you dividends (161). The father tells his son that he never drops the flask, nor has one drop fallen from it, "I treat it as if it can feel. I give it its due, as a body," says Incandenza, Sr. (161). When Incandenza, Sr. unscrews the flask's cap with the soft outermost tip of his fingers, he asks his son to listen to the "faintest snick" the cap makes as it leaves the flask's mouth: the flask's "snick" is analogous to the "ponk" of the tennis ball when you touch it—hit it—with the racquet, truly (162).

What Incandenza, Sr. is trying to impart to his son is what the fictional theatre director Tortsov is also imparting to his students in Constantin Stanislavsky's *An Actor Prepares*: to see the objects. Tortsov gives the aspiring actors exercises not just to make them look at objects, but to see them—anew—on the stage, by turning their focus of attention from the auditorium to the stage's objects, by training them to find solitude behind the footlights when thousands of eyes train on them (Stanislavsky, ch. 5).

On the stage, for an actor, it is not just about overcoming the sweaty palms, the dry-throat, the grumbling gut, the wobbling feet/voice, or the bridling of the heart that is beating like it has just been put through a 100m dash; the everyday-life movements—walking, sitting, lying down—that are so familiar and that come so effortlessly become difficult when the actor appears on stage; and, therefore, the director tells his students that they have to learn again how to walk, sit, lie

down, hear—and how to see (ch. 5). The exercises that the director constructs teach them how to.

In one of the exercises, the actors are given an object each to notice in the light; to notice means, in the director's book, is to carefully scan the object's "form, lines, colors, detail, characteristics," but the actors get only thirty seconds for this activity; the lights go out at the end of the time, and they have to describe their objects without seeing it; the director then switches on the light to find out whether the actors' descriptions tally with the features of the objects (ch. 5).

When the actors in the class get it wrong, they are asked to repeat the exercise; the director forces the actors to study their objects with less number of seconds available to them with each passing round, and the exercise continues until the actors get the descriptions of the objects right till the very last detail (ch. 5).

In another exercise, the director asks Kostya, the narrator in *An Actor Prepares*, to study the enamel on a table top; and Paul to examine a piece of string (ch. 5). When Paul begins to untangle the string, Kostya objects; he declares that the director's instruction involves observing and thinking about the objects only and not taking any action; but the director says that observing an object, intensely, evokes a desire to play around with the object; and by playing around with the object, you intensify the observation of the object, enable a stronger bond with the object you are concentrating on (ch. 5). Hence, Paul continues to untangle the string, and Kostya also desires to tamper with the enamel on the table with something sharp, which, in turn, allows him to see the pattern of the table with heightened awareness (ch. 5).

The director then darkens the whole room and lights a lamp on the table near which Kostya is sitting; the shade of the lamp throws circular rays on his head, hands, and small objects on the table (ch. 5). Sitting under the circle of rays, with the rest of the hall in darkness, Kostya is able to examine objects on the table more profoundly, and is also able to explore his thoughts and feelings (ch. 5). "Make a note immediately of your mood; it is what we call Solitude in Public," the director tells Kostya (ch. 5). "You are in public because we are all here. It is solitude because you are divided from us by a small circle of attention. During a

performance, before an audience of thousands, you can always enclose yourself in this circle like a snail in its shell" (ch. 5).

In Bernardo Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris*, Paul (Marlon Brando) drifts away into solitude, in the midst of a dialogue with Jeanne (Maria Schneider) about her childhood, with the aid of objects at hand; you feel Paul is not just drifting away from Jeanne, he is also enclosing himself in his thoughts and feelings, and moving away from the reach of Jeanne's voice, words, gestures, complaints, and moans.

While Jeanne is narrating an incident, Paul begins to walk around the room, animating the mute objects with his expressions, making objects sentient with his poetic touch, as though a mother caressing her child: he looks at his own face on the plate of the harmonica he is holding, points the harmonica's blinding silvery reflection on the wall, digs out with his right forefinger the paint peeling off a wall, smells the curtain, climbs the ladder and yanks out the stick that keeps the ladder together, and begins twirling the stick on his left-hand's fingers, like an adept drummer, even as he begins to get misty-eyed. "Why aren't you listening to me? Why do I feel like I'm talking to a brick wall when I talk to you?" says Jeanne (Bertolucci). "Your solitude weighs on me. It isn't indulgent. It isn't generous. You are selfish" (Bertolucci)! Paul responds to Jeanne's protest with merely a suppressed smile, and keeps the harmonica on top of Jeanne's head, all the while twirling the stick on his fingers, before walking off to the other room; next, you see him sitting on the sofa, taking a lamp shade, breathing deeply into it, and then beginning to cry, profusely.

At the beginning of the movie, too, when Paul and Jeanne meet for the first time in the Rue Jules Verne flat, Paul silently walks around the room, making objects come alive with his caressing of the easy caned chair, the white-sheet-covered furniture, and the lamp shade—which shade he caresses first before starting to remove its threads (just as the student Paul in *An Actor Prepares*, having been asked to concentrate on an object, untangles the string). "What are you doing?" asks Jeanne when she watches Paul with the pink old lamp shade, tugging at it and rotating it, seemingly lost in thoughts and feelings, which

perhaps the lamp shade itself evokes in him (Bertolucci). But Paul does not reply; the inarticulate Paul is isolating.

Brando's handling of objects in *Last Tango in Paris*, his poetic physical articulations, are not always done noiselessly, non-harshly. Sometimes, obstreperous outbursts analogous to Stanley Kowalski in *A Streetcar Named Desire* invade the screen (after all Brando wears a similarly designed body-hugging T-shirt in *Last Tango in Paris* that he also wears as Kowalski, a T-shirt accentuating his muscular arms and shoulders). In *Last Tango in Paris*, Paul throws his mother-in-law's suitcase against the wall; punches the door with both hands; gently pulls and shuts the door of a curious onlooker, and then, when she opens the door again, he yanks the door shut with a bang (Bertolucci).

In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, similarly, Kowalski yanks open the drawer of Blanche's trunk, throws out her clothes; chucks out the radio playing rumba music through the window; keeps kicking a cupboard for reason unclear; clears his table by chucking the cup against the wall (Kazan). And while he is banging things around, making noisy assertions, pawing objects, you realize that Kowalski—the raw beefy unsupple factory worker—is using more of his body to communicate his cordial dislike of Blanche Dubois than speech (even though there are instances of brawny speeches); it is as if, for Kowalski, his mighty flesh-filled body comes in the way of talking.

When Incandenza, Jr. in *Infinite Jest* displays lack of suppleness, when he stiffly bends down at the waist and yanks the garage door open, it reminds Incandenza, Sr. of Brando, and thus begins Incandenza, Sr.'s two-page monologue to his son on Brando's relationship with objects (157); and, although, he does not explicitly mention it, Incandenza, Sr. is certainly channeling, in his whiskey-sodden lecture, at least two of Brando's films, where Brando plays the physically articulate proletarian: *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *The Wild One*. The narrator in *Infinite Jest* tells you that Incandenza, Sr. has been a "pre-Method actor," who has become an "unemployable actor"; what is implied is that the reason for his unemployability is the emergence of the crooked-standing, slobby-walking, object-dominating: Brando (63).

A pre-method actor—and here one defines the category the way Brando does in his autobiography—is a "personality" actor; Brando names few of them as examples: Sarah Bernhardt, Katharine Cornell, Ruth Gordon. He also quotes George Bernard Shaw to make his point on personality actors: "A character actor is one who cannot act and therefore makes an elaborate study of disguise and stage tricks by which acting can be grotesquely simulated" (Brando, ch. 12). Brando criticizes these breed of actors for believing that by growing facial hair and wearing a certain type of robe and carrying a staff, they will shape-shift into Moses; but they fail to portray anything other than themselves: they play the same role over and over (ch. 12). When the personality actors are confused or tormented, they slap their foreheads and cry out loudly; they act "externally rather than internally" (ch. 12).

Brando compares the pre-Method actors with the purchase of packaged foods: as is the case with your preferred cereal product, you also come to expect the personality actors to remain unchanged from one cinema to the other; they, the owners of attractive personalities, play the same role in the same way, so that Clark Gable turns out to be Clark Gable in every role he essays; and Humphrey Bogart is Humphrey Bogart in every film, bringing in his stock mannerisms, failing thereby to separate his current role from his previous ones (ch. 12).

Stella Adler changes the landscape of acting during the fifties and sixties by what she imparts in her acting classes, declares Brando (ch. 12). In the early thirties, Adler goes to the Moscow Art Theatre to study under Stanislavsky; Adler passes on the disciplines and techniques of Stanislavsky to the students of the Group Theatre when she comes back to the United States; one of the students in her class is Brando (ch. 12).

Adler emphasizes on concentrating on the internal life of a character: she teaches her students "to *experience*" what a character might be feeling; what emotions might be driving a character; in other words, what is a character's weather, internally (ch. 12). "Until Stella came along, stage acting was mostly declaiming, superficial gestures, exaggerated expression, loud voices, theatrical elocution and unfelt emotion," says Brando (ch. 12).

Adler's "Method acting"—although, Brando hesitates to use this term, because he reckons it has been "bastardized and misused" by the Actors Studio teacher Lee Strasberg—involves pushing the actors to acquaint themselves with—to discover—their own mechanics of emotion and also of others; she asks Brando not to emote something which he is not experiencing personally during a performance (ch. 12). Adler also tells her students in *Art of Acting* that "Acting is not an abstract activity. The actor must make everything he deals with real" (Adler, ch. 2). And, therefore, for instance, a chair that has been placed on the stage has to be distilled from its abstraction, immobility, by the actor forging a relationship with it (ch. 2).

Adler shares with her students about how the presence of a chair helps in defining a play: the rundown wicker chair on which the white father is sitting on the porch, in Edward Albee's *The Death of Bessie Smith*, says everything and more about the character (ch. 2). In the play, Albee introduces the readers to the culture in which the black Blues singer Bessie Smith dies after being denied entry in a white hospital. To Adler, the father sitting on the chair is a man who hates himself, his daughter, black people, the mayor; the dilapidated system is represented by the father; but the rickety chair itself is the synecdoche of the rundown system (ch. 2).

Adler declares to her class that she knows the chair in her hand, thoroughly: what color it is; how many nicks are on its back; where the paint is peeling off; where the springs are peeking through the upholstery; what part of the chair needs fixing; what the chair demands of her; does the chair make her sit with her spine erect, or does it allow her to slouch and slide into the chair, making her back convex (ch. 2). The stage's chair, aloof and unattended and dead, has to be completely understood by an actor to give back to the spectators a sentient chair, to surprise them with the chair's aliveness (ch. 2).

In her exercise on developing the imagination, Adler tells her students that a playwright is never going to give a "tablecloth" that belongs to the actors; the playwright is simply going to put it down in her text as a tablecloth; it is up to the actors to co-opt the tablecloth, make it their own (ch. 5). "You will have to determine how old it is, how wrinkled, how threadbare, how fresh, how

starched," says Adler on an actor's relationship with a tablecloth (ch. 5). "The playwright will only indicate what it is. You will have to make it come alive" (Class Five).

And that is precisely what the leather-jacket-and-rolled-up-tight-jeans-wearing Brando, as Johnny, does as he enters the Bleeker's Café for the first time in *The Wild One*; and he does it so carelessly, so coolly, that it seems improvisatory, unrehearsed. When Brando enters the café, he removes his bike gloves, and as he begins to walk in, whistling, he touches the line of wooden chairs with his right middle-finger, so that they begin to swivel on their axis, come alive with Brando's touch, a touch to trigger sentience. And while paying for the beer, Brando implants a sort of beating heart into the coin when he teases Mary Murphy by putting the coin out of her reach again and again, making the coin dodge her grasp, making the coin dodge to the rhythm of jazz playing in the vinyl jukebox: she grasping, he dodging, the coin dancing.

When Incandenza, Sr., the pre-method actor, sees his son open the garage door with belligerence, his head fills up with the images of the method-acting Brando yanking, pulling, thrusting, shoving—objects (*Infinite* 157). He tells his son that his (son's) mother, too, thrusts and shoves objects, and treats bodies outside herself with scant respect; she does not know, says Incandenza, Sr., that treating an object/body, gently, means not just treating it but also your own body, efficiently, relaxedly, with utmost care; and for his wife's ignorance, or even lack of empathy for objects (for here there are feelings of the objects involved in this everyday artistic commerce between human-body and the object-body), Incandenza, Sr. blames Brando (157).

The mother apparently plays a small part in *The Wild One*; she is among the crowds, possibly in the opening scene of the movie, standing with hands over her ears, as Brando and his fellow "rebel" bikers roar past in their motorbikes (157). The mother falls for Brando from afar, picking up Brando's physical impetuosity, clumsiness, his object-dominating leanings; she passes on this disrespectfulness toward objects to her son, the father reckons; the way Incandenza, Jr. yanks the garage door toward him is because of Brando. "Jim, Marlon Brando was the

archetypal new-type actor who ruined it looks like two whole generations' relations with their own bodies and the everyday objects and bodies around them," Incandenza, Sr. tells his son who has not heard of Brando (157).

At first, Incandenza, Sr.'s initial apercus on Brando might feel like as if he despises Brando for the way he treats objects; but soon it appears he is angry about his wife's misprision of Brando's physical methods, his conversations through his physique. She loves Brando but she does not understand his physical craftiness, and this is why she is clumsy in her "everyday arts" of handling, for instance, the garage door (157): "Jim, she never intuited the gentle and cunning economy behind this man's quote harsh sloppy unstudied approach to objects," says Incandenza, Sr. to his son (158).

Brando tilting on the back-legs of his chair in *A Streetcar Named Desire*—with his legs crossed and up on the table, while eating with his left hand from the plate on his lap and smoking with his right—does not look spontaneous to Incandenza, Sr.; but the thought of Brando practicing this calisthenics with the object, tilting the chair over and over, studying to see if it can take his weight, deciding on an angle of the tilt that looks perilous but is not, before presenting it in front of the camera, does not occur to the mother.

It does not occur to the mother that Brando feels himself as a body so intensely that he does not need any mannerisms; and that when he touches an object, seemingly carelessly, he takes it to be a piece of his own body that can feel (158). About Brando's movements, Incandenza, Sr. states:

> Jim, he moved like a careless fingerling, one big muscle, muscularly naïve, but always, notice, a fingerling at the centre of a clear current. That kind of animal grace. The bastard wasted no motion, is what made it art, this brutish no-care (158).

Brando's and a tennis player's methods are similar, the drunk pre-method-actor father further avers; they both touch an object with "consideration" and thus become its owners; the object, thereafter, begins to pander to every command of

theirs: it moves or does not move for them, it sort of begins to perform for the considerate handlers (158).

Elsewhere, in *Infinite Jest*, Incandenza, Sr.'s insight on Brando's and tennis player's kindred considered touching of an object, a body's relationship with an object (i.e. another body), echoes in a slightly altered manner in Troeltsch's "Big Buddy" lecture. Troeltsch, the senior tennis player, tells the novitiates of how they are machines: they have to rotate, lunge, strike the ball, in the same way, repeatedly and mindlessly, without caring about the result; it's repetition for repetition's sake, until the accumulated weight of the repetitions immerses the motions and movements below the range of their conscious access; until the motions and movements get wired into the "machine-language of the muscles" (118).

Hal also talks about practicing hitting about a thousand serves at dawn to the opposite fence without an opponent to return it; he talks about practicing till you start moving on the court on "autopilot" (173). In his "Big Buddy" lecture, to sort of hammer home the point on automatism, Hal puts on a video of a player playing forehands, perfectly, over and over; looking at the video, the junior player has to pretend that it is him on the screen, and disappear into the image that is on a loop, and then take the disappearance out with him on the court and play hypnotically (110).

What in *Infinite Jest* is the machine language of the muscles, in his essay on Roger Federer, Wallace refers to it as "the kinesthetic sense" (*Both* 23). Wallace provides the definition:

> [It's] the ability to control the body and its artificial extensions through complex and very quick systems of tasks. English has a whole cloud of terms for various parts of this ability: feel, touch, form, proprioception, coordination, hand-eye coordination, kinesthesia, grace, control, reflexes, and so on (23).

The kinesthetic sense encompasses the training of the muscles, but also the nervous system, through skeletally tiring repetitive practice; it involves striking thousands of strokes, day in and day out, to develop an ability to play by '"feel"' what cannot be achieved consciously (23). It is rather impossible to consciously think about returning a 130 m.p.h. serve with only 0.41 seconds (= two quick blinks) to react if your kinesthetic sense is not refined (23).

Wallace, a former regionally-ranked tennis player, states in another essay that just a single shot in professional tennis constitutes maddening number of "mechanical variables" (*Supposedly* 235). Given the net at the center of the court that is three feet high and one player stationed (fixed) at each end of the court, the effectiveness of a "single shot is determined by its angle, depth, pace, and spin. And each of these determinants is itself determined by still other variables" (235). Like, for instance, the depth with which a player is able to hit the ball across is determined by how high the ball is when it passes over the net; it is also determined by the pace and spin the player is able to generate on the shot; the height of the ball whilst passing over the net is itself determined by the way the player positions his body while taking the shot, his grip on the racquet, his backswing of the racquet, his angling of the racquet, and so on (235). The variables multiply, and keep on multiplying, when you factor in the opponent's changing positions every moment, his penchant for certain moves, and the ball's trajectory, in the air and off the court, which the opponent has hit back at you (236).

Hitting back the ball involves keeping one eye on the other side of the court—where your opponent is and the direction he is moving towards and the angles that are opening up due to the opponent's decision to move in a certain direction—and the other eye on the ball: a tennis player has to be equipped with a "schizoid" vision of both the ball and the court, simultaneously (235).

To juggle all these variables while on court, you need to be preternaturally conscious, reckons Wallace; and yet, at the same time, juggling these variables can only be done without conscious thought; it can be done through blending of "talent" with iterative drills, so that the variables can be controlled unconsciously (236).

And once this occurs, once the mechanical variables of the game get kind of imprinted into your motherboard through repetition, it remarkably frees up the head, Troeltsch tells the juniors in the Big Buddy group-interface in *Infinite Jest*; because now you do not have to think about it every time you play: "The court might as well be inside you. The ball stops being a ball. The ball starts being something that you just know *ought* to be in the air, spinning," says Troeltsch (118). Again, Troeltsch here is merely seconding Incandenza, Sr.'s understanding of Brando treating objects as though it might as well be inside him, part of his own body. On the screen, Brando's act is analogous to that of a professional tennis player, who ingests the mechanical variables of the objects around him, in vast bulk, through rigorous rehearsals. You touch objects with consideration (love) over and over—repeatedly micro-adjusting your body so that your side is facing the incoming ball's path, repeatedly micro-adjusting your body so that the chair's back-leg tilt is just about enough—and the objects will be at your "beck and call"; or, to put it differently, everything will be done by the objects around you (160).

In his short story, *The Soul Is Not a Smithy*, Wallace introduces you to an unnamed father who carefully touches objects—a large number of forms—over and over, throughout the day, and makes calculations, and the routine makes an incision on his body, his expression. He brings his expressionless face of his actuarial job home; the father's eyes, as he returns home from his job, appear "lightless and dead," devoid of the charms the seven-year-old son associates with his father's weekend face and persona (*Oblivion* 103). On weekdays, the father always arrives home between 5:42 and 5:45; and, since the front door of the house is heavy, the father leans onto the door with his shoulder to close it as he comes in: the way he angles his shoulder to close the door carries the "same quality as his eyes" (104).

The father, after he turns from the door, puts his hat on the rack, slips out of his coat, folds the coat over his left arm, opens the closet with his right hand, transfers the coat to his right hand, removes the third hanger from the left in the foyer closet with his left hand; he loosens his necktie with two fingers, takes off

the rubber band of the newspaper, enters the living room, greets his elder son playing the piano, and sits down with the newspaper and waits for his wife to bring him a highball (103-4).

The weekday routine of the father appears choreographed to his seven-year-old son; the father's routine—including the way he leans on the door to close it with his shoulder as he returns home from his job—influences the son's nightmares; in his nightmares, the son sees the "reality of adult life"; and, even though his father does not appear in the nightmares, the seven-year-old son knows that it concerns his father's life, and his actuarial job, and with the way his face looks when he returns home from work (103). For nearly 30 years of 51 weeks a year, the father's job has been to sit at a Tingle desk all day: he reads various forms and makes calculations and on the basis of those calculations fills out more forms (105).

The son's nightmare opens with a panoramic view of a large room, where men in suits and ties are bent forward, and are going through the papers over their desks; the men are all sitting, silently and motionlessly; their faces tense and hanging loose (108). The son, now an adult, has never been able to convey as to why a silent bright room full of men, sitting on their desks with a blotter, desk lamp, and files of papers, and engrossed in "rote work," is a dreadful image for him (108).

In the dream's tableau, each man is sitting with a style all his own—unique are the positioning of their arms and head—a style developed over years and years of sitting at a desk every day; each man moves consciously, only occasionally, to turn a stapled page, or to move a loose page from the left to the right file, or to push away a file, and pull a new file of papers toward him for another round of unilateral concentration, of close-reading of the forms (108). The son does not know that the father's weekdays' evening's expression is an imprint of the actuarial job's tediousness and boredom, of evaluating forms after forms on the desk with a forward bend.

A rote examiner (tax professional) for three years in Wallace's posthumous novel, *The Pale King*, describes the eyes of those rote examining—going through forms, crosschecking forms, filling up the same memorandums on the same

forms—for thirty years or more (103). At first, he does not know how to describe it; then he tells you that his senior colleagues' eyes resemble that of a boiler man, a janitor, at his grandparents' apartment building (103). The boiler man feeds the furnace with coal every couple hours, and he has been doing this work "forever," and he is nearly blind from repeatedly looking into the burning furnace (103-4). With the janitor, the older tax person shares a condition of the eyesight that is wearing away; but there is also the shared sadness and boredom that repetitive tedious work engenders.

Not just the eyes, the tax professionals' bearings, too, take a beating in *The Pale King*: 'Irrelevant' Chris Fogle tells you that his father's posture is quite unusual for a short man; his father stands and moves with a slight forward bend at the waist; it looks as though he is walking into a wind of some kind (175). Fogle understands why this is so only when he himself becomes a tax professional, and notices the older rote examiners spending all day for years at a desk, examining tax returns that need auditing (175). The job's requirement of sitting still with a forward bend over a desk for years and years, and concentrating for long hours, unilaterally, on forms after forms, is what irreversibly incises on the body of the tax professional (175). The routine's incision on the body is what makes the Fogle's short father appear shorter, submissive, though Fogle does not mention it, the submissiveness.

An analogue of Fogle's father can be found in Franz Kafka's diary: Kafka mentions a man with a forward bend, who gives tickets to him and his friends for the boat ride in the lake of Bois de Boulogne (*The Diaries* ch. 2). In his trip to Paris, Kafka tells you that he can recollect, vividly, the first sight of the lake where a man with a bent bearing stoops down to give them tickets (ch. 2). Kafka reckons that his recollection is vivid perhaps because of his anxiety to get the tickets, and his inability to get the man to explain if the boat goes around the lake, or across to the island, and whether it halts somewhere (ch. 2). Kafka is so taken by the man that he often sees him, thinks about him, standing with a forward bend all alone without any boat to attend to—another case of a dull routine's incision on the body (ch. 2). Like Fogle's father, this man's bent-back incision appears irreversible; he, perhaps, will never be able to straighten his back, even when

there are no boats or boat riders to attend to, Kafka implies (ch. 2); just as Fogle's father's bent-back bearing is visible even when the father is not poring over forms in a silent bright room.

The routine's incision on the body is shown to be carried into the afterlife, too. A newspaper report in *The Pale King* states that Frederick Blumquist, a tax return examiner for thirty years, has been found sitting dead at his desk: he has been sitting in the same position, with a slight forward bend at the waist presumably, for four days (27). His supervisors are trying to determine as to how Blumquist's death has been able to escape the attention of his twenty-five coworkers. Blumquist has been sitting dead from a coronary since Tuesday; but it is only on Saturday evening, only when an office cleaner finds him at his desk, 'working' in the office, even with all the lights switched off, and asks Blumquist about how he is still continuing to work in the dark, only then do they realize it (27).

His supervisor informs the newspaper that in the last thirty years, Blumquist has always been the first to come to the office and the last person to leave; he has always been a hard-working employee with an unwavering focus; and, therefore, his co-workers do not find it unusual when Blumquist remains seated in the same position all through the four days, seemingly attending to the complex dry form, crosschecking and calculating, being uncommunicative (28).

In George Saunders' *Lincoln in the Bardo*, too, the customs and habits you possess are carried over, after your death, into a transitional realm called, in the Tibetan tradition, the bardo. Abigail Blass, a ghost in *Lincoln in the Bardo*, spends her nights collecting twigs, pebbles, dead-bird parts, motes, and guards them, ardently; she is in the habit of counting these possessions, over and over, for long hours (*Lincoln* 81). That the widow carries over her obsession of collecting and counting from her pre-Bardo period is evident from her grievance speech, regarding theft of her possessions (81).

She catalogues her possessions as though she is still alive: one thousand three hundred dollars in the bank, four thousand dollars worth of gold coins (the gold coins that are kept in one of the upstairs rooms but which room she does not wish to reveal); two horses, fifteen goats, thirty-one chickens, seventeen dresses

worth three thousand and eight hundred dollars, four hundred twigs, sixty pebbles, two dead-bird parts, and too many motes to count (81). What is implied is that her pre-bardo obsessions multiplies to the *nth* degree in the bardo, so that Blass races about in the night collecting, and counting again and again what she collects, and wakes up in the morning and counts her possessions again (81).

The rote examiners, the ones with a forward bend from the waist, are hosannaed as heroes in *The Pale King*. The substitute Jesuit teacher informs his students at the end of his "Advanced Tax" lecture that the accounting profession is "heroic," and that the accounts students are on the threshold of "heroism" (*King* 228). By heroism, the teacher does not mean of the sort seen in films that nourish the students while growing up; or the sort they hear about in the childhood tales (229). The teacher does not consider heroism you find in childhood entertainments to be brave; it is mere theatricality, the teacher points out, where the hero faces a choice, a life-threatening danger, a foe; and everything miraculously solves in the film's climax, which is tailor-made for the hero to shine, to show his heroism, and to earn the ovation of the audience (229).

But in the banausic world of tax, the teacher informs, the hero has to perform without an audience and its applause, without an audience to witness his heroism; no one cares about what the accounting man, staring at the tax form out of his expressionless face, does in the silent bright room with a forward bend from the waist; and if, during lunch, he regularly steps out of his work building for thirty minutes, and sits on a park bench to absorb into his mind the sound of birds alighting on trees and suddenly taking off together, a sort of synchronized swimming in the sky; or if, when he comes back home, he likes to listen to peppy music on the radio, or listen to his son practice his piano, to maneuver out of the engulfing silence he sits in all day (*Oblivion* 106-7).

A character in *The Pale King* tells you that he has written a play about his profession that cannot be performed; in the play, a rote examiner is sitting and poring over tax-related forms and is motionless, except when he has to turn a page or make a note in the pad; he continues sitting, preoccupied with his forms and pad, and the audience begins to get bored, and then they begin to leave,

telling each other how boring the play is (106). The amateur playwright describes that the action of the play begins once the audience makes their exit; but since it is a realistic play, true to the working life of a rote examiner, there is no action even after the audience leaves; the rote examiner continues sitting, rote examining, hardly moving (106). The substitute Jesuit teacher defines "heroism" to his students in *The Pale King*:

> True heroism is you, alone, in a designated work space. True heroism is minutes, hours, weeks, year upon year of the quiet, precise, judicious exercise of probity and care—with no one there to see or cheer. This is the world. Just you and the job, at your desk. You and the return, you and the cash-flow data, you and the inventory protocol, you and the depreciation schedules, you and the numbers… Routine, repetition, tedium, monotony, ephemeracy, inconsequence, abstraction, disorder, boredom, angst, ennui—these are true hero's enemies, and make no mistake, they are fearsome indeed. For they are real (230-1).

This hero of "today," the substitute teacher reckons, the hero of the "modern era" is different from the hero of "yesterday" (232). The hero of yesterday is known by its ability to break through the boundaries and bring "facts" into existence; the hero of yesterday has been known to generate facts (232). But the hero of today does not need to hew down boundaries because they are "fixed"; and today's hero does not need to generate facts because the most important facts have already been generated by yesterday's hero (232). Today's hero's heroic act involves classifying, organizing, shepherding the facts—leading the facts in the form to where it is requisite; if all the important facts have already been generated, then the ingeniousness of today's hero lies in the slicing of facts (232-3).

The hero slices facts, orders and deploys them, routinely and repeatedly; he quietly sits at his desk for nine hours per day on weekdays, with a back-straining forward bend, working in the desk lamp's light's circle (like the actor above in *An*

Actor Prepares who is able to concentrate better with the desk lamp's small neat circular light pointing at the objects on his desk). The hero/rote examiner moves only when he has to turn a pinned page, or to put a loose page from left side to his right, or to close a file and push it away, and pull another file toward him and open it and gaze at it, by summoning up fervent concentration: this is the hero's career's rhythm. The hero appears tragically trapped in this form of clichéd rhythms/gestures/motor actions; trapped in the everyday banality of the readymade adult world.

PART II

'AND'S + OBJECTS + BREATHLESSNESS

In a public interview with David Kipen, Wallace declares that he dreads reading his own work in public spaces, because he feels his work is not suited for reading out loud. Wallace says:

> I mean it doesn't really conform to the breath very well… It's not just a matter of length. I think it has to do with a certain sort of headlong anxious quality that, without the need for breathing or syllabization or anything like that, lives a lot better on the page than it does outside (Wallace 1:56-2:29).

In the same interview, the interviewer, Kipen, tells Wallace that when he reads Wallace's work, he gets a certain sense that Wallace constructs sentences at the very speed of thought; the interviewer asks Wallace if he writes quickly. The author says that he writes very slowly in fact, going through draft after draft, until he gets to a point when it starts sounding "real" to him; and part of the realness has to do with successful sentence-tempering: the realness has to do with whether Wallace has been able to construct a sentence that makes the reader read slowly; and, in other instances, whether his sentences appear to be "breathless and headlong and kind of speedy" (Wallace 3:14-3:41).

The interviewer then asks Wallace about the techniques the author uses to make a reader read slower or faster. In reply, Wallace says that the easiest technique is to modulate the length of the sentences; if it's a run-on sentence, he ensures that the grammar of the sentence is such that the reader never really gets lost, but also never quite gets to stop; this type of syntactical structure lends a quality of "breathlessness" to the sentence, Wallace tells Kipen (3:50-3:58).

In *Infinite Jest*, when you are introduced to Don Gately, an oral narcotics addict, he is about to burgle a house along with his associate; but Guillaume DuPlessis, the owner of the house is, unfortunately, present. The Gately-introductory section, plus also the subsequent Gately-episodes in the novel overflows with the coordinating conjunction, 'and': heaps of 'and's; heaps by 'and's; heaps of 'and's to make you breathless:

SAMPLE SENTENCE #1

> The little guy [DuPlessis] was asleep sick in bed upstairs in acetate pajamas with a hot water bottle on his chest and half a glass of OJ and a bottle of NyQuil and a foreign book and copies of *International Affairs* and *Interdependent Affairs* and a pair of thick specs and an industrial-size box of Kleenex on the bedside table and an empty vaporizer barely humming at the foot of the bed, and the guy was to say the least nonplussed to wake up and see high-filter flashlights crisscrossing over the unlit bedroom walls and bureau and teak chiffonnier as Gately and associate scanned for a wall-safe, which surprisingly like 90% of people with wall-safes conceal in their master bedroom behind some sort of land- or seascape painting (*Infinite* 57).

Above, in the 127-word sentence, the narrator attempts to make a huge pile by applying 13 'and's—the most vital word for excess, states William Gass in his essay "And," (*Reader* ch. 47). Vital for excess and for inducing breathlessness.

Gass thinks that 'and' is anonymous and invisible, for when you really pay attention to it—study, see, listen to it—'and' does not appear to be 'and' at all; it

is like one of the threads in your clothes that keeps the clothes from coming apart (ch. 47).

In sample sentence #1, you become a burglar too, seeing DuPlessis's dark bedroom's objects as if with a high-filter flashlight, studying the objects one at a time: a bottle and a glass and another bottle and magazines and specs and a box and vaporizer and bureau and chiffonnier: the slew of 'and's reminding you, again and again, that it's a dark room, and that the flashlights can catch only one object at a time in its circumference.

Wallace places the 'and's, meticulously, between objects not only for you, the burglar/reader, to see the objects, but also for you to see the 'and's; not to let the objects and 'and's go unstudied. In the circumference of the flashlight, therefore, the burglar/reader catches, along with the objects, the 'and's.

The unwatched 'and' does not carry any meaning, reports Gass; the 'and' plops on the page as it pleases, while the writer is sweating through nouns and verbs, etching and erasing them (*Reader* ch. 47). Conversely, the watched 'and' has multiple meanings and functions of the most profound sort. The 'and' is swarming with surprising lessons on language if only you care to watch it, Gass tells you (ch. 47).

To produce 'and,' you initially open your mouth, and the breath flows out, and then the breath pushes up against the roof, and it even enters the nose, the breath, and then the flow of the sound is stopped by the tongue against the hard palate (i.e. the front part of the roof of the mouth). Gass shows you the various ways of pronouncing the article "a": '"aw, A, uh, aah,"' or you may even forget to pronounce it; he tells you that you can pronounce "the" as: '"thuh or thee"'; but "and" can be pronounced only one way: "and" (ch. 47). However, the length of "and" differs depending on how much you let the rush of a vowel carry you on: "aah-nn-duh" (ch. 47). The "duh" throws a noose around the next word, and allows your thoughts to continue… continue piling up, building excess, without interruptions (ch. 47).

A word's music is reliant on how a person performs it, voices it; but, since you read in the pin-drop silence of the library or even in your study room, without even moving your lips, you hear the music of the word only in what Gass refers to

in his essay “The Music of Prose” as the “hall of the head” (*Reader* ch. 44). When you read the aforementioned ‘and’-swarming sentence of Wallace, what does it sound like in the hall of your head?

How does Wallace’s prose’s music—“aah-nn-duh” “aah-nn-duh” “aah-nn-duh”—make you feel? Doesn’t it strike you that the additive dances of the sentence—“and half a glass of OJ and a bottle of NyQuil and a foreign book and…”—are inducing in you a sense of breathlessness, as you wait for the sentence to end? What do you do when such a sentence comes to an end? Do you jump up in delight (“there—there—we’re here!”), or do you backpedal as soon as it ends, to the starting point of the sentence, again and again? Do you begin to grow addicted to its repetitive word (‘and’) acting as a sort of refrain?

The sample sentence #1’s shape and length and repetition (its repetitive ‘and’-music) are reminders that the burglar, Gately, who has broken into DuPlessis’s home, is an oral-narcotics addict; and that he lives by adhering to stringent physical routines of need and satisfaction: certain ferocious ingestive compulsions.

The reiterative architecture is also visible in Henry James’s sentence from the novel, *The Golden Bowl*. Gass discusses a passage from James’s novel in his essay “The Architecture of the Sentence,” where Prince Amerigo goes shopping with Charlotte Stant to purchase a gift for Maggie Verver, the woman whom the Prince plans to marry (*Reader* ch. 49). They walk into an antique shop and the shopman begins showing substandard objects:

> Of decent old gold, old silver, old bronze, of old chased and jeweled artistry, were the objects that, successively produced, had ended by numerously dotting the counter, where the shopman’s slim, light fingers, with neat nails, touched them at moments, briefly, nervously, tenderly, as those of a chessplayer rest, a few seconds, over the board, on a figure he thinks he may move and then may not: small florid ancientries, ornaments, pendants, lockets, brooches, buckles, pretexts for dim brilliants, bloodless rubies, pearls either too large or too opaque for value; miniatures mounted with diamonds

> that had ceased to dazzle; snuffboxes presented to—or by—the too-questionable great; cups, trays, taper-stands, suggestive of pawn tickets, archaic and brown, that would themselves, if preserved, have been prized curiosities (ch. 49).

As you enter the sentence, the word "old" is repeated (four times) to sort of drum into your head that it is the space of an antique shop; and the different types of old metals (gold, silver, bronze) on display are named; and the sounds of the words, the metals, the punning on the opening word "decent," all together take you down the steps and into the shop itself, states Gass (ch. 49).

James's passage gives you an impression of you going down steps, and the word "old," which is repeated and which demands your attention, acts as if it is a "riser" in the staircase (ch. 49); just as 'and' repeated 13 times in Wallace's sample sentence #1 acts as a sort of a riser and demands your attention and carries you forward into DuPlessis's dark bedroom with Gately and his associate and places you in the position of the burglars.

In James's passage, the shopman fills the counter with things for Prince and Charlotte; among other things, there are: "pendants, lockets, brooches, buckles" (ch. 49). The Prince looks at the bibelots, while you, the reader, read the list of bibelots; the reader becomes the Prince: the one becomes the other (ch. 49). The reader, similarly, becomes the burglar in Wallace's sample sentence #1; and, while the burglars observe the objects in the room, you read the list of objects: a bottle, a glass, another bottle, magazines, and so on.

While touching the various bibelots, the shopman's hand's movements are tentative, like the hesitations and pauses in James's passage; the shopman mimics the hand gestures of a chessplayer, touching the figures on the board "briefly, nervously, tenderly," reckons Gass, and the syntax of the passage mimics the hesitant hand gestures of the shopman (ch. 49).

In Wallace's sample sentence #1, too, you find the language's action and the action of the burglars running parallel to each other; both the actions belong to planes that resemble each other. The objects in DuPlessis's dark room reveal themselves to the burglars one by one, not altogether, in the circumference of

the flashlight, with the flashlight catching one object at a time. One by one, the objects reveal themselves to the burglars' eyes; the objects as if click on and then off. The 'and's, the placement of the 'and's after every object, so that an object appears to you after a tiny 'and'-interval, mimic the burglars' experience of an object erupting into their consciousnesses after a tiny interval—the time it takes them to catch another object in the flashlight.

Plus the breathlessness and the forward momentum in the passage that the 13 'and's produce, mimic the breathlessness and the forward momentum of the mind of the flashlight-wielding addict interlopers. The forward momentum of the mind is at play when Gately and his associate are scanning the objects—the bottle, the glass, another bottle, a book, magazines, thick specs, Kleenex box, vaporizer (*Infinite* 57). These objects do not mean anything to them, and they skim these ones, breathlessly, uninterestedly, impatiently: not bottle, not glass, not book, not magazines, not specs, not Kleenex box; they are rather anxious to know where the land- or seascape painting is, because most people hide their wall-safe behind it (57).

In his essay "And," Gass provides an example of a childlike speech that makes you breathless on hearing it: "I saw a snake and it was long and black and slithery and fork-tongued and pepper-eyed and slimy and evil and a cliché in the grass" (*Reader* ch. 47). Such a childlike unstudied speech gives rise to abundant forward movement—like Wallace's sentence above—because of the breathlessness achieved through use of the conjunction, over and over. If you want the child to grow up to be a man, says Gass with a touch of sarcasm, you may tweak his language by sloughing off the 'and's (ch. 47). Gass rewrites the above sentence with the child's speech now coming at you through an aperture of a minimalist-machinery: "I saw a snake. It was long. It was black, slithery, fork-tongued and pepper-eyed. It was slimy, evil. It was a cliché in the grass" (ch. 47). Gass is not an advocate of such 'and'-throttling or tying-up-the-tongue-type calisthenics; he finds minimalism to be mindless, most of the time (*Reader* Theory). 'And' provides an opportunity to loosen the tongue; perhaps even provides you with another tongue.

Gass, instead, like Wallace, has the penchant for the excess and 'and' is essential to conjure up excess. The coordinating conjunction, reckons Gass, is ideal for making huge mounds, to imply an addition, ad infinitum (ch. 47). One 'and' makes for a neat couple: *Fanny and Alexander*, *Jules and Jim*, *Here and Elsewhere*, *War and Peace*, *Crime and Punishment*; but when you add the second and then the third 'and,' the previous 'and's begin to transform (ch. 47).

Gass selects a part of a long passage, in his essay "And," from Charles Dickens's *Dombey and Son*, to show you the author's mounding elan; but despite his additive inclinations, or rather through it, Dickens conveys that there is more to the story about the neighborhood area getting ruined due to the recently laid railway tracks (ch. 47). Here is Dickens showing restrain through excess:

> There were frowzy fields, and cow-houses, dung-hills, and dust-heaps, and ditches, and gardens, and summerhouses, and carpet-beating grounds, at the very door of the railway. Little tumuli of oyster shells in the oyster season, and of lobster shells in the lobster season, and of broken crockery and faded cabbage leaves in all seasons, encroached upon its high places. Posts, and rails, and old cautions to trespassers, and backs of mean houses, and patches of wretched vegetation, stared it out of countenance (ch. 47).

In this passage of Dickens, the objects and surroundings are enumerated using 'and's; these 'and's divide the objects and surroundings into heaps. Please note that Gass is quoting a passage of excess from Dickens that has the exact number of 'and's (13) as the sample sentence #1 of Wallace; except that Dickens's 'and's are divided over three sentences as opposed to one sentence of Wallace; in other words, Dickens does let you pause and catch your breath. And Wallace doesn't.

SAMPLE SENTENCE #2

> Gately could easily have screwed out of here and never looked back; but here indeed, in the lamplight, is a seascape over next to the chiffonnier, and the associate has a quick peek and reports that the

safe behind it is to laugh at, it can be opened with harsh language, almost; and oral narcotics addicts tend to operate on an extremely rigid physical schedule of need and satisfaction, and Gately is at this moment firmly in the need part of the schedule; and so D. W. Gately disastrously decides to go ahead and allow a nonviolent burglary to become in effect a robbery—which the operative legal difference involves either violence or the coercive threat of same—and Gately draws himself up to his full menacing height and shines his flashlight in the little homeowner's rheumy eyes and addresses him the way menacing criminals speak in popular entertainment—*d's* for *th's*, various apocopes, and so on—and takes hold of the guy's ear and conducts him down to a kitchen chair and binds his arms and legs to the chair with electrical cords neatly clipped from refrigerator and can-opener and M. Café-brand Automatic Café-au-Lat-Maker, binds him just short of gangrenously tight, because he's hoping the Berkshire foliage is prime and the guy's going to be soloing in this chair for a good stretch of time, and Gately starts looking the kitchen's drawers for the silverware—not the good-silver-for-company silverware; that was in a calfskin case underneath some neatly folded old spare Christmas wrapping in a stunning hardwood-with-ivory-inlay chest of drawers in the living room, where over 90% of upscale people's good silver is hidden, and has already been promoted and piled just off the foyer—but just the regular old everyday flatware silverware, because the vast bulk of homeowners keep their dish towels two drawers below their everyday-silverware drawer, and God's made no better call-for-help-stifling gag in the world than a good old oily-smelling fake-linen dish towel; and the bound guy in the cords on the chair suddenly snaps to the implications of what Gately's looking for and is struggling and saying: Do not gag me, I have a terrible cold, my nose she is a brick on the snot, I have not the power to breathe through the nose, for the love of God please do not gag my mouth; and as a gesture of goodwill the homeowner tells Gately, who's rummaging, the combination of the

> bedroom's seascape safe, except in French numbers, which together with the honking adenoidal inflection the guy's grippe gives his speech doesn't even sound like human speech to Gately, and but also the guy tells Gately there are some antique pre-British-takeover Quebecois gold coins in a calfskin purse taped to the back of an undistinguished Impressionist landscape in the living room (*Infinite* 57-8).

The sample sentence #2 of Wallace has 468 words and 28 'and's. But, again, you learn from Gass that the small word—'and'—has wide-ranging functions; and that 'and's meanings might vary; and that different 'and's might connect, sometimes even within a single sentence, different objects: concepts, inscriptions, syntactical, and rhetorical strategies.

The sentence preceding sample sentence #2 in *Infinite Jest* informs the reader that DuPlessis and his associate, in the midst of their search for the wall-safe, discover that the homeowner is present at home, and has not gone with his family for the foliage-tour in Berkshire. What is the fallout of this revelation? The beginning of sample sentence #2 provides you with an image of the obvious fallout, but which does not unfold: "Gately could easily have screwed out of there and never looked back" (57). Gately does not go out or run toward the exit; the cause of the homeowner being at home does not translate into effect: you may argue, rhetorically, that if *A* (cause) has not translated into *B* (consequence), then you cannot think of *A* as a "cause"; and that the causal sequence may be said to be broken in this case.

But another sequence begins to evolve: Gately's associate spots the wall-safe behind the seascape, and tells Gately that it is easy to open; and it is revealed that Gately, an oral narcotics addict, is desperately in need of the drug. Both, the information (the safe's laughable lock), and the biological need (for a drug), drive Gately not to flee, to do what he does next. Below is an excerpt of sample sentence #2:

> …the associate has a quick peek and reports that the safe behind it is to laugh at… and oral narcotics addicts tend to operate on an extremely rigid physical schedule of need and satisfaction, and Gately is at this moment firmly in the need part of the schedule (*Infinite* 57*)*.

Except for the 'and' of "need and satisfaction" in sample sentence #2, the rest of the three conjunctions in this part of the sentence might be termed, what Gass calls, in his essay "And," the 'and' of cause (*Reader* ch. 47).

In the essay, Gass quotes an 'and'-induced breathless sentence of Gertrude Stein from 'Melanctha':

> She tended Rose, and she was patient, submissive, soothing, and untiring, while the sullen, childish, cowardly, black Rosie grumbled and fussed and howled and made herself to be an abomination and like a simple beast (ch. 47).

Gass shows the 'and' that Stein's sentence's form implies; he rewrites parts of the sentence to delineate this: "sullen Rosie grumbled"; "childish Rosie fussed"; "cowardly black Rosie howled and made herself to be an abomination and like a simple beast" (ch. 47). This rhetorical structure is an invocation of the 'and' of cause and consequence.

Gass provides another example of this type of 'and: "I bought some stock in IBM and the bottom of the market parted like a wet sack" (ch. 47). And another, from Ernest Hemingway's short story, 'After the Storm,' where two people get into a fight at a bar and one of them, the narrator, takes a knife and cuts his opponent across his arm and exits: "Well, I went out of there and there were plenty of them with him" (ch. 47). Gass terms this Hemingway's use of conjunction to be the 'and' of consequence: The narrator goes out of the bar "because" the man he knifes starts getting surrounded by many of his (injured man's) friends (ch. 47).

Similarly, in the case of sample sentence #2, “because” his associate tells Gately about the easy-to-crack code of the safe, “because” Gately is an addict, and “because” Gately is now craving for the drug, he is going to indulge in things that he usually doesn’t whilst burglarizing: “and so D.W. Gately disastrously decides to go ahead and allow a nonviolent burglary to become in effect a robbery” (*Infinite* 57). These two connectives (‘and’s) are ‘and’s of consequence. The burglary, which is by definition nonviolent, turns violent, and Gately’s subsequent actions shift under the rubric of robbery, legally speaking.

And what exactly does Gately do when the wall-safe is found? How does he treat DuPlessis, the homeowner who turns out to be home? Gately roughs up DuPlessis. How? The detailing of the manner in which Gately enacts the violent crime, the usage of six ‘and’s to do so, is another instance of ‘and’ appearing not to be ‘and’ at all. These ‘and’s supply the information of manner to the sentence; “how” is the question these ‘and’s answer; and, thus, these ‘and’s (appearing when Gately’s crime turns violent, turns into a robbery) may be said to be adverbial. Here is how Gately treats Duplessis in sample sentence #2:

> Gately draws himself up to his full menacing height and shines his flashlight in the little homeowner’s rheumy eyes and addresses him the way menacing criminals speak in popular entertainment—*d’s* for *th’s*, various apocopes, and so on—and takes hold of the guy’s ear and conducts him down to a kitchen chair and binds his arms and legs to the chair” (*Infinite* 57).

There are six adverbial ‘and’s in this passage of sample sentence #2, excluding the ‘and’ of “and so on.”

The first ‘and’ in the aforementioned sentence of Stein from ‘Melanctha’ also does not appear to be ‘and’ at all: “She tended Rose, and she was patient, submissive, soothing…” Here the ‘and’ is used as an adverb, points out Gass in his essay “And” (*Reader* ch. 47). If adverb is said to usually answer such questions as when, where, how, or to what extent, the first adverbial ‘and’ of Stein’s sentence informs you “how” Melanctha takes care of Rose: she does it patiently,

submissively, soothingly (ch. 47). Here is how Gass asks you to read this part of the Stein sentence: “She tended Rose, and [in doing so] she was patient, submissive, soothing” (ch. 47). The ‘and’ determines the nature of what follows the verb “tended.” There is no category in grammar for this type of exercise, declares Gass (ch. 47).

And there is no category in grammar either, you reckon, for excavating ‘and’ where there are commas. If, on previous occasions, Gass shows you ‘and’s that are not ‘and’s at all—the ‘and’ of cause and consequence, and the adverbial ‘and’; then now, in the same Stein sentence, he shows you ‘commas’ that are not ‘commas’ at all; they are covert ‘and’s; and he abstracts five hidden ones. Here is again the Stein sentence in its attenuated form: “She was patient, submissive, soothing, and untiring, while the sullen, childish, cowardly, black Rosie grumbled” (ch. 47). What you see are commas between: “patient” and “submissive”; “submissive” and “soothing”; “sullen” and “childish”; “childish” and “cowardly”; “cowardly” and “black Rosie grumbled” (ch. 47). What Gass sees are commas substituting for ‘and’s; the presence of the conjunction, therefore, is at a conceptual level (ch. 47). Here, again, Gass familiarizes you with the protean inclinations of ‘and’: the “ghostly and bodiless” characteristics (ch. 47).

You can rewrite this part of Stein’s sentence using ‘and’: ‘“she was patient and submissive and soothing and untiring”’ (ch. 47). But this is not a vigorous construction, states Gass (ch. 47). And this isn’t either: “She was patient; and she was submissive; and she was soothing; and she was untiring” (ch. 47). In the everyday speedy transactions with others, you’re probably more inclined to use monosyllabic words and skeletal sentences; and for the same speedy reason, you might interpose commas to indicate folding up of ideas.

After binding DuPlessis’s arms and legs to the chair with electrical chords, Gately searches the kitchen drawers for dish towel to gag DuPlessis. The homeowner realizes what Gately is looking for, and he implores Gately in first person and five independent clauses separated by commas in sample sentence #2: “Do not gag me, I have a terrible cold, my nose she is a brick of the snot, I have not the power to breathe through the nose, for the love of God please do

not gag my mouth" (*Infinite* 58). The convention of punctuation for a compound sentence—a sentence containing two or more independent clauses—require you to put a comma and coordinating conjunction ('and') for joining the independent clauses; the comma along with the 'and' signal that another independent clause is on its way.

Although, DuPlessis's imploration is only part of a 468-word sentence, you still feel that the rules of grammar pertaining to a complete sentence should apply here; you feel that a comma splice has been committed in sample sentence #2. You commit a comma splice when you splice or join two independent clauses together with a comma only, and you leave out the 'and.' For example: "Babai is writing his thesis on David Foster Wallace, he is going to submit it on time." A comma alone is not powerful enough; you need the assistance of a conjunction here: "Babai is writing his thesis on David Foster Wallace, [and] he is going to submit it on time."

With comma plus 'and,' DuPlessis's five independent clauses read like this: "Do not gag me, I have a terrible cold, [and] my nose she is a brick of the snot, [and] I have not the power to breathe through the nose, [and] for the love of God please do not gag my mouth." After the first comma, after the first independent clause, it might be apposite to place "because" instead of "and": "Do not gag me, [because] I have a terrible cold…" The next two conjunctions are, of course, 'and's of cause: "…[because] my nose she is a brick of the snot, [because] I have not the power to breathe through the nose…" But DuPlessis's does not have the luxury to indulge in either "because" or "and"s; he needs to get his message across quickly to Gately, who is rummaging through the kitchen drawers, searching for a towel to gag DuPlessis. And, therefore, following Gass, the 'and' becomes ghostly and bodiless. Since DuPlessis senses death through gagging, the imploring passage folds up 'and's; the three commas (if not four) indicate the folds; it translates into speedy straining antsy-ridden speech. But, since Gately cannot understand the language DuPlessis is speaking in, DuPlessis fails to communicate his nose-blocked rhinovirus condition.

Apart from being ghostly, exerting itself conceptually and invisibly, 'and' remains ensconced in other sounds, sometimes, Gass points out in "And" (*Reader*

ch. 47). He lists words where the chief element is 'and': "randy," "saraband," "island," "Andorra," "Anderson," "antediluvian," "Spandau," "canned ham," and "ampersand" (ch. 47). In sample sentence #2, likewise, you have 'and' sneakily hiding inside "brand": "M. Café-brand Automatic Café-au-Lat-Maker," one of the machines from where Gately clips electric chord to tie up Duplessis (*Infinite* 57). 'And' can also be seen lurking about in the rhinovirus-induced inflections of Duplessis: "adenoidal" ("honking adenoidal inflection the guy's grippe gives his speech") (58). In sample sentence #1, in addition to appearing 13 times as a word, 'and' reveals itself through sound in "scanned" ("Gately and associate scanned for a wall-safe") and "land" ("land- or seascape painting") (57).

And even when it appears fully as a word, even when it places its body between other words (or qualities), 'and' might not appear to be 'and' at all; it might double up as adverb of manner and also "because." "'And' plays a major role in the meaning of many words familiar to the logician, like 'yet,' 'but,' and 'although,' though 'and' is not all of any," says Gass (*Reader* ch. 47). In other words, the comma sort of becomes 'and's double, just as 'and' becomes the double of an "adverb,""because," "yet," "but," and "although."

It is as though, for Gass, 'and' is a not a word alone, but a character affined with Fyodor Dostoevsky's "doubling" characters in his novels. It is as though 'and' sits as the counterfeit Goliadkin sits in front of the real Goliadkin in Dostoevsky's *The Double*; the 'and' casually sits opposite an "adverb" or "because" or "yet" or "but" or "although"; and the 'and' is thoroughly different from an "adverb" and "because" and "but" and "yet" and "although"; and, at the same time, the 'and' is thoroughly identical to them, semantic-wise, sometimes.

In *The Double*, the one who has come into the office and is now sitting opposite Goliadkin is Goliadkin too; not the one who has already been sitting in a chair with his mouth agape and holding a pen in his hand; the person who arrives is completely different from the first Goliadkin; and, at the same time, somehow, thoroughly identical to the first. The second Goliadkin is:

> Of the same height, of the same mold, dressed the same way, with the same bald spot—in short, nothing, decidedly nothing, had been

> overlooked for a complete likeness, so that if they had been taken and placed next to each other, no one, decidedly no one, would have undertaken to determine precisely which was the real Goliadkin and which was the counterfeit, which was the old and which the new, which was the original and which the copy (Dostoevsky, ch. VI).

At a certain moment, in the "careers" of an "adverb," "because," "but," "yet," and "although," the 'and' appropriates them; or, to put it differently, 'and' seizes up other words, their semantics, their ways of lighting up the language and diffracts them through its own aperture, making them and itself visible, anew.

In his essay, "The Architecture of the Sentence," Gass points out that there is always space in a sentence to cram more words:

> Each word is therefore like a picket in a fence. As these spaces are filled, the fence becomes solid. The minimalist style tends to leave these spaces open. The baroque style tends to fill them (*Reader* ch. 49).

He gives an example of a sentence's space getting more and more filled—there is always space for more adjectives, more appositives—and then the space getting etiolated, progressively:

> Henry said goodbye to Larry.
> Good old Henry said a short goodbye to Larry, his friend of twenty years.
> The guy people called "good old Henry" said a short but fond goodbye to a sour and sullen, pale-faced Larry, his off-and-on friend of these tumultuous last twenty or so years. Etc.
> Or: Goodbye, Larry, Henry said.

Goodbye.
Bye.
By (ch. 49).

What do you mean by spaces in a sentence? In the essay, Gass writes about two types of spaces. First, there are the spaces in which you live and do your chores and build and travel (or drag your feet everyday) from point A to B, and from B to A via C maybe (ch. 49).

And, secondly, there are the "spaces of representation," the spaces in the head or paper where you forge associations, and attempt to make dissonant things chime; the space where you might find: the painter's perspective of a person screaming with his hands pressing against his ears to tackle day to day deluge; the corporate's diagrams (like high-rises) and tables and exhaustive statistical charts; the architecture's elaborate Bauhaus plans; and, particularly, writing itself (ch. 49). In the spaces of representation, you think, you plan, and you design.

When you write, you not only construct sentences after sentences, but you design a varied set of spaces: logical, grammatical, rhetorical, referential, musical, social, etc.; and these spaces channel your feelings and ideas and energies. "This is the architecture of the sentence. And sometimes architecture itself resembles a sentence," says Gass (ch. 49).

And Gass, as a reader, is curious to know the number of spaces in a sentence. Like, for instance, he dissects in "The Architecture of the Sentence" the spaces hidden in the aforementioned James's sentence from the novel, *The Golden Bowl*. To reiterate, in the sentence, Prince Amerigo goes shopping with Charlotte Stant to purchase a gift for Maggie Verver, the woman whom the Prince is set to marry. There is the space of the staircase through which you move, along with the Prince and Charlotte, to reach the antique shop; there is the observer's space: the Prince, Charlotte, and the salesman; there is the space that the salesman's hand, nervous and deceitful, creates; there is the chessboard-like table's space over which is spread out dim, substandard, formerly dazzling objects; each disappointing object indexes a certain social space; and there is also

the social level of the space you reside in while you contemplate what to purchase (ch. 49).

In sample sentence #2, likewise, there is the space of the observers: DuPlessis, Gately, and his associate; the space that the lamplight creates by bringing the seascape into view; the space of kitchen drawers, which Gately is rummaging to find everyday silverware because two drawers below it are, invariably, oily dish towels that are good for gagging; the space of living room drawers where the good silverware in a case of calf skin is there; the space of the foyer, where the burglars pile the good silverware; the space where DuPlessis is bound to the chair with electrical cords from "refrigerator," "can-opener," and "M. Café-brand Automatic Café-au-Lat-Maker"; the space of the landscape painting behind which gold coins are taped (*Infinite* 57-58).

In sample sentence #1, too, there is the space of the observers: DuPlessis, Gately and his associate. There is the bedside table's space that bears different objects: "…half a glass of OJ, and a bottle of NyQuil…"; the space of the vaporizer at the foot of the bed, just about humming; the space of the flashlight-created space that comprises the walls, bureau, and chiffonnier (57).

In sample sentence #1, a space also opens out from the middle, through an endnote:

> The codeinless kind though—almost the first physical datum Gately took in the nasty flashbulb-flash shock of the occupied bedroom's light coming on, to give you an idea of an oral-narcotics man's depth of psychic investment (57n. 17).

The sample sentence #1 ramifies, segues from the main text into the back of the book on the point that the bedside table's cough syrup bottle has non-addictive substance ("codeinless"). While the main text is listing, linearly, the objects burglars are coming across in the room—the endnote interpolates (like the burglars) to furnish information about something that is going to happen: Duplessis switching on the light of the bedroom; the flash of the bulb shocking Gately; and Gately noticing the contents of the cough syrup bottle.

When you move back into the main text, after reading the endnote, you reenter mid-sentence, reenter the linear narrative again, and the listing of the objects in the room continues with 'and's; the 'and's resting between the objects not only compel you to look at the objects, but also compel you to look at the usually anonymous and invisible "and": "…and a foreign book and copies of *International Affairs and Interdependent Affairs* and a pair of thick specs and an industrial-size box of Kleenex on the bedside table and an empty vaporizer barely humming at the foot of the bed" (57)…

In the third chapter, I return to the concept of "and," as theorized by French philosophers, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. I show how Wallace establishes the logic of "and" by making the language grow grass-like from the middle of the sentence, by making the language stutter and stammer, and by creating a tension in language: "and…and…and…"

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2

The 'Invisible Forces' In David Foster Wallace's Fictions

The American poet Jorie Graham begins the book, *Overlord*, with a poem ("Other") that describes a certain type of "absence" coursing into the sickly poet's life, and transforming the way she murmurs and understands the word—"Now" (2). For the first time, the poet, as a child, misses school; the teacher taking attendance calls out her name and gets a silent response; and she, lying in her bed, hears the word: "absent" (2).

Only things, the poet decides, can never retreat: the tree outside her window, for instance, is stretched to the outermost bounds of its bark, leaves, and roots; the blue cup, too, with its blue stream on the dresser; and, also, the bridge's handrail's bird (2). Things are always completely present; they don't have the capacity to retreat part of themselves (2). Only humans, the poet reckons, can be absent; only you can withdraw into yourself at any moment; remain present in part only: "We can pull back/from the being of our bodies, we can live in a/portion of them, we can be absent, no one can tell" (3).

In the opening scene, of David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, Hal Incandenza gives silent responses to the Deans' questions. Hal appears not to be altogether there in the room; he is as though present with a portion of himself withdrawn: Hal prefers someone narrating his story for him, to him (*Infinite* 3). Hal flails, wriggles, and waggles; he emits animalistic sounds and noises (14).

What has happened to Hal for things to have come to this? The answer generally revolves around six possibilities:

1) CONSEQUENCES OF MEETING LURIA PEREC: Stephen Burn claims in his book, *David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest*, that there are suggestions that Hal's inability to communicate in the opening scene in the Year of Glad (Y.G.) is because of his encounter with Luria Perec, a terrorist in *Infinite Jest* (ch. 3n. 13). Luria also happens to be the name of Russian neurophysiologist A. R. Luria, who is the author of *The Man with a Shattered World*, and whose book Wallace mentions in his essay "Greatly Exaggerated" (ch. 3n. 13). Luria's book tells you that after a

bullet penetrates Zazetsky's left parieto-occipital regions of the brain in a war, the Russian soldier becomes "illiterate" (*Man* 87). Although Zazetsky is able to speak, his vocabulary shrinks, massively: when he needs to relive himself, he is unable to convey to the nurse to bring the "bedpan," because he forgets the word for the object (87-88); in meetings, his "disconnected ideas" compel him to remain mute (94). "He [Zazetsky] had lost what is distinctly human—the ability to use language," says Luria (87). And Hal too, Burn reckons, perhaps suffers an injury to the left cerebral hemisphere (the place where language skills are located) in his meeting with Luria; and that causes the muteness of Hal in the opening scene (ch. 3n. 13). Hal tells the deans that the essays submitted along with the college application are old, because last year's essays "would look to you like some sort of infant's random stabs on a keyboard" (*Infinite* 9). With Hal being a southpaw, he is automatically a right-brain dominant; meaning that even though Hal loses his language skills (due to brain injury), his tennis-playing skills are still intact (he reaches the semifinals of the tournament he is participating in), points out Burn (ch. 3n. 13).

2) INGESTION OF "DMZ": In the Year of the Depend Adult Undergarment (Y.D.A.U.), on November 20, 2009, toward the end of *Infinite Jest*, Michael Pemulis discovers that the DMZ hallucinogen is missing from its hiding place (*Infinite* 916); and on the same day, you see Hal losing control over his facial muscles and beginning to display gradations of hilarity expressions (875). A year later, in November 2010, in the opening scene, in Y.G., Hal tells the deans of the University of Arizona that "I cannot make myself understood, now… Call it something I ate" (10). This statement is followed by Hal's memory of mold-eating as a child, which appears to imply that Hal's condition is because of ingesting DMZ, a mold-based hallucinogen. In *The Unspeakable Failures of David Foster Wallace*, Clare Hayes-Brady endorses the view that Hal's issues with language (in the opening scene of the novel) is possibly because of the intake of DMZ tablets that Pemulis loses (toward the end of the novel in Y.D.A.U.) (153). Hayes-Brady lists the DMZ-induced feelings of Hal: "disembodiment, an inability to function unaided in the world, and a withdrawal into the life of the mind" (154).

3) **FALLOUT OF MARIJUANA ABSTINENCE:** In Y.D.A.U., on November 8, 2009, Hal confesses to his brother, Mario, that he is a marijuana addict (*Infinite* 782); and he tells his friend Michael Pemulis that he is in fact thinking of going off drugs "forever" (1064n. 321). Pemulis warns Hal that if he abstains from drugs altogether, Hal would become "the walking dead" (1065n. 321). On November 20, 2009, Hal's face's expression begins to involuntary leap from hilarity to cachinnation; begins to vacillate between amusement and mirth (875-76). A year later, in November 2010, in Y.G., in the opening section of the novel, similarly, when Hal smiles, it is construed by the deans that Hal is hurting (5). Hal is also unable to communicate. The Hal-episodes at the end (in 2009) and the beginning of the novel (in 2010) certainly exemplify Pemulis's words about death-in-life if Hal quits ingesting drugs altogether, you might argue.

4) CHILDHOOD ISOLATION + MARIJUANA ABSTINENCE + LONELINESS: In *Elegant Complexity*, a study of *Infinite Jest*, Greg Carlisle tells you that Hal's unable to make himself understood in the opening section in 2010 Y.G. because of his "retreat into himself—his isolation" (VI). The 18-year-old Hal has been carrying the feeling of being isolated since childhood, and his abstinence from marijuana in 2009 Y.D.A.U. aggravates it—the isolated feeling—according to Carlisle (VI). When Hal tells the deans in the opening section that "I cannot make myself understood, now…. Call it something I ate," he presumably equates eating with isolation and childhood (VI). In childhood, perhaps, the eating of the "esoteric mnemonic steroids"—the substance that Hal's mother feeds him by mixing it with the morning cereal—burgeons Hal's intellectual capacity (Hal is able to memorize entire dictionaries and syntax manuals); but because of this very intellectual prowess, Hal possibly feels isolated socially, states Carlisle (VI). Or childhood isolation—the beginning of the feeling of isolation—may be a result of eating of the mold (VI). After eating the mold, Hal runs to his mother and tells her, "I ate this" (*Infinite* 11). Hal's mother, in turn, runs around the garden, holding aloft the mold in her fingers, either shouting—"*God!*"—or—"Help! My son ate this" (11)! The mother keeps shouting, over and over (11). That the mother does not comfort her sobbing and scared son, and instead keeps running around the garden and shouting, perhaps makes Hal feel isolated; this episode might be the onset of Hal's isolated feeling in childhood, states Carlisle (VI). This feeling gets

more intense when Hal quits marijuana altogether in November 2009, Y.D.A.U. In the opening scene, what Hal is undergoing is a kind of "loneliness" that afflicts people immersed in a self-obsessed culture (VI). Carlisle thinks that Hal's inability to communicate in the opening scene in November 2010 (Y.G.) begins on 20 November, 2009 (Y.D.A.U.), the day Hal gives up marijuana, which eventually leads to Hal being taken to an emergency room of a psychiatric hospital (VI). To Carlisle, it appears that the decision to abstain from marijuana, the day-to-day relentless pressures of top-level tennis, his own (and his family's) obsessions "have driven Hal to retreat internally, to regress to a state of incommunicability with others" (VI).

5) DISTURBING SINCERE EXPRESSIONS: In her essay on *Infinite Jest*, Catherine Nichols states that you start to notice that Hal is expressing his own identity when Hal becomes the narrator in the novel and withdraws from marijuana on 20 November, 2009 (Y.D.A.U.) (13). "From that moment on, the discrepancy between Hal's inner feelings and outward expressions begins to diminish," says Nichols (13). The pulsing and writhing emotions of Hal—the emotions hiding beneath the detached poker-faced countenance—begin to surface (13). The face begins to distort; the janitor points out to Hal that Hal's face is a "hilarity face" (*Infinite* 875). The janitor's interpretation baffles Hal as he is unaware that his face is beaming hilarity; Hal attempts to make a "somber" face (875). He fails. The janitor tells him that now Hal's face is "mirth-ful" (876). When he finally looks at his face in a window, Hal says, "I looked sketchy and faint to myself, tentative and ghostly" (876). After exactly a year, in the opening scene, his face begins to distort again (Hal smiles, but the deans interpret it as a grimace); and Hal attempts to communicate to the deans, even though he is to remain silent (an instruction from those accompanying him to the college entrance interview). Hal attempts to communicate his feelings, which he has not done, sincerely, until now, Nichols points out (13-14); with eyes closed, he communicates: "I am not a machine. I feel and believe. I have opinions. […] I'm not just a creatus, manufactured, conditioned, bred for a function" (*Infinite* 12). Then he opens his eyes and communicates: "Please don't think I don't care" (12). Nichols thinks that Hal's sincere sentiments is at variance with the dominant values in *Infinite Jest*; the people in the novel's culture find the expression of

inner feelings to be terrorizing (Nichols 14); the deans, thus, consider Hal to be "*sub*animalistic," and they call an ambulance, and send him to a psychiatric hospital (*Infinite* 14). In other words, what Nichols proposes is that Hal has no issues in the opening scene; he is not damaged in any way; in fact he is able to communicate his inner feelings; the communication breaks down because the culture is averse to sincere expressions; it disturbs their comfort (Nichols 14).

6) **INGESTION OF THE FILM *INFINITE JEST*:** *Les Assassins des Fauteuils Rollents* (the A.F.R.), a Quebecois separatist group—which is formed after the United States coerces Canada and Mexico into coalescing under the Organization of North American Nations (O.N.A.N)—wants Canada to secede from America. As a weapon for the secession, the A.F.R. (aka "Wheelchair Assassins") is in pursuit of Hal's father's *Infinite Jest*: a movie said to be so entertaining that once you've begun viewing it, you keep viewing it over and over, until you're rendered lifeless. On November 20, 2009, in Y.D.A.U., there is a "hysterical rumor" of "Quebec adult wheelchair-tennis contingent" reaching the M.I.T. Union, where Hal is going to play an exhibition tennis match; perhaps A.F.R. abducts Hal during this infiltration (965). In the opening scene, Hal sort of validates this: he recollects digging up his father's head (17). Why does Hal disinter his father's body? It's a possibility that the cartridge of *Infinite Jest* is buried along with Hal's father; and the "Wheelchair Assassins" capture Hal, take him to the grave of his father, make him exhume the *Infinite Jest* film, and coerce him to view it. Thus, Hal's stillness, uncommunicativeness, expressions/movements beyond volition—his retreat—are because of ingesting *Infinite Jest* images. In *Understanding David Foster Wallace*, Marshall Boswell tells you that Hal's inability to communicate might be either because of the intake of DMZ hallucinogen (the second possibility above), or accidental viewing of *Infinite Jest* (133). Burn, who gives the possibility number one above, reckons that out of all the hints that Wallace provides, the hypothesis of Hal viewing his father's film is most probable (ch. 3). But if he has seen the film, how is Hal still alive (ch. 3)? Does his addiction to substance save him (ch. 3)? Or does ingestion of a certain prophylactic film save Hal (ch. 3)? Burn wonders about these questions and acknowledges that he does not have the answers, because the plot of *Infinite Jest* is ambiguous by design (ch. 3).

According to Wallace's biography, *Every Love Story is a Ghost Story*, Wallace deliberately structures the Hal-episodes in a way to preclude the reader from dwelling on any one of the above possibilities for too long, too assuredly; and, thus, the what-has-happened-to-Hal question gets asked, again and again, without a single firm unequivocal possibility—answer—emerging (Max 193). In a letter to his *Infinite Jest* editor, Wallace writes:

> Any sort of conventional linear ending for this stuff is in my opinion going to seem either linearily thrillerish in a way that doesn't go with the rest of the book; or else incredibly prolix and complicated (193).

The author tells his editor that he is aiming for: "an almost Artaud-ish blackout-type ending…. One that might look truncated or even violently ablated" (193).

There are three endings in *Infinite Jest*. First, on page 1079 the book ends with the 388th endnote. Second, the main text ends on page 981, in November 2009. Third, the chronological end of the novel is on page 17 in November 2010. Again, before the Hal-episode in the novel's opening, which takes place in November 2010, you can locate Hal for the last time in November 2009. What exactly happens in the last days of November 2009, at the end of the novel, when Hal's face begins to project "various expressions ranging from distended hilarity to scrunched grimace, expressions that seem[s] unconnected to anything that [is] going on" (*Infinite* 966)? Is it because of DMZ-ingestion? Or: marijuana withdrawal?

What happens between November 2009 and November 2010—no one can tell with certitude either. Because these twelve months in the book are absent. Essentially, the erasure of 12 months in *Infinite Jest* is to send you into a rapacious hunt for the answer; but it also, subtly, shows you the book in beautiful obstreperous ramified bloom versus when it is not in bloom; it is as if the actors in *Infinite Jest* take a 12-month sabbatical from the character they are playing; they stop manifesting—rest. Standing before a tree in bloom, the poet, Graham, has the revelation of the tree when it is not altogether there; absent; not in bloom:

> As if a tree could siphon all its swollen fruit/back in, down into its limbs, dry up the/tiny opening/where manifestation slipped out—/taking it all back in—until it disappears—until/that's it; the empty tree with all inside it still—versus this branching-out before me of *difference*, all/brilliantly lit, out-/reaching, variegating,/feeding a massive hunger (Graham 54).

How do you read a novel that is deliberately structured in a way to make you hit a cul-de-sac whenever you pursue the what-has-happened-to-Hal question? How do you make headway when a novel's limbs as though pull down its manifestations (for 12 months)?

I propose reading the Hal-episodes of *Infinite Jest* through Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concept of "novella." The French philosophers tell you in '1874: Three Novellas, or "What Happened"' (a chapter in *A Thousand Plateaus*) that a novella is structured in a way to evoke the question: '"What happened? Whatever could have happened"' (225)? The year in the title of their chapter—1874—refers to the publication year of the French writer Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly's story collection, *Diaboliques*.

NOVELLA AS A CONCEPT

In *Diaboliques*, the novella 'The Crimson Curtain' compels you to ask at certain hairpin bends of the narrative, "Did I miss something? Something has surely happened for things to have come to this, but what?" The coach (a horse-drawn carriage), in this story within a story, comes to a halt in a sleeping village at night; from the coach, an illuminated window with closed crimson curtains can be seen (d'Aurevilly 16). Captain Vicomte de Brassard recounts a thirty-five-year-old biographical story—a chilling event that occurs behind those curtains—to the narrator in the coach (18).

Having just passed out of the military school, Brassard, the 17-year-old, begins lodging with an old couple (25). Brassard is vain about his appearance; he puts on his full military uniform when he is bored, and takes solitary walks in the promenade with a puffed-up chest, and revels in the compliments others pay him

(22). The old couple's pretty 18-year-old daughter, Albertine, has impassive queenly airs, and, in the presence of Brassard, acts as though he does not exist (27). But one day, at dinner, he finds her sitting next to him at the table (instead of her usual position between her mother and father); and she begins to make advances toward him under the table (28). What has happened for the indifferent Albertine to fall for the vain Brassard—the one she does not pay attention to for a whole month? wonder Deleuze and Guattari (*Thousand* 226).

The next day at dinner, when Albertine seeks out Brassard's hand under the table, Brassard slips a "delirious" note (d'Aurevilly 32). Albertine, though, does not give a reply to his letter; in fact she takes her previous position of sitting between her mother and father at the table. "And why this change? What had happened? What had I missed? Had the mother and father deduced something?" Brassard asks himself these questions (33). Albertine again begins to look at Bressard as if he is absent.

Suddenly, Albertine comes to Bressard's room one night, and then continues to come for the next six months; she comes to his room after her parents fall asleep (38-9). Albertine comes to his room barefooted, because she does not want to wake her parents with the noise of shoes on cold stone floor (45). Every night, Bressard caresses her cold feet first, warms them (45). But one night, he fails to make blood flow into Albertine's feet, and her embrace loosens, and she dies (45-46). What happens to Albertine? What exactly does she die from? The novella does not reveal; you never get to know, Deleuze and Guattari point out (*Thousand* 226).

What should Bressard do with the corpse of Albertine? What will become of him? He decides to put the body in her bedroom, but he paralyzes when he has to cross the parent's bedroom with Albertine's corpse to reach her bedroom (d'Aurevilly 48). After mentally going through a couple of options—of throwing her body through the crimson-curtained window to make it look like a suicide, or shooting himself with his pistol—Bressard decides, finally, to desert Albertine's corpse and run to his colonel (49-50).

The colonel asks him to immediately get out of the town, and tells Bressard that he, colonel, will meet Albertine's parents, and will write to Bressard about it

(50). But the colonel never writes to Bressard; and soon after the colonel dies in a war; and so, again, you (along with Bressard) are never going to know about what happens after Bressard leaves the town, and how the colonel takes care of things vis-à-vis Albertine's death (*Thousand* 226). In reference to d'Aurevilly's 'The Crimson Curtain'—and also novellas that revolve around the question "Something has happened, but what?"—Deleuze and Guattari tell you that it is difficult to keep things unresolved, irresolvable. They write:

> It should not be thought that it is easier to leave things open-ended: for there to be something that has happened that we will never know about, or even several things in a row, requires no less minute attention and precision than the contrary case, when the author must invent what will need to be known (226).

The whole move of the novella has nothing to do with recollecting or reflecting on something from the past; the novella is not a memory-game; in fact the novella revolves around the act of "forgetting": the literary genre of novella puts you in touch with something that cannot be known (227). Can it be that "nothing" really has happened? This, too, is a possibility in a novella (227).

A "nothing" produces "something," or makes "something" happen in a novella (227). What is this "nothing" (227)? It is a secret (227). Deleuze and Guattari tell you that the concept of novella has an umbilical relation to secrecy; but the secret that the novella carries around is of the undiscoverable type; the form of the novella's secret cannot be penetrated (227). Whatever has happened to Hal, similarly, remains unknowable; the form of Hal's secret is imperceptible.

In his novella 'In the Cage,' Henry James also gives you something that remains unknowable. The telegrapher, an acute young woman, decodes through Captain Everard's telegrams that he is in peril (James, ch. XII). The telegrapher thinks, playfully, about telling the Captain that now that she knows too much about someone, she can demand hush money from him (ch. XII). The Captain, perhaps, does not know how frightened he is; but the telegrapher knows (ch. XII).

You, though, never come to know what the telegrapher deciphers; you are only teased about it through the telegrapher's ruminations. The secret might be about the woman the Captain is in love with, but you cannot tell with certainty; both, the woman and the captain, are in danger, declares the telegrapher (ch. XII).

Deleuze and Guattari reckon that James is not fascinated with the secret's matter; he is inclined toward the secret's form; he does not even care about discovering the matter (*Thousand* 229). Wallace, like James, teases you through the twelve-month lacuna in *Infinite Jest*—from November 2009 to November 2010—through Hal's involuntary facial expressions, sounds, noises, and spasms, so that you keep crying out: "What has happened to Hal?" But there is no secret that echoes back from the past.

Apart from the novella's expression ("What happened?"), and its form ("Secrecy"), there's also the content of the novella: the "Body Posture" (*Thousand* 227). Deleuze and Guattari bracket "folds or envelopments" as one of the types of body (and mind) postures you find in a novella (227). In 'The Crimson Curtain,' when Bressard meets Albertine for the first time, she is standing on her tiptoe and hanging her hat on a clothes rack; and, while doing this, Albertine turns her neck, lets Bressard see her face, but carries on with what she is doing as though he is not present (d'Aurevilly 26). From the outset, Albertine's Albertine's posture does not unfold.

Albertine startles Bressard through her airs, her sudden appearances: he stops in his tracks (27); and this surprised reaction of Bressard is also one of the traits of body postures in a novella (*Thousand* 227). Albertine keeps silent out of habit; she hardly speaks during dinner for a whole month with her parents or Bressard (d'Aurevilly 27). It surprises Bressard, therefore, when he finds Albertine sitting beside him; and she audaciously holds Bressard's hand under the table in the presence of her parents; and when Bressard tries removing his hand from her clutches, Albertine grips—encloses—it even tighter; and when she eventually withdraws her hand, Albertine presses her foot on Bressard's (29). "Is she mad?" Bressard asks himself (30). Albertine startles Bressard; envelops Bressard.

Albertine astonishes Bressard again when she goes to his room one night; on seeing her, Bressard is about to let out a cry, but Albertine makes a gesture to cut it off (39). During the day, Albertine does not pay attention to Bressard; and in the night, when she comes to Bressard's room, and embraces him, Albertine says nothing; she remains uncommunicative. Bressard always manages to abstract only a monosyllable from her lips; but monosyllables do not solve riddles that Albertine releases, continuously and silently; monosyllables do not unfold her (42). Even though Albertine's body posture—her embracing and kissing of Bressard—might suggest unfolding of Albertine; to Bressard, she comes across as a "sphinx"—she is not altogether present (42).

Hal is not altogether present, too, in the tennis court. Some days, Hal fluctuates, waxes and wanes: you can see him moving in and out of a match, pulling back part of his body, part of him as if leaving, hovering, and then coming back (*Infinite* 682). After nearly losing the tennis match against Ortho Stice, Hal goes into the viewing room—where you can watch film cartridges—and sits alone, and stretches out his injured left ankle, and holds the other leg's knee to his chest, and squeezes a tennis ball with his non-playing right-hand, and, with a neutral expression, watches some of his father's films (686-7). In other words, he "envelops" himself.

When Hal is recumbent and watching a film, Bridget Boone and Frances Unwin (two tennis players at the Enfield Tennis Academy) come into the viewing room. Boone offers Hal the yogurt she is eating, but Hal refuses by way of gesturing to the Kodiak (chewing tobacco) in his mouth, and then leans over and spits out the juice (701). When Unwin asks him what is the movie on TV, Hal in slow-motion, without speaking, points to the title on the screen. Boone asks Hal if something is wrong, why he is not responding. In reply, Hal says: "I'm isolating. I came in here to be by myself" (702). Hal is not paying attention to the narrative unfolding on the screen (704).

On November 20, 2009, toward the end of *Infinite Jest*, something "hits" Hal and puts him in a state of "panic" and paralysis; it overwhelms him with cumulative cognitive material of the number of times, for instance, he has walked down the 56 steps to his room, and the number of times he has to undergo this

process, over and over, until he graduates; the amount of food—snacks, meat, etc.—he has to consume for the next sixty years (896-7). All these images (and more) begin to cumulate in Hal's head, and he, taking support of the wall, hunches—folds—until the torrents pass away (897).

Hal once more retires to the viewing room, and lies down on his back on the carpet; he revels in being horizontal, a body posture that is a sort of envelopment:

> I was on the floor. I felt the Nile-green carpet with the back of each hand. I was completely horizontal. I was comfortable lying perfectly still and staring at the ceiling. I was enjoying being one horizontal object in a room filled with horizontality (900).

Hal either does not respond, or responds reluctantly, to enquiries from his friends who come into the viewing room; when his friend, Michael Pemulis, tells Hal that they should go someplace else to talk, Hal conveys that he prefers to interface horizontally with Pemulis in the viewing room itself (908). Whatever "hits" Hal, also puts him in thrall to horizontality; the dimension of horizontality piles up all around him in the viewing room: the horizontal pillows, the carpet, the seats of chairs and couches, the floor, the door's bottom part, and so on, come into sharp focus; they erupt on Hal's visual field (901).

Hal, in other words, has a revelation in a horizontal position much like Graham, sick and horizontal in her bed, in the aforementioned poem, 'Other.' The poet sits up in her bed, and things begin to pile up around her: the tree and its bark and the tips of its leaves and the roots outside the windowpane; the dresser's cup; the blue stream on the cup; the blooming crabapples; the door; the curtain's tasseled fringe; the chair with the pillow; the saffron-colored lampshade; the clouds on cup, etc (Graham 2). That things are fully present, and she is not, is revealed to the poet for the first time.

The horizontal things in the viewing room awaken Hal to the fundamental dimension (of horizontality) that he has been neglecting until now; the horizontality of things remind him that he has been too reliant on verticality—

walking, running, jumping, stopping; and now, after discovering the pleasures of horizontality, he feels more dense and solid (902). Hal's silence and incommunicativeness and horizontality is tantamount to folding or envelopment in November 2009; his enclosed body posture (and mind) is the content of a novella; it befits a novella; it adds to the text's impenetrability—you will never know what has happened to Hal for things to have come to this. Hal tells you that in this horizontal position you will not be able to knock him down (902). And that is because—and Hal's body posture explicitly suggests this—he has already been knocked down; he is already on the canvas. What has happened?

In November 2010, exactly a year after the above goings-on, in the opening scene of the novel, Hal again exudes envelopment, vertically. In the presence of the deans, during University admission, the incommunicative Hal crosses his legs, puts ankle on knee, and inserts one hand's fingers into the spaces between other hand's fingers, and places them on his lap; and, by doing so, draws an image of the letter X—a sign of an enclosed body posture; the crossed legs complement the position of the hands in accentuating the envelopment of Hal's body (3). The deans are taken aback—a feature of the novella's content—by Hal moving his head from side to side with a smile, which appears to the deans to be a "grimace" (5); they are also horrified by Hal's flails, wriggles, and waggles (14).

In Wallace's short story, "The Soul is Not a Smithy," there are elements of the concept of novella too. In the story, Richard Johnson comes in as a substitute Civics teacher in the 4th grade; Johnson is teaching American Constitution (*Oblivion* 68). Instead of writing "due process of law," Johnson inadvertently writes "due process KILL of law" on the chalkboard; he takes a few steps back, cocks his head, and looks at what is written in a surprised manner, a body posture reminiscent of the novella's content (86). Johnson shakes his head and erases the words "KILL of law," and replaces it with "of law" (86).

Johnson writes the Xth Amendment on the chalkboard as: "The powers not delegated KILL to the United States THEM by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it KILL THEM to the States" (87). He cocks his head once more, and looks at the chalkboard as if he is unable to perceive—hear or understand something; he

erases the words “KILL” and “THEM” (87). But he soon begins to repeatedly write on the chalkboard, “KILL THEM KILL THEM ALL” and “KILL KILL KILL THEM ALL KILL THEM DO IT NOW KILL THEM” (91-2). Johnson cocks his head further to the side; his hands begin to insert words not in the Constitution; he also, simultaneously, begins to emit a single-note “scream,” definitely not of his own volition (91).

The cops, who come into the classroom through the door and the window, ask Johnson to drop the chalk and step away from the chalkboard; but Johnson continues writing “KILL,” again and again (99). Johnson’s hand snaps, and he stands with both hands rigidly spread out, and his scream crescendos, and he turns around to face the class with a trembling body; Johnson’s facial expression either comprises both “suffering and ghastly exultation,” or alternates between them, rapidly (100-1). Johnson’s two different facial expressions etched on his face are akin to Hal’s facial expressions of both a smile and grimace in the opening scene of *Infinite Jest* (5); and Johnson’s rapidly alternating expressions also remind you of Hal’s face’s expression (at the end of the novel) leaping from hilarity to cachinnation; vacillating between amusement and mirth, involuntarily and rapidly (875-6).

Hal’s wild uncontrollable gesturing with his arms (in front of the deans in the opening section) is also not unlike Johnson’s hands writing those words on the chalkboard—both their hands are at variance with their own will; what also makes them kindred spirits are their emanations of sounds and screams. Just as in Hal’s case, you will never be able to explain what has happened to Johnson for things to have come to this; you have to read the Johnson-episodes in ‘The Soul is Not a Smithy’ as a novella, which puts you in a relation with something that cannot be known: there is no secret material to dig up here; the form of novella’s secret is impermeable (*Thousand* 227): Johnson, according to the press, does not have any criminal history, nor does he have any record of mental health issues that might explain his behavior in the Civics class (*Oblivion* 73). The concept of novella teach you that Johnson’s story cannot provide you with knowledge of the past; it appears to have forgotten about the past; or it might even be that “nothing has happened” in the past—it is perhaps “nothing” that makes “something” occur in the Civics class (*Thousand*, 227). “What is this nothing that

makes something happen" (227)? It is novella's relation to secrecy, whose form remains impenetrable (227).

Or: the "nothing" that makes "something" happen in the Civics class—the "nothing" that makes "something" happen in the opening as well as the end sections of Hal-episodes in *Infinite Jest*—is of the future, rather than of the impenetrable past: the invisible forces of the future.

INVISIBLE FORCES + SCREAM

In *The Logic of Sensation*, Deleuze tells you that Francis Bacon paints the scream because he establishes an alliance "between the visibility of the scream (the open mouth) and invisible forces" of the future; the scream detects the diabolical/invisible forces of the future (*Logic* 61). In a letter to Max Brod, Kafka writes: "Diabolical powers, whatever their message might be, are knocking at the door and already rejoicing in the fact that they will arrive soon" (181n. 5).

Each and every screaming mouth in Bacon's paintings, writes Deleuze, is potentially composed of the "diabolical powers": these powers—call it "forces"—knock at your door, on your body; but the forces are not visible (61). Painting a scream—a person's cry—is one of the ways to make invisible forces visible.

The screaming mouths in Bacon's paintings strike an association with forces. The forces yield the scream; the forces sustain the scream; and the forces make the body go into a spasm, reckons Deleuze (*Logic* 60). But it does not mean that Bacon's scream paintings are some sort of a horror show, a "visible spectacle" before which Bacon's figures are screaming—a spectacle is not the cause of their screams; nor are they screaming before objects they can sense and perceive: there are no visible objects here that are regulating their feelings, their pain (60). If Bacon's figures are screaming, it is because they are the target of unable-to-be-seen forces; forces that are insensible; forces that muddle every aspect of a spectacle; forces that do not come under the rubric of pain and feeling, but go beyond it (60).

The unnamed narrator in 'The Soul is Not a Smithy' tells you that Johnson appears to be struggling, mightily, against an "evil or alien force" at the chalkboard; and that this "force" has seized Johnson, and is strong-arming him to

interpose words in the Constitution against his will; and that this "force" is also making him scream (*Oblivion* 91). The "force," soon after, juxtaposes Johnson's scream with smile—a shifty smile (101); and the "force" also creates a montage of scream, smile, outstretched rigid arms, and head touching the shoulder (100). The force convulses Johnson's body: Johnson's pitch of scream gets higher and higher as he turns around; he faces the class with his whole body shaking (100). What horrific thing has Johnson witnessed? What is causing him to scream? "Nothing!" It is just invisible forces producing the convulsions, the scream. Johnson is not screaming before a horror show: a visible spectacle.

Bacon privileges painting of the scream over horror; although, after doing a number of paintings depicting human cry, he thinks of his scream paintings as being "too abstract" and "unsuccessful" and unable to delineate what is causing the person to scream; Bacon laments his inability to be mindful of the horror that produces the cry (Deleuze, *Logic* 181n. 4). In response, Deleuze declares that the fact that Bacon does not show the horror in his scream paintings, does not show why someone is screaming, preclude these paintings from turning into a spectacle; the scream paintings of Bacon simply captures—reveals—invisible forces (181n. 4).

Bacon's pope (*Study after Velazquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X*), for instance, screams from behind the curtain; he cannot see, nor can he be seen; his only function is to make visible these invisible forces (powers) of the future that is making him open his mouth, making him scream, like Wallace's Johnson screams—screams "at" and not "before" (61). Deleuze prefers the preposition ("at") to the adverb ("before") after the verb ("scream"); because to "scream before" equals to screaming before a visible horrible spectacle; while "screaming at" equals to a confrontation with invisible forces. Or, to put it slightly differently, the phrase "screaming at" involves screaming at "death"; it involves coming together of forces: the visible force of the scream and the invisible forces that make you scream (61).

The body, in several of Bacon's paintings, escapes from itself through convulsions. In Bacon's *Figure at a Washbasin*, Deleuze points out, the man is seen gripping the sink's oval, with his hands clutching the two taps, tightly, and exerting pressure upon itself, to escape through the drain's strainer's hole (15). The entire body of Pope (*Innocent X*), on the other hand, escapes through the screaming mouth (28).

Deleuze quotes a passage from William Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*, which exemplifies in literature the body attempting to escape from itself through a hole that is part of itself: "Johnny's body begins to contract… Each time the contraction is longer. 'Wheeeeeeee!' the boy yells, every muscle tense, his whole body strain to empty through his cock" (17). Johnson's spasmodic body strain to escape from itself through the screaming mouth too, like Bacon's Pope and Burroughs's Johnny (*Oblivion* 100).

What is the nature of this body that can escape from itself?

Deleuze tells you about the body's trajectory when it collaborates with invisible forces: external or internal. The body stands on its own; it does not need the crutch of "organs"; in fact the body is hostile toward organs, or rather the "organization of organs" called an "organism" (44). The body that Deleuze is referring to is a "body without organs": a concept that Deleuze borrows from Antonin Artaud (44). The body does not have an organ: mouth, tongue, teeth, larynx, esophagus, belly, and so on; it is made of "flesh and nerve" (45). And though it is completely living, the body has a life that is nonorganic; this nonorganic life sets free a life that the organisms encage: Deleuze refuses to call organisms—i.e. fixed organs—life; the fixed organs lock up life (45).

Beneath the organisms is the "body without organs" (44). The body dilates or fractures the organisms, inflicts a convulsion on them, and places the organisms in relation with the forces (160-1). The body (or the body without organs) escapes from the organisms: fixed organs; the body escapes through various apertures in Bacon's paintings: mouth, anus, stomach, throat, sink's circle, etc (50).

What flows through the body is a "wave" (45). Whenever the wave comes up against external invisible forces exerting pressure on the body, a "sensation"

releases (45). If the sensation connects to the body in this manner, then there's a production of "real" and not "representation": the Pope is not screaming because of encountering a horrific image; it is not because of his feelings or pain in relation to a narration (a story, a spectacle) (39). There is no narration: "What is happening?" or "What is going to happen?" or "What happened" (136)? Nothing has happened in Johnson's case. Johnson is shaking, and both his arms are stretched outward and his mouth is screaming, and giving off an unpleasant inexplicable smile; but these actions are not in response to a narrative; it is because of the imperceptible forces acting on Johnson's body (*Oblivion* 100-101).

On the other hand, Johnson's behavior at the chalkboard is a cause of horror for his students in the Civics class. Because of encountering the nightmarish narrative or image, starring their substitute teacher, the fourth-grade students begin to cry, vomit, pass urine, suck their thumbs, sing lullabies to themselves (100); their eyes bulge out and roll around; they begin to scream and run toward the class's exit (101). While Johnson screams "at" the invisible forces, his students scream "before" a horror—a horrible story.

In Bacon, the distinction between the violence of spectacle (a narrative of visible horror) and violence of sensation (a non-narrative of invisible forces) play out in separate paintings; Wallace, though, appears to 'paint' the two violent thoughts concurrently. Wallace, in other words, is simultaneously telling a story (of how the horrific image of the substitute Civics teacher frightens the kids), and also attempting to avoid storytelling (by showing a teacher possessed by diabolical powers/forces of the future). Wallace is—ridiculous and contradictory as it may sound—a storyteller as well as not a storyteller, in this passage.

If Deleuze praises, repeatedly, one way or the other, Bacon's employment of the scream, it is because the scream shows that the painter decides to confront the invisible forces; for this same reason you might praise Wallace. The non-storyteller in Wallace makes Johnson—makes life—scream at death, with death here meaning not a visible thing that makes you blackout; but invisible forces—diabolical powers of the future—that life detects; that life is capable of capturing—defeating—or even befriending, and rendering it visible through the human cry: scream (*Logic* 62).

Johnson is what Deleuze might call a wrestler: Johnson's visible body grapples with the invisible powers; and it is within the visibility that Johnson creates a possibility of winning, something that is not possible if the diabolical powers of the future, the forces, continue remaining invisible; continue remaining hidden in a violence of spectacle: the horrific image (62). With life screaming at death in the works of Bacon and Wallace—with life getting into a confrontation with the invisible forces—it avoids representing death, avoids building a narrative; but when the violence of spectacle—the horror—preclude the forces from turning visible, then it enervates you, turns you into a passive spectator before the horrific show; you narrate, passively, about this spectacle; you do not get into a confrontation with the invisible forces (62). Johnson avoids passivity; he confronts the diabolical powers of the future knocking on his body; he screams.

Hal, too, is a victim of the powers of the future: the imperceptible and insensible forces traversing his body. The forces produce sounds and noises—cries—in Hal that are inhuman in its timbre: sounds and noises that you can presume, if not out and out screams, are bordering on screams, or muffled screams (*Infinite* 14). Forces also effect out of kilter—uncoordinated—gestures in Hal: his arms writhe and waggle (14). The Deans express in their own way that what they have been witnessing is a horror show; while one of them defines Hal's acts to be tantamount to seeing "a vision of hell" (14); another declares it to be "only marginally mammalian" (15). For the Deans, Hal's act represents something horrible—a horrifying story is being conveyed.

What has happened to Hal? Something, surely, has happened for him to act in this manner? Yes, it has. But the answer, perhaps, does not lie in the past (the impenetrable past if seen through the concept of the novella); but lies in the present, where diabolical forces of the future are brushing up against Hal's body; and Hal's visible body is grappling with the invisible forces; and it is within the visibility that Hal creates a possibility of winning—by emitting scream-grade noises and sounds.

INVISIBLE FORCES + SMILE + FACE

The mouth does more than just scream in Bacon's paintings; the mouth also smiles. What lies beyond the scream is the smile; and Bacon again laments that he has hankered, but has been unable to paint the smile (*Logic* 28). In response, Deleuze tells you that Bacon is just being self-effacing, because Bacon's works on smiles are among the most gorgeous in the history of painting (28). If screaming mouths in Bacon's paintings function as the body (without organs) straining to escape from itself through the open mouth's aperture, the smiling mouth shows the body (in the conventional sense) disappearing and face dismantling (28).

Deleuze equates Bacon's smile paintings to the Cheshire-Cat's smile in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (28). After the Cat appears and vanishes, twice and suddenly, on a branch of a tree, Alice tells the Cat that it is making her "giddy": "And this time it vanished quite slowly, beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin, which remained some time after the rest of it had gone" (Carroll, ch. VI).

Bacon's *Painting 1946*, points out Deleuze, shows the man's face crumbling—dismantling—in favor of the uneasy smile resting on its head under the umbrella; the man's body appears to be slowly corroding (*Logic* 28). The same man is seen in the *Second Version of 'Painting' 1946*, still smiling; but his smile is more prominent and straightened (28). The blue-suited man sitting on the bed in Bacon's *Study for a Portrait*, too, is seen flashing an anxious smile; his face is partially divided—cut-up—by the blue-brown vertical lines of the curtains in the background; and the man's body and head is beginning to disappear into the horizontal slats of the Venetian blind behind it (29). Another one of the disappearing-body-and-disquieting-smile ilk is Bacon's *Three Studies of the Human Head*, which shows the black-suited man screaming in the centre, smiling on the left, and, on the right, his blurry face—though Deleuze says head—is sort of melting away (28). The men in these different portraits are smiling, hysterically and involuntarily; they are being shaken by the invisible forces (X). Their bodies appear to be disintegrating; the smile, though, looks sturdy—even obstinate—to outlast the body's disintegration (28).

The hysterics, according to Deleuze, foist their presence on things and beings around them; and also for the hysterics, the circumambient beings and things are overpoweringly present: "*too* present" (50). The hysterics convey the surfeit of presence to every being and thing (50). The hysterical (involuntary) smile, similarly, is endlessly present: too present. Beneath and beyond the face, the hysterical smile continues insisting; just as the scream persists after dismantling the mouth, and the body (without organs) persists after disorganizing the organism—the fixed organs, the organization of organs (51).

Hal's face begins to dismantle as the face starts displaying its own intentions in November 2009: now hilarious, now amusing, now mirthful, now cachinnating, and so on (*Infinite* 875-6). And the involuntary hysterical ambiguous smile continues insisting. Hal's face begins to play up when he tells the janitors that Stice, Hal's fellow player at the Enfield Tennis Academy, needs warm water upstairs, urgently, because his face is sticking to the window (875). One of the janitors, Kenkle, notices that Hal's face is functioning in a "hilarious" manner; and that Hal's face's expression suggests that he is almost doubling up, and slapping his knee, and having trouble pronouncing the words, due to laughter (875).

Hal begins to grapple with the invisible forces that are producing his oscillating facial expressions; he consciously attempts to make his face circumstance-appropriate; he tries to make it "deadly somber" (875). But the smile continues to persist: the eyes are still crinkly, and the gums are still showing (876). Hal feels at his face; checks his face in the window; the light outside the window, though, is too poor to figure out the face's expression (876). Hal tells you that he intends to check his face in the mirror: Is it still broadcasting a hilarious expression, unintentionally (896)? Hal tells you of another embarrassing moment concerning his involuntary smile:

> The woman behind the register at the Shell station last night had recoiled as I approached to present my card before pumping, as if she too had seen something in my expression I hadn't known was there (899).

Hal's hysterical—involuntary—smile persists, channeling invisible forces, dismantling the face; it makes Hal appear slightly arrhythmic, slightly off, in a milieu. "I feel that the true struggles are always struggles with the shadow. There are no other struggles but the struggle with the shadow," says Deleuze in a lecture, *Painting and the Question of Concepts* (9). By "shadow," Deleuze means invisible forces: the body's struggle is only with the invisible forces.

In the opening section of *Infinite Jest*, in November 2010—exactly a year after the above incidents of involuntary hysterics and their endless presence—Hal still looks to have only slight control over his face; the hysterical smile re-emerges. Hal tells you that he is wearing a "neutral" expression in the admission office, and not attempting what might feel to him to be a "smile" (*Infinite* 3). He, though, changes his stance; he smiles; but what the deans see is the expression of someone in pain, someone grimacing; one of the deans ask him if he is all right (5). Hal's uncle, replying on behalf of Hal, tells the deans that it's just a "facial tic," and turns toward Hal as a signal to take care of his face (5). "I do the safe thing, relaxing every muscle in my face, emptying out all expression. I stare carefully into the Kekulean knot of the middle Dean's necktie," Hal tells you (5). Hal retracts to a neutral expression—a blank expression.

The blank expression belongs to the cow in the field where the unnamed mother abandons her daughter, Julie Smith, and son, Lunt, in Wallace's story 'Little Expressionless Animals' (*Girl* 40); the expressionless cow keeps masticating and looking at the two kids standing and holding a post (40). Julie, as a grown-up, declares that she still dislikes animals, because they wear a blank expression (41). She tells you to look at an animal's face, and then to look at men's faces; the faces of men are continuously mobile, but their faces project different arrangements of the same expression: it leaps from blankness to blankness (41).

The cow's face's blank expression in the field is contagious; Julie catches it; her face, too, is without expression: her reaction to stimuli is poor (17). But her face does not project only blankness like the male faces Julie describes (17). In the game show ("JEOPARDY?") that she participates in on television, Julie's face

moves from a blank stare (a concave-face) to a flickering expression of serenity (a convex-face) (16-17).

Julie's face moves through variegated expressions during the live game show, but when the show cuts for a commercial, Julie's face falls back on blankness: she stares at the audience (17). Even when the audience competes for her attention, she stares, blankly (26). Julie tells her girlfriend, Faye, that she likes faces that broadcast a different expression every second (10); she tells Faye that all the different men her (Julie's) mother brings home are silent and have blank faces (10). These blank-faced men do not like Lunt, her brother, since the brother stares at them, blankly; Lunt can continue staring for hours at the same thing (11).

Generally, portraits in painting teach you that faces have two poles, reckons Deleuze (*Cinema I* 98). In the first pole, the painting delineates the face: it outlines the nose, the eyelids, the mouth, the beard, the hat, and so on; Deleuze calls it "faceification" (98). To the face, belonging to the first pole, you might ask: "What are you thinking about" (99)? When the face is thinking about something, when it attaches itself to an object, there is a sense of wonderment or surprise (99). In this state, the thinking face has pellucid outlines; the face's features reflect a drum-tight unity whilst thinking: the face's various organs or features are not fragmentary images, in other words (99). If you come across this type of face, with its features all intact and which is in thrall to a thought, then you are in the presence of a "reflexive or reflecting face" (100).

Deleuze finds the "reflexive or reflecting" faces in DW Griffith's *Broken Blossoms*. Lucy, a frail girl, gets frequently beaten up by her father under some pretext or the other; what's excruciatingly absurd is that after every beating she's immediately given an injunction by her father to smile, and the girl complies: she creates a smile in her face with her fore- and middle-fingers. When Lucy dies, after a severe beating, she's seen with the eyes rolled up in her head and mouth open, giving an impression that she is still petrified of her daddy's cruelty, and that her face still seems to be reflecting and asking: "Why" (100)? "Why did you beat me father?" Lucie's petrified face—her face's retention or preservation of its expression—is classifiable as the reflexive or reflecting face (100).

The "Yellow Man," a Buddhist who falls in love with the Lucie in *Broken Blossoms*, maintains a dreamy, opium-fuelled facial expression throughout the silent film. Even when Lucie dies, even when he is shooting down Lucie's father, there is no change in "Yellow Man's" facial composition: his immobile face seems hooked on to a thought or object; the opium's stuporous effects still reflect on his face (100). Deleuze, who reads this film as a paradigm of the reflecting face, also notices the preservation of the "reflection of Buddha" on the "Yellow Man's" face, without elaborating on why he, Deleuze, feels this way (100). Perhaps it is because of the expression of the monkish quietude that stays engrained on the man's face, no matter the disturbing images of the city in which the "Yellow Man" is attempting to spread the words of Buddha. And, thus, there's, in the "Yellow Man's" unchanging expression, an eternal ring, one of the salient features of the reflexive or reflecting face—the type of face, precisely, that Julie in Wallace's 'Little Expressionless Animals' loathes: the blankness that men preserve on their faces are always without mutability; and even if men's expression change, it is just another reflection of blankness, Julie complaints (*Girl* 41).

In Wallace's story, *B.I. #42*, the unnamed son talks about his unnamed father's career of standing in the men's room, with towels and toiletries, for six days a week; the father has been doing this job for the last twenty-seven years (*Brief* 73-76). The father installs himself at his designated place for nine hours, looking at a "special nothing"; he stands with a part of himself withdrawn: his duty involves standing in the men's room as if he is not present (76). The father brings his expressionless men's room's face home; he is unable to shake off the blankness (76). At home, too, the father retreats from himself: he is not altogether there at home; he is absent (76).

In the second pole of the face, says Deleuze, the painting breaks the facial features into smithereens: here is a fragment of a shuddering mouth, there is a broken line of the eyes. These types of paintings cannot stand the outline of the face and, thus, revolt against it—the outline; and the revolting inclinations of these paintings are the traits of faces or "faceicity" (Deleuze, *Cinema I* 98). To the face, belonging to the second pole, you might ask: "what is bothering you, what is

the matter, what do you sense or feel" (99)? If you come across this type of face—with its features engaging in a series of little movements, with its features taking on an independence, momentarily—then you are in the presence of an "intensive face" (98, 99, 100). In films, you come across the intensive face when a face leaps from one expression to another, successively (100). When a face's features or traits work serially, it's a movement of rebellion against the outline, a breaking away from the unity of the face, provisionally (100).

Deleuze finds the "intensive face" in GW Pabst's *Pandora's Box*. Jack the Ripper's face goes from one pole to another in a relatively short time. When Jack the Ripper—a serial killer—is about to climb the stairs of Lulu's home—a serial seducer—both wear a reflective face, a wondering face (101). You see Jack dropping the knife he's been carrying behind his back, deciding not to kill Lulu, before climbing the stairs. While hugging Lulu, though, Jack notices the bread-knife under the lamp; his face crescendos into an expression of terror on looking at the gleaming knife lying on Lulu's table in the room: "the fear becomes a paroxysm…his pupils grow wider and wider…the man gasps in terror" (101-102). But then, Jack's face retracts into the reflecting face of the stairs again; he resigns himself to the fact that he is a killer, and that his destiny is to kill the available victim, and that he must answer the overpowering call of Lulu's table's shining instrument (102). Jack the Ripper now reflects the face of death (102).

You can also find the serial, intensive face in Todd Phillips's *Joker*. Joaquin Phoenix, who plays the joker, is shown vacillating from one pole of the face to the other. The joker has a medical condition, which is characterized by sudden, frequent, and uncontrollable laughter or crying, and which expression is at odds with how the person feels. In a scene with his therapist, the joker is seen laughing, irrepressibly, with his eyes closed; he appears to be in considerable pain while laughing: he is, simultaneously, grimacing, pursing his lips, arching his brows, and burping; the involuntary yanking of his face is hurting his throat. The intensive series is in display here as the fragmentary features of the joker rebels against the outline of his face. After few seconds, the joker's face calms down, turns reflexive, immobile; the joker shares with his therapist what he is thinking: "Is it just me, or is it getting crazier out there" (Phillips)?

In another instance, the joker is seen travelling in the bus with his relaxed, reflective face resting on the window, thinking about something, when he notices a young boy staring back at him from the front seat with calm, curious face. The joker begins to make a series of voluntary intensive faces at him: the mouth opens exaggeratedly, the eyes squint, and the pupils widen analogous to Jack the Ripper; and then, in the next moment, he puffs up his mouth and manipulates his eyebrows. The joker amuses the boy; but the mother scolds the joker for bothering her son. The joker, for a second or two, regresses to the reflective face, before breaking into a paroxysm of laughter; he tries, desperately and unsuccessfully, to suppress, to turn his face into a reflective one—by pulling at his mouth, by trying to shut it. The joker is trying, in other words, to put his dissolving face back together; trying as though to rein in the involuntary micro-movements of his face. He's shown wearing the reflective face when he disembarks from the bus.

Wallace, briefly, touches on the intensive faces—the hysterical insisting expressions—that he often finds in David Lynch's films in his essay on the filmmaker. Wallace, though, calls this type of facial expression "Lynchian" (*Supposedly* 162). This is not the expression you broadcast, suddenly, when you hear something appalling, or when you bite into rancid food, or when you are around kids and trying hard to amuse them (162). The Lynchian facial expression does indeed involve breaking into an incongruous smile or scream all of a sudden; plus, it involves holding this expression for way longer than what the circumstance can possibly require, so that, according to Wallace, it begins to mean several things simultaneously (162-3).

The old couple in the back seat of limousine in Lynch's *Mulholland Drive* breaks into a broad gum-exposing smile all of a sudden; their grotesque smiles have an unsettling quality of interminableness; and at one point, the woman, without disturbing the exaggerated smile on her face even a bit, begins to slap her husband's knees (really hard); and both of them raise their eyebrows, and look at each other with their firm hideous smiles. What stimuli are making them hold their smile? You cannot tell with certitude, because the stimuli are invisible. All

you know is that their smiles are too present and for too long on the screen; and that they strike disturbing chords in you.

In Lynch's *Lost Highway*, Wallace points out, you find Bill Pullman's mouth silently screaming, and holding this expression for a long while, as he is kneeling beside the mutilated body of his wife; Jack Nance in Lynch's *Eraserhead*, too, screams, silently, before returning to the reflective face (163). While Pullman is seen screaming before the horror of his wife's internal organs scattered in the bedroom, Nancy is silently screaming at an invisible force; something escapes from Nancy's mouth: is it his larynx? In another scene, though, Pullman is shown screaming at invisible forces: in the prison, he is shown catching his head—moving his head rapidly from side to side with his eyes closed and mouth open—and screaming; his face is bloody, and so is the floor that forms the background. The imperceptible forces dismantle Pullman's face, literally; when a guard takes his routine round to mark the attendance of prisoners, he finds Pullman absent: the guard finds an unknown person (with a swollen-up face) sitting inside Pullman's cell.

In *The Logic of Sensation*, Deleuze tells you that in painting the artist's primary concern is not to invent forms, but to seize "forces": there are invisible forces, and it is a painting's job to render those visible (56); and Bacon's paintings are wondrous because it shows various ways in which you can do this (58). Deleuze reckons that Bacon creates a concatenation of heads and self-portraits to make the invisible forces visible (58). As examples, Deleuze lists four paintings of Bacon: *Four Studies for a Self-Portrait*, *Three Studies for a Self-Portrait*, *Three Studies for a Portrait of Geoff Dyer*, and *Three Studies of Isabel Rawsthorne* (58). All the heads in these studies are in a state of agitatation like Pullman's head in the prison above; the heads in Bacon's paintings are agitated not due to movement, but because of the "forces of pressure, dilation, contraction, flattening, and elongation" being applied to the head: the unable-to-be-seen forces strike the head from various angles (58).

Movement does not interest Bacon, reckons Deleuze; Bacon is keen to display how movement affects the body at rest; how the wind (force) whips the head, distorts the eyes and brows, hollows out the cheeks, decenters the lips,

scrubs out the outlines—sloughs off the face (XI). In Bacon's *Four Studies for a Self-Portrait*, for instance, you can see—in the first self-portrait from the top—Bacon's face slightly tilting to his right, or perhaps his face's position is upwards at an angle, with the right-eye close and the other eye hollow.

The narrator in Wallace's 'The Soul is Not a Smithy' also tells you—as if he is describing Bacon's *Four Studies for a Self-Portrait* itself—that the face of the substitute Civics teacher, Johnson, is listing slightly; or, on the front of his head, Johnson's face's position is at an upward angle of couple of degrees (*Oblivion* 76). It is as though you are holding a mask or a portrait in front of you, with the mask/portrait facing you, and you tilt it upward, slightly, so that it is not quite at the center now (76). To the narrator, these characteristics of the face present Johnson as either "wincing," or drawing back from whatever he is uttering (76). But it surely conveys a face whose features are escaping the outline—an intensive face. Johnson's broadcast of either rapid alternating expressions at the chalkboard, or two simultaneous and different facial expressions of "suffering and ghastly exultation," also convey dissolving of Johnson's face (100-1).

In the last self-portrait—of *Four Studies for a Self-Portrait*—you can see Bacon with his eyes closed; in the second-last portrait, too, you find Bacon with his eyelids closed, and his head is thrust to the right. In *Three Studies for a Self-Portrait*, again you come across Bacon with eyes closed, hollow eyes, and left profile of concave-headed Bacon. These *Studies* by Bacon capture Bacon—slathered in greens, pinks, oranges, blues, whites—in the receiving end of unable-to-be-seen forces; the forces bludgeoning his head this way and that way; the forces smashing in his head; the forces shutting—hollowing out—his eyes.

In the opening scene of *Infinite Jest*, Hal also shuts his eyes, and speaks to the Deans, slowly (10). When Hal opens his eyes, four intensive faces of the deans confront him, the ones who witness the deformation (the spasm, the convulsion) of Hal's body (12). "I look out. Directed my way is horror. I rise from the chair. I see jowls sagging, eyebrows high on trembling foreheads, cheeks bright-white," says Hal (12). Hal tells you that the expression of a dean suggests that there is as if a gusty wind blowing from his direction (12). You can say the same about Hal: that there are invisible windy forces blowing in his direction, whipping his head, and

that they are producing an intensive face: the involuntary facial expression of a grimace when Hal wants to broadcast a smile; or the two simultaneous and different expressions of smile and grimace; or the rapid alternating expressions of smile and grimace (5).

And that the windy imperceptible forces also produce in Hal, toward the end of the novel, intensive faces: his expression changes by the second, leaps from one expression to the other: from hilarity and cachinnation to amusement and mirth (875-76). Exactly the kind of face that Julie in 'Little Expressionless Animals' prefers (*Girl* 10); the kind of face whose outline gets blurry as its features escape—break away—and the face deforms. It breaks away from blankness: from a reflexive face.

What does it mean for a face to deform, dismantle?

Among other things, it means a face that does not adhere to the roles assigned to it. Deleuze reckons that there are at least three roles that a face plays: 1) a face individuates (each person is distinguished by it); 2) a face socializes (it has a certain role in the society); 3) a face communicates (it not only helps to communicate between two people, but also, in a single person, by striking an internal agreement between the person's character and role) (*Cinema 1* 110).

These three aspects of a face are presented in cinema as well as other mediums of art (110). When there is a close-up in cinema, Deleuze sees a face losing all the three functions (110). Deleuze tells you about Ingmar Bergman's penchant for drawing close to the human face, and how he dissolves it in many of his films including *Persona* (110).

In *Persona*, in the middle of her performance of *Electra*, Elisabet Vogler (Liv Ullmann) falls silent; she looks around for a while in astonishment; she remains silent for more than a minute; she clenches her fist and teeth and looks around again, silently and bafflingly. And then her lips quiver a bit, and a slight smile breaks out on her face. She stops her performance, because she gets a strong sudden urge to laugh. The next day she does not turn up for the rehearsal, and, when her maid reminds her about it, Elisabet does not move or speak. What has happened?

Elisabet has not been performing for three months when the film begins; she has given up her profession—her societal role, one of the roles of a face (110). She is put through various physical and mental tests and clears each and every one of them; and so she is either not able to, or does not want to communicate—another role of a face (110). Elisabet begins to live without talking, in silence, by reducing her needs: Sister Alma, who tends Elisabet, has numerous one-sided conversations with Elisabet throughout the film; Alma sometimes even speaks on behalf of Elisabet, telling Elisabet's story to Elisabet; while Elisabet covertly "studies" Alma, perhaps, to keep Alma's words, tones, and physical articulations in her reserve for future artistic reference. (Elisabet is, perhaps, going to return to acting in the future; the last scene in the film where she is seen again in her *Electra* attire, shooting, hints at it; but for now she renounces her profession, social role, and can't or doesn't communicate.)

But what has happened for things to have come to this? Elisabet's husband does not know either. Why is her wife not talking, not communicating? He asks her in a letter: "Have I done you harm in some way? Have I unknowingly hurt you somehow? Was there some terrible misunderstanding between us" (Bergman)? In the letter, he reminds Elisabet of her own words: of them being victims of "forces" that can be negotiated with only to a limited extent (Bergman). Elisabet tears up the letter along with the photograph of her son, aggressively.

In Jean-Luc Godard's *Vivra Sa Vie*, Nana (Anna Karina) expresses her desire to the philosopher, Brice Parain , to talk less; she cannot quite understand why you must always talk; to not talk often, to live in silence are Nana's prayers—she reckons the more she talks, the less her words mean. In reply, Parain tells Nana about the benefits of going into total muteness:

> One learns to talk well only when one has renounced life for a while. That's the price. Speaking is almost a resurrection in relation to life. Speech is another life from when one does not speak… There's a kind of ascetic rule that stops one from talking well until one sees life with detachment (Godard).

Elisabet in *Persona* sort of gives expression to Nana's prayers by segueing into muteness, by renouncing her social role as an actor.

Elisabet's individuation also volatizes in the film, reckons Deleuze; especially when she begins to resemble, in a strange manner, Alma (*Cinema 1* 110). Or, do you say, Alma begins to resemble Elisabet: smokes like Elisabet; wears a band about her hair like Elisabet; caresses her hair like Elisabet caresses hers (Alma's); dresses in same-colored clothes; and even narrates a memory of Elisabet to Elisabet in such minutiae that as if it is Alma's very own, memory.

Alma's individuation volatizes, too: Elisabet's left profile superimposes for a couple of seconds on Alma's left profile and vanishes, whilst Alma is narrating Elisabet's story (of her cold treatment toward her son) to Elisabet, herself, and you. And, suddenly, it occurs to her that as if she is getting too filled up with Elisabet—being swallowed up by Elisabet's memories and meanness and have begun channeling it—and that her individuation is getting eroded; Alma panics: "No. I'm not like you. I don't feel the same way as you do. I'm Sister Alma. I'm only here to help you. I'm not Elisabet Vogler. You're Elisabet Vogler" (Bergman). Elisabet's left profile again superimposes on Alma's left profile, and now it stays there.

And not just individuation, Alma's social role also crumbles when she abandons her professional duty of nursing Elisabet, when she leaves a shard of broken glass on Elisabet's path. Elisabet steps on the shard; and on Alma's reflexive face (what is she thinking about?), with its features still intact, a white uneven vertical line begins to vibrate; the vibrating line and sound give an impression of Alma's face getting cut up: her face fragments, her left profile conceals, her right eye dilates, her face turns intensive, and then the face explodes, dismantles.

It does not matter to Deleuze if these two (Elisabet and Alma) have a resemblance before they begin their relationship as nurse and patient; or if they begin to develop resemblances; or if *Persona* is really a story of a person being divided into two (*Cinema I* 111). For Deleuze, Alma and Elisabet are identical because of losing their individuations, which is equivalent to losing their social

roles and communications (111). They are identical because both of them lose their faces, or lose three functions of face.

Though, Elisabet stops being an actor professionally, she does not forego an actor's habitual furtive routine of "studying" other people. When Alma reads one of Elisabet's letters to her friend, she finds out that she is nothing but a "great study material" for Elisabet, and that she is enjoying a lot studying Alma (Bergman). Alma feels a sense of betrayal because she has been sharing with Elisabet a number of intimate memories about herself.

In a television interview, after the release of *Persona*, Bergman says that, though, Elisabet betrays Alma in the film, he does not see it in the same manner; Bergman empathizes with Elisabet because of the profession she belongs to. The profession of acting requires constant devotion to studying people—it is an ineluctable aspect, albeit a difficult one, to study people in emotionally charged conditions ("Persona" 10:38-10:54). "But every artist who is active in these kinds of media is always recording, making notes, observing, absorbing, and feeding off their environment," says Bergman, who reckons that this compulsive process of observation and ingestion of other's comportments can sometimes frighten the professional actor; and sometimes can appear to them to be amoral, and even a "crazy" undertaking (11:51-12:34). But, Bergman says, the actors cannot stop their insatiable need for constant studying of other human beings.

Hal, in the opening scene of *Infinite Jest*, is constantly studying the seven people in the University administration room. Below are few examples of close readings—reporting to the reader—by Hal:

1) Kirk White, the tennis coach of the varsity, is jingling the coins in his pocket (*Infinite* 3); he goes near the window and runs his hand over the back of his crew cut head (5).

2) Charles Tavis (Hal's uncle) is wobbling his loafer (3); he straightens an already straight watchband (5).

3) Dean of Admissions to Hal's left is "yellowish" and has a "fixed smile," and yet his smile has a temporary quality, as if it is forcibly stamped on his face (3).

4) Enfield Tennis Academy prorector Aubrey deLint moves his back against the

wall's panel and "recenters his weight" (5).
5) The Dean of Athletic Affairs to Hal's right speaks with his head cocked and has freckles on his scalp (4); he cocks his head, severely, whilst addressing Hal, so that he includes the tennis coach behind him, and it appears to Hal that two people are addressing him, together (7).
6) The Director of Composition has more eyebrows than usual (4); he gives expressions that Hal cannot interpret (6).
7) The Dean of Academic Affairs has unkempt hair like a lion (3); he gives a look of "distanced affront" (6).

But Hal is studying not just the seven people present in the University administration room; he is also studying himself. Hal is also another subject—the eighth subject in the room—that Hal is observing, absorbing, recording, and noting things about. And he is reporting it to you: how are the deans reacting to his silent responses; and how is he, in turn, reacting to the deans' reactions. Hal is commentating on his own actions, and his audience includes you and also himself.

Hal, under the influence of invisible forces, is communicating with you—the reader—in first-person and present tense, while he is silent, unresponsive, to the questions the deans are asking. Hal reports even when the Director of Composition is dragging him, pinioning Hal's hands behind (13). Hal tells you that the Director thinks—certainly because of the inhuman sounds and involuntary movements of Hal's limbs—that Hal is having a "seizure," so he forcibly opens Hal's mouth to see if his tongue is sticking to the throat (13). Then the Director thinks that Hal is "choking," so he employs the "Heimlich" maneuver (13). And then the Director thinks that Hal is "out of control," so he applies various postures to get Hal back to equanimity (13).

Apart from you (the reader) and himself (the eighth subject), there are also, of course, the deans in the audience, and it's not that Hal does not communicate at all, in words, with them; but they do not understand him. After his initial unresponsiveness, he communicates "slowly,"—Hal reports this fact to you (10). But what the Deans can hear are merely animalistic sounds (14).

In one realm, by keeping silent, Hal loses one of Deleuze's three roles or functions of face: communication. While, in another realm—the level in which he

is communicating with you—he is articulate. When he is being put inside the ambulance to be taken to a psychiatric hospital, Hal does not protest with the deans; instead, he reports to you about the weather, the visit to the psychiatric hospital exactly a year ago, and so on; he is even a grammarian par excellence during this moment: "There are, by the *O.E.D.* VI's count, nineteen nonarchaic synonyms for *unresponsive*, of which nine are Latinate and four Saxonic," Hal tells you (17). And, in yet another realm, Hal is communicating with the deans, slowly, but the deans do not understand what he is saying, or Hal's words appear to be horrifying animal sounds to them (12-13).

Hal does not have a profession like Bergman's Elisabet, who renounces hers as an actor and thus her social role. Hal, though, has a social role as a student. In one realm, Hal fulfills his role as a student: he is a precocious essayist. Instead of the required two, Hal submits nine monographic essays along with his University application; his essays, the deans declare, are off the charts, with titles like: "Neoclassical Assumptions in Contemporary Prescriptive Grammar" "Montague Grammar and the Semantics of Physical Modality" etc (7). In another realm Hal, as a student, is under suspicion; Hal's mark sheets show incongruity: while his standardized test scores are "subnormal" and verbal scores are nearly "zero," his secondary school transcripts show "outstanding" marks; the transcripts are from the institution where Hal's mother and her brother are the administrators (6). A dean tells Hal:

> A matriculate's first role at the University is and must be as a student. We couldn't admit a student we have reason to suspect can't cut the mustard, no matter how much of an asset he might be on the field (7).

In other words, Hal loses another function of his face: he loses his social role as a student, since the deans suspect him of doctoring his marks. Hal attempts to defend himself; he confesses that last year's transcript has been tampered with a bit to get him over a rough patch; but the grades before that are his very own (10). Hal tells them, with eyes closed, that he is not just an athlete; he devours

books after books (11-12). When he opens his eyes, he sees the horrified faces of the deans; they are horrified by the noises and sounds issuing from Hal's mouth; by his gestures (12).

INVISIBLE FORCES + BECOMING-ANIMAL + ESCAPE

The deans variously describe Hal's animalistic gestures (in the opening scene of *Infinite Jest*) as: "A writhing animal with a knife in its eye"; "His arms were… flailing. This sort of awful reaching drumming wriggle. *Waggling*" (14). And they describe Hal's animalistic sounds as: "Like some sort of animal with something in its mouth"; "Sounded most of all like a drowning goat. A goat, drowning in something viscous"; "This strangled series of bleats" (14).

The deans in *Infinite Jest* are as horrified as the chief clerk is on hearing the sounds that issue from Gregor Samsa's mouth in Kafka's novella, "The Metamorphosis." When Samsa wakes up one morning, he notices his metamorphosis into an insect; he notices that he has several legs, and that they are waggling involuntarily (*Collected* ch. 22). When he hears his own voice answering his mother, it shocks him. His voice, Samsa notices, carries a constant "twittering squeak," which does not interfere with the words leaving his mouth, initially: the words, the pronunciations, are clear; but then the "twittering squeak" rises up and reverberates around the words and dismantles their "sense," so that you are not sure of the words Samsa is using (ch. 22). When Samsa cries out from inside his locked room, giving an excuse of illness for not catching the early morning train to work, the chief clerk asks Samsa's mother whether she has been able to understand even a word of what Samsa is saying. "That was no human voice," declares the chief clerk (ch. 22).

The words Samsa cry out are clear to him, but his family members and the chief clerk, standing on the other side of Samsa's locked-from-inside bedroom door, no longer understand him; the chief clerk finds Samsa's voice and the sound of his words to be animalistic; Samsa coughs quietly, since he thinks that his father, mother, sister, and the chief clerk, might also construe the coughing noise as inhuman (ch. 22). Samsa's words or his cries cannot be said to have affiliations

anymore to a "language of sense," Deleuze and Guattari point out in their book, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*; though his "nonsense"—Samsa's whining, warbling, crying, twittering, squeaking—is born out of it: a language of sense (21). Nonsense erupts from a language of sense.

Like the chief clerk and Samsa's family members, the deans are unable to understand Hal in the opening scene of *Infinite Jest* because his words—though Hal articulates, slowly and distinctly, like Samsa—do not belong to a language of sense anymore. For the deans, Hal's words are merely a voice carrying serial sounds of a goat's bleating: nonsense (*Infinite* 14). For a dean, Hal's face strangles and burns (14): it is the situation of a human losing his individuation, losing his face or a function of his face; it is the situation of a becoming-animal of a man, or the becoming-goat of a man, not unlike Samsa losing his individuation, his face, the becoming-beetle of a man.

Lucas Thompson in his chapter on Kafka in the book *Global Wallace* also draws an analogy between the opening scene of "The Metamorphosis" and *Infinite Jest*; but Thompson reads Samsa's becoming of an animal as a "biological descent" into an insect; and, similarly, reads Hal's act as a downward climb of "the evolutionary tree" into an animalistic state (153). In Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming-animal, though, you do not undergo a "process of biological devolution" (154), and turn—as if finally reaching the logical destination/conclusion—into an insect (Samsa) or a goat (Hal). It is not a case of Samsa and Hal "being an animal" and exiting the human territory completely; nor are they becoming "like" an animal; nor are they being "like" an animal. "It is a *becoming-animal* and not a *being-animal* because it is hybrid. We begin from what is not animal, neither animal nor human but 'transversal,'" says Claire Colebrook, in her book on Deleuze (133).

In the situation of becoming-animal, Hal and Samsa establish a virtual alliance with a goat and beetle, and enter into a proximity to the goat and beetle, respectively. What Hal and Samsa assume are not really the powers of a goat and beetle; but something equivalent to it. This alliance with an animal either increases their powers or gifts them with newer ones; and they become more

than the person they are by forming what Australian philosopher Paul Patton refers to in his book on Deleuze as an "inter-individual body": a provisional body—a body without organs—forms in alliance with the "real" or "imaginary" powers of the animal concerned (Patton, *Deleuze* 79-80).

In the situation of becoming-animal, Hal and Samsa, through the sounds that emanate from their mouths, deterritorialize—disorganize—language, render it nonsensical. Neither the deans (in Hal's case), nor the chief clerk (in Samsa's case), understand them.

A nonsensical language derives—tears—from sense itself; not dissimilar to the way "pure sonorous material" intrudes—interrupts—"composed and semiotically shaped music" in Kafka's works, Deleuze and Guattari point out (*Kafka* 5).

In Kafka's *Description of a Struggle*, for instance, you read about a pianist who does not know how to play. In the story, the supplicant walks over to the pianist (who is playing a sad song), and expresses his desire to play the piano (because he is feeling happy) (Kafka, *Collected* ch. 45). The supplicant does not know how to play the piano; and the supplicant knows that the audience knows that he does not know how to play the piano. The supplicant sits at the piano, straightens himself, asks to turn off the lights, but he does not play; and "at that moment two gentlemen seiz[e] the bench and whistling a song and rocking me to and fro, carr[y] me far away from the piano to the dining table" (ch. 45). A girl in the audience tells the host of the party that the supplicant plays the piano very well; and the others in the party treat him generously in response to his great performance; the supplicant takes a bow and eats merrily and leaves the party without playing a note. This short story, say Deleuze and Guattari, foreshadows composer John Cage's silent piece of 1952: *4'33"* (*Kafka* 5).

In Cage's three-movement piece, a soloist (William Marx) comes on stage: he bows to the applauding audience before sitting at the piano; he turns a page of a score on the stand, shakes and straightens himself, wears his specs, closes the lid of the piano, starts a stopwatch with his right hand and keeps holding out his right arm in front of his body at about ninety degrees (like someone about to make an emphatic point, or someone making a point, emphatically), and counts

till 30 seconds before stopping it; then the soloist opens the lid, keeps the stopwatch, waits, chews on something in his mouth, looks at the score, closes the lid, starts the stopwatch again (holding his right arm out at ninety degrees) and counts till two minutes and 64 seconds before stopping it; and then the soloist opens the lid once more, keeps the stopwatch, waits, dangles hands by his sides; and again he starts the stopwatch (and keeps holding his right arm out as usual at ninety degrees) and counts till one minute and 40 seconds before stopping it; and then he keeps the stopwatch, opens the lid, closes the score on the stand, removes his specs, stands and bows to the applauding audience and exits the stage without playing a note (Marx).

Like the pianist who cannot play the piano—and yet releases music, pure sonority—you find the singer who cannot sing in Kafka's 'Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk' (*Collected* ch. 44). The mouse narrator tells you that among the intimates they reach a consensus that Josephine's singing is not extraordinary. In fact they do not even consider the art of Josephine to be classified as singing; it is merely "piping"; and piping is something that every mouse does; piping is simply one of their characteristics (ch. 44). And Josephine does not even pipe better than others; her vocal skill is perhaps even weaker than other members of the cohort. Josephine is a singer who pipes, and does not sing, and produces songs through "nonsinging," Deleuze and Guattari state (*Kafka* 21). That she does not sing, that she whistles—pipes—worse than the other mouse, make Josephine's art of nonsinging "even greater" (5-6).

Similarly, in Kafka's 'Investigations of a Dog,' the seven musical dogs arrive to the accompaniment of terrible blast of sonority; they do not speak, do not sing, and they are always silent; and yet they produce music out of nihility—"empty air" (*Collected* ch. 83). Since no one can tell how they make music, since no one sees or hears them making—emitting—music, Deleuze and Guattari consider the seven musical dogs to be music artists in their bodies' depths (*Kafka* 21). The French philosophers write:

> Everywhere, organized music is traversed by a line of abolition—just as a language of sense is traversed by a line of escape—in order to

> liberate a living and expressive material that speaks for itself and has no need of being put into a form (21).

Children are experts at tearing language from sense (21). They often indulge in the game of parroting a word during which the word turns vague, turns nonsensical (21). In Kafka's *Castle*, schoolchildren surround K. and keep jabbering, and he is unable to comprehend what they are telling him (21). The scene is sort of autobiographical: Kafka mentions in his diary that, as a child, he parrots one of his father's phrases—"end of the month, end of the month" (21). In the child Kafka's mouth, the expression turns vague; turns nonsensical; it escapes a language of sense (21).

In Wallace's first novel, *The Broom of the System*, a cockatiel named Vlad the Impaler enters into human speech with two words, "Pretty boy," and for some time he repeats these words only (98). But one day, Vlad begins to parrot, word by word, long passages of what Candy is about to tell her boyfriend whilst breaking up; Vlad learns the words when Candy practices (in the room where Vlad is in a cage) the lines she is going to use to end the relationship (97). What Vlad parrots—continuously blabbers—are mostly obscene; obscene words of Candy; and, which is why, the owner of the bird (Lenore Beadsman) teaches him Psalms (101).

On the basis of his ability to quote verbatim from the Bible, a religious television show hires Vlad to deliver god's message to the American people (275). But when the camera trains on him, Vlad does not say the required lines; he conflates obscene and Biblical thoughts, rendering the sentences nonsensical: "Inside out! A camel! The bird has been touched by Auden" (274) "Jesus knew the sex was great" (275).

Even when the camera is not training on him, Vlad neutralizes sense: when Lenore asks Vlad to repeat, "The sins of the fathers. I shall not want," Vlad says "Jesus shall not want"; and then Vlad screams: "The sins of the feathers. Who has the book" (102)? Both, Candy and Lenore, do not understand what book Vlad is talking about (103). The cockatiel, Vlad the Impaler, does not talk "like" a human,

but yanks from the language of sense certain tones that signify nothing (*Kafka* 22).

The situation in which becoming occurs—the becoming-human of the mouse, the becoming-beetle of the man, the becoming-human of the bird, the becoming-goat of the human—is not in a language of sense (*Kafka* 22). In language of sense, the word "goat," for instance, designates an animal, directly; and the word can also apply metaphorically to other aspects, so that you can say: "so-and-so is *like* a goat" (22). Deleuze and Guattari refer to Kafka's 1921 diary entry, where Kafka talks about loathing the use of metaphors in writing (22). That literature is not independent, and appears incapable of living in itself, and holds on to metaphors as a crutch—"like a goat" "like a beetle" "like an animal" "like a human"—makes Kafka despair (22).

Kafka, thus, expunges metaphors: you cannot read Kafka's works, Deleuze and Guattari repeatedly declare, symbolically or allegorically; or read with an intention to find out what does it signify, or what does it designate (22). Kafka's animal stories are not metaphoric writings; but writings of metamorphosis. And metamorphosis is not equal to metaphor; it is contrary to metamorphosis (22).

Below are the words of defense that are put up, in "The Metamorphosis," by Samsa, who establishes a virtual alliance with a beetle; Samsa is addressing (from behind his locked door) the chief clerk, who wants to know why Samsa has not taken the early morning train to work:

> But, sir, I'm just going to open the door this very minute. A slight illness, an attack of giddiness, has kept me from getting up. I'm still lying in bed. But I feel all right again. I'm getting out of bed now. Just give me a moment or two longer! I'm not quite so well as I thought. But I'm all right, really. How a thing like that can suddenly strike one down! Only last night I was quite well, my parents can tell you, or rather I did have a slight presentiment. I must have showed some sign of it. Why didn't I report it at the office! But one always thinks that an indisposition can be got over without staying in the house.

> Oh sir, do spare my parents! All that you're reproaching me with now has no foundation; no one has ever said a word to me about it. Perhaps you haven't looked at the last orders I sent in. Anyhow, I can still catch the eight o'clock train, I'm much the better for my few hours' rest. Don't let me detain you here, sir; I'll be attending to business very soon, and do be good enough to tell the chief so and to make my excuses to him (*Collected* ch. 22)!

Samsa "cries" out—whines—the above words, the narrator tells you (ch. 22). After Samsa finishes talking, or what appears to him as talking, the chief clerk asks Samsa's mother: "Did you understand a word of it" (ch. 22)? And then the chief clerk declares: "That was no human voice" (ch. 22). The whining sound takes possession of Samsa's voice and makes the above 210-words of defense blurry, incomprehensible; these 210-words become nothing but "intensities," as the whining sound deterriorialize the language or language of sense, Deleuze and Guattari point out (*Kafka* 22). These 210-words cease to mean anything in the "proper," or "figurative," or "symbolic" sense; these 210-words "escape" the bounds of the language system in the process of Samsa's metamorphosis (22). The sound sweeps away the words. The animal stories—the becoming-animal of humans, and the becoming-human of animals—are where Kafka makes an intensive use of language; or where metamorphosis occurs through intensive language, through sounds that blur the words. The sounds—the intense expressions—dismantle the forms of language.

Wallace, too, uses the intensive language in the becoming-animal situation of Hal in the opening scene of *Infinite Jest*. Below are the words of defense Hal puts up against the charges of providing the University administrators with fake mark sheets and purchased essays:

> I am not just a jock. My transcript for the last year might have been dickied a bit, maybe, but was to get me over a rough spot. The grades prior to that are *de moi*. I cannot make myself understood, now. Call it something I ate. My application's not bought. I am not just a boy

> who plays tennis. I have an intricate history. Experiences and feelings. I'm complex. I read. I study and read. I bet I've read everything you've read. Don't think I haven't. I consume libraries. I wear out spines and ROM-drives. I do things like get in a taxi and say, "The library, and step on it." My instincts concerning syntax and mechanics are better than your own, I can tell, with due respect. But it transcends the mechanics. I'm not a machine. I feel and believe. I have opinions. Some of them are interesting. I could, if you'd let me, talk and talk. Let's talk about anything. I believe the influence of Kierkegaard on Camus is underestimated. I believe Dennis Gabor may very well have been the Antichrist. I believe Hobbes is just Rousseau in a dark mirror. I believe, with Hegel, that transcendence is absorption. I could interface you guys right under the table. I'm not just a creatus, manufactured, conditioned, bred for a function. Please don't think I don't care. I'm fine. Please don't worry. I can explain. Nothing is wrong. Try to listen (*Infinite* 10-12).

Before Hal finishes talking, or what appears to him as talking, the Director of Compositions wrestle him to the floor; and one of the deans cry out: "What in God's name are those……those sounds" (12)? The deans describe the sounds and noises of Hal as "*sub*animalistic"; and then, precisely, as the sounds of a "goat": "This strangled series of bleats" (14). The bleating sounds capture Hal's voice and make the above 242-words of defense blurry; these 242-words, which are incomprehensible to the deans, are not being used in a "proper" or "symbolic" or "figurative" sense; these 242-words in the sentences above become nothing "but only a distribution of states": intensities (*Kafka* 22). The sound—bleating in Hal's case and whining in Samsa's—makes the sequences of words tremble and, by doing so, unbinds every word from its standard rules, opens every word onto unpredictable intensities, which is an internal component or range of the word itself (22). This intensive use of the language does not signify; it involves arriving at an unformed intense expression—whining, bleating, and so on (19).

Metamorphosis puts two deterritorializations in conjunction: the human foists the animal to run off or to be in the service of the human; but also the animal, in its turn, puts forward to the human certain ways of escape that the human can never think of by himself, Deleuze and Guattari tell you (35). The man is absolutely pushed out of his original territory ("absolute deterritorialization") in the situation of becoming-animal. This is not a relative ejection of man out of his own territory, which the man brings upon himself by indulging in shifting (in his chair or from one room to another or from one house to another, etc.), or travelling (intra-city, city-to-city, country-to-country, Earth-to-space, etc.); the becoming-animal of the human involves what Deleuze and Guattari call an "immobile voyage": a voyage that you undertake by staying in one place (35). In this immobile voyage, becoming-animal lives as an intensity only; only as intensity can you comprehend becoming-animal (35). You escape in an immobile voyage in becoming-animal; you deterritorialize through becoming-animal. About immobile voyage and becoming-animal, Deleuze and Guattari write:

> To become animal is to participate in movement, to stake out the path of escape in all its positivity, to cross a threshold, to reach a continuum of intensities that are valuable only in themselves, to find a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone (13).

Becoming-animal is a zone of escape—not freedom—and an escape that an animal proposes to the human by indicating to them the lines of flight—means of getting out, getting away.

Kafka's ape in 'A Report to an Academy' provides the distinction between "freedom" and "escape." The ape narrates the experience of his capture; the three-sided low and narrow cage, where he is unable to stand up or sit down. The ape realizes that he cannot continue living in this manner; he has to devise an escape or a "way out" (*Collected* ch. 38).

The ape reports that he is consciously using the words "way out," and not "freedom" (ch. 38). Locked inside a cage in the steamer, he does not yearn for freedom, where space opens up on all the sides. He sees the uselessness of

moving about in space, fleeing from his cage; because, if he flees, he knows his oppressors in the steamer are certainly going to catch and put him into a cage with a python, in whose embrace he is going to die; and even if he jumps into the sea, he is going to drown (ch. 38). These movements are nothing but a few minutes of false freedoms, the ape realizes. And, thus, what the ape aims for is what Deleuze and Guattari call "a stationary flight, a flight of intensity"; in other words, an immobile voyage (*Kafka* 13): "No, freedom was not what I wanted. Only a way out; right or left, or in any direction; I made no other demand," says the ape (*Collected* ch. 38).

The ape begins to imitate the humans in the steamer as a kind of strategy to escape. Deleuze and Guattari reckon that the ape's imitation is artificial; the ape is not concerned with reproducing figures; the ape is looking to produce intensities (*Kafka* 13). Becoming is an act of catching, possessing, enhancing your powers; not imitating or reproducing (13). Imitation involves entering into another territory; while the act of becoming involves deterritorialization, where you're neither in your own original territory nor in someone else's territory; neither human nor animal (13). On the course of imitation, the ape even begins to talk; but the ape is not enthusiastic about it: "There was no attraction for me in imitating human beings; I imitated them because I needed a way out, and for no other reason" (Kafka, *Collected* ch. 38).

The ape finds himself outside his own territory, according to Deleuze and Guattari, because of the diabolical forces of the humans (*Kafka* 14): their bullets (which hit him and yank him out of his habitat); their cage (which restricts his movements and incises his flesh); their spitting habit (which makes him spit in other's faces); their pipe (which smolders his fur and which he learns to smoke); their schnapps (which bottle he learns to uncork and empty in one swig and throw it away); etc. If the diabolical forces of the humans deterritorialize the ape, the deterritorialized ape (through his animal force) also impels the human to leave his own territory:

> My ape nature fled out of me, head over heels and away, so that my first teacher was almost himself turned into an ape by it, had soon to

give up teaching and was taken away to a mental hospital (Kafka, *Collected* ch. 38).

The ape's escape is not a choreographed movement; it is an escape without movement, by staying in one place, through intensity: "head over heels and away" (ch. 38). For the ape it is not a question of freedom versus a certain form of submission to the human diabolical forces; it's a question of the ape's desperation to find a line of escape (which is different from that grandiose word, "freedom"), a way out of the three-sided low and narrow cage, where he cannot stand up or sit down, and has to remain in a squatted position, constantly (*Kafka* 6). And it does not matter to the ape where he finds his way to break through, to get out: "Right or left, or in any direction" (*Collected* ch. 38).

While the ape becomes a human to escape, Samsa in "The Metamorphosis" becomes an animal—a beetle—to get out. The ape wants to escape the cage he has been put into; he wants to escape being put into the zoo (another cage). What does Samsa want to escape? Samsa becomes an animal, Deleuze and Guattari reckon, to find a way out—and not freedom; find a way to get out, where his father has been unable to, or does not know of finding one (*Kafka* 13): the father, as a bank messenger, even sleeps in his uniform, so that it appears that he is still in submission—still with his head lowered—to the powers of his office superiors at home; and that he is ready to provide his services round the clock (14).

Samsa, a commercial traveler, becomes an animal, because he wants to escape the firm's chief and the chief clerk; the bureaucrats and the system (13)—to flee those who begin to look at Samsa, suspiciously, when he does not reach the firm on time one day; they quickly forget his daily unrelenting fidelity. Samsa becomes a beetle and enters the zone where only a warble or whining—a sort of humming, twittering, squeaking—issue from his mouth, and no words; his voice produces wordless sounds (13). Samsa traces, intensely, a way out vis-à-vis the bureaucratic system: the oppressors, the visible diabolical powers (14).

The different ways of Samsa and his father, the ways in which they handle the bureaucratic or commercial system kind of mirrors the ways of Kafka and his

father. Kafka's understanding of freedom is different from his father's. Kafka's father, a Czech Jew, migrates from the countryside to take up residence in the city; this is indeed a procedure of leaving a territory, of deterritorialization; but the procedure falters again and again as Kafka's father, according to Deleuze and Guattari, enters a new territory, reterritorializes, in his business, where he operates with his head lowered, submitting to diabolical powers, and is driven into a corner (12-13). The father is unable to dismantle the "impasse" (11). In literature, Kafka is able to—by becoming an animal.

Not just the character in a story, the acts of becoming-animal also belong to the writer; the writer—sitting with his knees conjoined and his spine erect, occasionally shifting in his chair, occasionally moving his arms and hands in different degrees and variations, facing screen or paper, constructing something—the writer also takes the immobile voyage; whilst writing, the writer stops being—a writer or a "writer-man" (7). Instead, he metamorphoses. The writer becomes a man of experiment; the writer stops being a man in order to become an animal, an inhuman: an insect, an ape, a dog, a mouse; and the becoming-animal of the writer is through "voice," "sound," and "style" (7): the wordless humming of Samsa, the humming of the language itself, so that the words become a blur, so that the bureaucrat (chief clerk) is unable to comprehend. The language in which Samsa conveys his sickness, protests against allegations, appears to the bureaucrat to have only an animalistic timbre: Kafka's intensive use of language.

Kafka sits in his study, and becomes an animal, and he makes the process of becoming-animal a quintessence of his stories (35). Becoming an animal is a way to get out—escape—even if that voyage takes place by staying in one place, or in a three-sided low and narrow cage (35). Becoming an animal is one of the ways to counter the diabolical powers knocking at your door, at your body, Deleuze and Guattari reckon:

> To the inhumanness of the 'diabolical powers,' there is the answer of a becoming-animal: to become a beetle, to become a dog, to become

> an ape, 'head over heels and away,' rather than lowering one's head and remaining a bureaucrat, inspector, judge, or judged (12).

In the opening scene of *Infinite Jest*, Hal acts as though he is isolated in three-sided low and narrow cage; and that he completely lacks the freedom to move; and that a few measured moves are permitted only (3). Or, rather, Hal's body posture is sort of a self-imposed incarceration, an envelopment—a fold—reminiscent of a character in a novella: he inserts one hand's fingers into the spaces between other hand's fingers—beaming a sign of no-entry (i.e., the letter X)—and puts the hands on his lap; and carefully crosses his legs, which complement the position of the hands (3). Hal has been instructed (possibly by Uncle Charles who accompanies him for admission at the University) not to attempt a "smile," to wear more of a "neutral" expression (3). Uncle Charles either answers the questions the deans ask Hal, or he speaks to the deans or asks them questions on behalf of Hal. Hal stays silent; Hal communicates silence. Hal tries to maintain a "neutral and affectless silence"; to play a kind of defensive game with the deans, where whatever questions they ask him, he lets it "bounce off" him, and not do anything, because he has been instructed not to (9). Not to move; not to smile; not to talk.

Hal has been coached to be present in the admission room with certain portions of him withdrawn; to remain present in part only.

Hal's circumspect body postures, his reined-in expressions, his silence, compel you to ask the novella question, or the question that novellas revolve around, "What has happened?" When the deans' questions begin to pile up, when the deans turn silent in response to Hal's silence, Hal decides to smile; except what the deans see is a person in pain: a person grimacing (5). "Something has happened to Hal, but what?" you ask, along with the deans. But this question is not answered in the opening scene comprising 17 pages; nor is it answered in the rest of the 1000-plus pages of *Infinite Jest*. Whatever has happened to Hal, you will never be able to know, because Hal's secret is in the vein of a novella: the novella—the kind of novella that Deleuze and Guattari are interested in—carries secrets whose form is impenetrable (*Thousand* 227).

Hal does not have a secret matter to be disinterred from the past; his past is imperceptible (227). The concept of novella cannot provide you with knowledge of the past; it appears to have forgotten about the past; or it might even be that "nothing has happened" in the past—it is "nothing" that makes "something" happen in the opening scene of *Infinite Jest* (227). And the "nothing" that makes "something" happen in the present is of the future, rather than of the past: the diabolical—invisible—forces of the future.

Above, both the ape in "A Report to an Academy" and Samsa in "The Metamorphosis" are also up against the diabolical forces; but they are trying to escape more of the visible diabolical forces of the humans: the oppressors in the steamer; the bureaucrats and the bureaucratic system. On the other hand, Hal is grappling not just with the visible human forces in the form of the deans, who judge him to be a fraud; but Hal is also having to grapple with (internal or external) invisible forces of the future that are knocking at his body, shutting his eyes, whipping his head, producing an intensive face: the involuntary facial expression of a grimace when Hal intends to broadcast a smile; or the two simultaneous and different expressions of smile and grimace; or the rapid alternating expressions of smile and grimace (5). The invisible forces also produce the spasms and convulsions in Hal; his limbs begin to make uncoordinated, out of kilter movements—begin to waggle and flail (14).

To defeat the forces, to try to find a way to get out of the strangling forces, to escape, Wallace—Kafkaesque—chooses the essence of animal. Hal becomes an animal to flee both the visible forces (the deans) and the invisible forces, to arrive at that zone where the voice does nothing but bleat: "[Hal] sounded most of all like a drowning goat. A goat, drowning in something viscous" "This strangled series of bleats" (*Infinite* 14). Hal becomes a goat through sound, through intensive use of language signifying nothing: his wordless bleating obscures the words' resonances.

Hal's wordless bleating achieves three things simultaneously: 1) It shows that Wallace—Bacon-esque—decides to confront the invisible forces. While Bacon does it by showing his figures screaming at invisible forces, Wallace does it through scream-grade noises and sounds: bleating. Wallace makes life—makes

Hal—'scream' at invisible forces. It shows that Wallace reckons that a life can not only detect the invisible forces—diabolical powers of the future—but is also capable of capturing, defeating, or even befriending them, and rendering them visible through the cry: scream. 2) With language being used in an intensive manner (and not in a "proper," or "figurative," or "symbolic" sense), with Hal's voice being carried away by the bleating sound, with the sound blurring the words that Hal utters, the language deterritorializes—disorganizes, comes apart; or, in other words, the language escapes its own territories. 3) By bleating, by establishing an alliance with an animal, Hal deterritorializes; he escapes his own original territory, becoming more than the person he is by forming an inter-individual body in alliance with the "real" or "imaginary" powers of a goat.

Sitting on the chair, in the office of admission in the opening scene of *Infinite Jest*, Hal makes an immobile voyage in the face of forces, invisible and visible. Hal escapes without movement, by staying in one place, through stationary flight of intensity: "head over heels and away" (*Collected* ch. 38).

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3

DAVID FOSTER WALLACE'S MINOR USE OF THE MAJOR LANGUAGE

In 'Authority and American Usage,' a 61-page essay on Bryan A. Garner's *A Dictionary of Modern American Usage (ADMAU),* David Foster Wallace praises the lexicographer for displaying "Democratic Spirit" in the usage dictionary: it is a quality that is a combination of "rigor and humility, i.e., passionate conviction plus a sedulous respect for the convictions of others" (*Consider* 72). The democratic spirit is hard to maintain on certain vexed issues such as "correctness" in contemporary American usage; you have to look at yourself, honestly, and to question yourself, continually, about what motivates you to believe in something, declares Wallace (72). What strategy does Wallace employ to tackle the "highly charged" issue of American usage (72)? In the usage essay—an essay which is "part narrative, part argumentative, part meditative, part experiential"—what persona does Wallace project (Garner, *Quack* 78)? At the beginning of the usage essay, Wallace declares himself to be a language fanatic (a "snoot" as he calls it), and that he is a prescriptivist (a "linguistic conservative"); but then the American author distances himself from prescriptivists (or variants of it) on occasion; he even portrays himself, on one occasion, as a descriptivist (a "linguistic liberal") (*Consider* 79).

In the first part of this chapter, I read Wallace's usage essay the way another American author, George Saunders, reads Anton Chekhov's short story, 'Gooseberries.' Saunders tells you in his book, *A Swim in a Pond in the Rain*, that Chekhov's story thinks through a series of "on the other hand" declarations: "Ivan is against happiness; on the other hand, he sure does enjoy swimming" (*Swim* ch. 6). Through this structure, Chekhov is able to convey how petty it is to have a "one dimensional opinion" about something; or how it is not possible (ch. 6). Similarly, Wallace, or Wallace's persona in the usage essay is that of someone who is not one-dimensional; who does not settle into a single belief regarding English usage; and who keeps qualifying his position; and you keep suspending your decision to judge. To judge him: Wallace.

In his usage essay, Wallace gives an injunction to his black students about not using Standard Black English (SBE) in their essays (*Consider* 108). The black students, in other words, are not to disturb the equilibrium—the homogenous system, the constant terms and relations, the grammar—of Standard Written English (SWE). On the other hand, though, Wallace himself puts the homogenous system of SWE in disequilibrium in his fictional and non-fictional works. In the second part of this chapter, I show how Wallace decomposes—destructs—English, the major language, through creation of syntax: through agrammaticality, digression, repetition; how he makes the language stutter and stammer; and how he makes a minor use of the major language.

PART I

THE STRUCTURE OF 'ON THE OTHER HAND' IN CHEKHOV AND WALLACE

In the usage essay, Wallace writes about a song he composes as a kid about blunderers in Standard English; the Wallace family sings this song together on long-distance car trips (*Consider* 71n. 8). A touch of poetic wisdom from Wallace's grammarian mother, Sally Foster, helps Wallace to smuggle into the lyrics of the song the strangulating tone of W.B Yeats—Wallace adds the words "widening gyre" from Yeats's *Second Coming* to his song (71). (The song for the English-language-debasers shows the high notes Wallace's precocity hits, as well as adumbrates a prescriptivist in the making.) Below is the wailful road song:

> When idiots in this world appear
> And fail to be concise or clear
> And solecisms rend the ear
> The cry goes up both far and near
> for Blunderdog
> Blunderdog
> Blunderdog
> Blunderdog

Pen of Iron, tongue of fire
Tightening the wid'ning gyre
Blunderdo-O-O-O-O-O-O (71)…

In her grammar book, *Practically Painless English*, Sally declares that an improper pronoun reference drives her "up the wall with confusion" (101), and an incorrect verb tense hurts her teeth (125). At home, during supper, if Wallace or his sister commit a usage gaffe, the grammarian mother begins to cough, and keeps coughing and pretending to choke, as if from lack of oxygen, until the one who makes the error sets right the wrong (*Consider* 71). As a kid, Wallace's favorite advertising howler is "Save up to 50% and more," and it is a sort of an in-joke between the mother and son, and they often laugh about it (*Quack* 104).

"Grammar Nazis, Usage Nerds, Syntax Snobs, the Grammar Battalion, the Language Police"—these are the terms usually used to describe the usage fanatics; the term that is used, though, in Wallace's home, is "SNOOT" (*Consider* 69). Wallace declares that he is a snoot because of his mother; it runs in the family: Wallace's snoot acquaintances, too, have at least one parent whose relation with English usage is rabid (71n. 8). Wallace defines snoot in his usage essay:

> SNOOT (n) (*highly colloq*) is this reviewer's [Wallace's] nuclear family's nickname à clef for a really extreme usage fanatic, the sort of person whose idea of Sunday fun is to hunt for mistakes in the very prose of [William] Safire's column. This reviewer's family is roughly 70 percent SNOOT, which term itself derives from an acronym, with the big historical family joke being that whether S.N.O.O.T. stood for "Sprachgefuhl Necessitates Our Ongoing Tendance" or "Syntax Nudniks Of Our Time" depended on whether or not you were one (*Consider* 69n. 5).

The snoots know the meaning of "*dysphemism*," and let you know that they know it; the snoots know when and how phrasal adjectives are hyphenated, and can

recognize a participle dangling; and the snoots know that they know, and they know that not many in their country know or even care about these things—the rules of Standard English—and they judge these people accordingly (70). The snoots "are the Few, the Proud, the More or Less Constantly Appalled at Everyone else"—with everyone else here referring to the non-standard English users (71). At the beginning of the usage essay, through the repeated use of "We" to refer to snoots, Wallace wants you to know that he is very much a snoot too (71).

Wallace, though, is "uncomfortable" being a snoot, because his bellicosity (vis-à-vis current English usage) is similar to the bellicosity of religious/political conservatives (vis-à-vis current culture) (70). Wallace, as a professor of English, goes through a pattern every semester: after finding solecisms in the first set of his students' essays, he immediately veers from the regular Literature syllabus and begins taking an "Emergency Remedial Usage and Grammar Unit" for the next three weeks—because Wallace is "pathologically obsessed" with Standard English (70n. 6). As he realizes that his students do not know how to identify clauses, or do not know how crucial the word "only" is, and how misplacing it can completely change the meaning of a sentence—'"I only love you" versus "I love only you"' (*Quack* 103)—Wallace loses his temper, beats his head against the blackboard (*Consider* 70n. 6). Wallace writes:

> The truth is that I'm not even an especially good or dedicated teacher; I don't have this kind of fervor in class about anything else, and I know it's not a very productive fervor, nor a healthy one—it's got elements of fanaticism and rage to it, plus a snobbishness that I know I'd be mortified to display about anything else (70n. 6).

The snoots—or the "prescriptivists"—the ones conservative about change in English and its usage, the ones looking to effectively use language in grammatical and rhetorical sense, are endlessly at war with the "descriptivists"—the liberals, the recorders of language as it's actually used by the native speakers. If the native speaker, for example, confuses—or swaps—the words "infer" and "imply," the descriptivists do not object; for the descriptivists, it's all right (*Garner's* Preface).

Wallace, in his usage essay, takes apart the descriptivists, especially the arguments of the editor, Philip Gove, in *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (*W3*) in 1961. *W3* enrages the prescriptivists by endorsing "Ok" and "ain't" (the words W3 claims are used by educated population across the United States in the 60s). *W3* declares: "A dictionary should have no truck with artificial notions of correctness or superiority. It should be descriptive and not prescriptive" (*Consider* 79). The descriptivists, through their direct and objective observation, build the contents of their dictionaries; this is how, they believe, every English dictionary (and the correctness of language) is to be determined.

Gove in *W3* lists five proclamations of descriptivism that Wallace quotes in his essay: '"1—Language changes constantly; 2—Change is normal; 3—Spoken language is language; 4—Correctness rests upon usage; 5—All usage is relative"' (83). Wallace responds to Gove's edicts, as a sort of spokesperson for the prescriptivists, point by point. 1—If "language changes constantly," the question is at what rate and in what proportion (83)? 2—What is a normal change(83)? Is flux proposed by Heraclitus as normal as a slow change (83)? How many people have to not abide by the usage conventions, or how many usage conventions need to be flouted, to say that a change in language has occurred (83)? 3—The prescriptivists do not concern themselves much with spoken English; their usage guides concentrate on "Standard Written English" (SWE) (84). 4—Gove does not specify whose usage correctness is based on, Wallace points out (84). What Gove wants is grammar rules corresponding to the way people actually use the language, and not usage based on rigid rules (84). But whose usage—which group of people—are you going to pay attention to? Wallace asks Gove (84). Is it going to be: "Urban Latinos?" "Boston Brahmins?" "Rural Midwesterners?" "Appalachian Neogaelics" (84)? 5—From Gove's fifth principle, it appears to Wallace that the answer to the question "which group of people?" is "all of them" (84). Gove is proposing to "observe" and "record" every "language behavior" of every native speaker, to include everything in the dictionary, which is of course impossible to do (84). Such a dictionary, even if constructed, Wallace points out, will weigh millions of pounds and require hourly updates (85). An online dictionary, though, is an alternative; but it will not only require a lexical battalion to update the website minute-by-minute, but also require scores of on-field

reporters to observe and record the language behaviors—a methodology descriptivists call “scientific”; there’s no point in conducting such an exercise, feels Wallace (85n. 29).

Wallace calls descriptivists’ understanding of what “scientific” means “crude and outdated’; the “scientific lexicography” of the descriptivists—which involves observing every act of every native speakers’ language behavior and including all these observations in the dictionary—requires them to naively believe that they are undertaking a “scientific Objectivity” (85). What the descriptivists do not understand is that the observers are part of the phenomena they are observing and are indivisible from the analysis; they do not understand that there is no such thing as an observation free of bias (85). Wallace considers the descriptivists to be “pollsters”; the descriptivists are really observing and recording “human behaviors” and not certain “scientific phenomena”—human behaviors that are most of the time imbecile (89).

Issues of grammar and usage are related to ethics rather than science, declares Wallace (89). Because the descriptivists include every last utterance of the native speakers in the English language, because the descriptivists equate “regularities” in the native speakers’ manner of using the English language with “norms,” they fail to see the language—the conventions of grammar and usage—to be a matter of ethics (and not science) (89).

A “norm” comes into being when a community agrees that something is the most favorable way of doing things (89). A community may discover that certain ways of using language are better than others for specific purposes. And if one of the purposes involves communicating—which food to eat and which to abstain from—then misplacing modifiers, for instance, can be an important, and even costly, violation of norm. A sentence by a tribesman with a misplaced modifier—“People who eat that kind of mushroom often get sick”—can confuse the recipient of the message (90). Does this statement mean: only if you frequently eat that kind of mushroom, you’ll fall sick (90)? Or: you have a high probability of falling sick the very first time you eat that kind of mushroom (90)? Thus, a community that grows and consumes mushrooms has to ensure that they are not misplacing modifiers, and that it is expunged from English usage, states Wallace

(90). In other words, given what language is used for in the community, the fact that certain numbers of tribesmen misplace modifiers to talk about the safety of the food does not make misplacing modifier a good thing (90). This is why Wallace draws an analogy between ethics and English usage: if, for example, a certain percentage of the population evades paying their taxes, scold and punish their kids, it does not mean that they think these acts are good ideas; the descriptivists, precisely, ride on this fallacious reasoning: if "Everybody Does It" then somehow it's all right; all right to say it (90). Wallace writes:

> The whole point of establishing norms is to help us evaluate our actions (including utterances) according to what we as a community have decided our real interests and purposes are (90).

Wallace understands that it is very difficult for a community to come to an agreement on norms; but when the descripivists assume all norms regarding usage to be "arbitrary" and easily expendable, you have the above misplaced modifier and mushroom-like confusion (90-1). Thus, Wallace, in his usage essay, as a snoot prescriptivist, finds flaws in the methodology and arguments of the descriptivists.

Wallace, though, distances himself from the "pop SNOOTs" (79n. 21): the columnists, the practitioners of "Popular Prescriptivism" (79). Wallace tells you that pop snoots or prescriptivists are at times humorous, but much of what they write appears to him to be old men carping about the English language getting sullied (79). Wallace finds, for example, John Simon's arguments in *Paradigms Lost* regarding Standard Black English (SBE) hidebound and offensive and facile. Regarding SBE, Simon writes:

> As for 'I be,' 'you be,' 'he be,' etc., which should give us all the heebie-jeebies, these may indeed be comprehensible, but they go against all accepted classical and modern grammars and are the

> product not of a language with its roots in history but of ignorance of how a language works (79-80).

The above quote from Simon's book evidently carries a tone of plutocracy; the other pop American prescriptivists like Newman and Safire also write in a similar tone when writing about English usage—a tone they borrow from the hardcore British prescriptivists, Eric Partridge and H. W. Fowler, Wallace points out (80). Wallace, therefore, advertises himself as someone who does not write in a plutocratic tone regarding English usage, does not belong to the pop-snoot category.

But, though, he is not in the pop-snoot camp, the camp that despises SBE, Wallace is not "for" the use of the dialect in essays either. After reading the first couple of their essays at the beginning of the semester, Wallace lectures his black students, in a private conference, against using SBE.

In the conference, Wallace tells his black students, at the cost of scaring and perplexing and offending them, that what they are here to study in the college is a "foreign dialect," and this dialect is known as "Standard Written English" (SWE); and the dialect the black students are using, in their essays in Wallace's English class, is SBE (108). And there are number of differences between SWE and SBE (108).

One of the differences is grammatical: double negatives are considered an error in SWE but not so in SBE (108). There is also stylistic difference between SBE and SWE: in SWE, states Wallace, subordinate clauses are usually used in the early parts of sentences, and these subordinates are set off by commas; and writing that doesn't adhere to this SWE comma rule is considered "choppy" (108).

In his lecture, Wallace almost empathizes with his black students for being given low grades by other prescriptivist professors in the college because of failing to comply with the rules of a language that is "foreign" to them—a fact that has been unknown to the black students, until Wallace acquaints them with the thought that they are "foreigners" in SWE (108). But Wallace, at the same time, gives his students injunction against using SBE in their essays: the black students have to obey—master—SWE in Wallace's English class (108).

And if the students want to argue in their essays, for instance, that forcing them to write in SWE when they are fluent in SBE is "racist" and "unfair," they still have to construct these arguments in pristine SWE for their prescriptive professors—prescipritivists in general—to pay attention to them (109). James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., and other successful African-Americans, know this, Wallace points out, and that is why their speeches and prose are in perfervid SWE (109).

The lessons about why it is essential to learn SWE, though, are difficult to convey to his Black students because it is bluntly "elitist" (107). Wallace writes:

> The real truth, of course, is that SWE is the dialect of the America elite. That it was invented, codified, and promulgated by Privileged WASP Males and is perpetuated as "Standard" by same. That it is the shibboleth of the Establishment, and that it is an instrument of political power and class division and racial discrimination and all manner of social inequity (107).

These issues are touchy to bring up in the English class because the one who is lecturing them—passing injunctions—about SWE, is Wallace; and Wallace is, precisely, "a Privileged Wasp Male" and an emblem of the "Establishment," which facts Wallace is inordinately conscious of (107). In his lecture, Wallace tells his black students that white people are developers of SWE, and they—the powerful white people in powerful offices—use SWE now, and, therefore, the dialect might as well be called, "Standard White English" (108-9). Wallace tells his black students that he is giving them the "straight truth" because he respects them; he tells them that if they want to succeed in American culture, they have to learn to use SWE (108-9).

By making the above unfiltered pro-SWE arguments to his black students, Wallace distances himself from what he refers to as the "dogmatic snoots": the type of prescriptivist professors who fail to, or does not feel the need to, give arguments about why students must choose SWE over SBE (or other dialects) whilst writing (107n. 60).

The dogmatic snoots consider SWE to be the only dialect in English; and, for them, any student failing to acknowledge this fact is ignorant and character-wise deficient (105). This is tantamount to a preacher delivering sermons, says Wallace, and for a teacher to hold such a preachy attitude is toxic: the teacher has to put in the hard rhetorical yards to make the audience (students) agree on the usefulness of learning SWE, and not presume this to be self-evident (105-6). And when the traditional prescriptivists—the dogmatic snoots—skip this step, take SWE's superiority to be intrinsic and self-explanatory, take themselves to be no less than prophets of this dialect (107), you see "eilitism" being practiced, feels Wallace (107n. 60).

Wallace indicates—attempts to display—that he does not practice elitism in his English class; to his black students, he makes his pro-SWE arguments comprising elitism, explicitly and overtly and loudly; he tells them why SWE, despite teeming elitism, is a desirable dialect to learn the conventions of: Wallace strives to portray himself in the usage essay, therefore, as belonging to the snoot-but-not-dogmatic-snoot category (107n. 60).

But when he is among peers, Wallace crosses into the descriptivist camp. Wallace has two native-English dialects: the SWE of his parents and his peers' Rural Midwestern (RM) (99). With his peers, Wallace uses the nonstandard English; he uses: "He don't" instead of "He doesn't," and "Where's it at?" for "Where is it?" (99). He uses these constructions because he does not wish to be a pariah among his peers; and also because he considers these "RMisms" to be better than their SWE equivalents, despite being a snoot (99).

Wallace reckons that some of the traditional prescriptivist rules are "stupid," and those who endorse them are "contemptible and dangerous" type of snoots (100). The traditional prescriptivists, for instance, give injunction against splitting infinitives (100). This stupidity of the prescriptivists, Wallace points out, is born out of a misreading of Latin—the language from which English borrows heavily (100). Since infinitives are only one word in Latin, you cannot split them; the earliest prescriptivists of English, in their enthusiasm to copy the Latin language, overlook this technical aspect, and decide against splitting English infinitives too (100). And the legacy of stupidity lives on through traditional

prescriptivists—the contemptible and dangerous snoots. Again, Wallace attempts to portray himself as someone who does not belong to the dangerous-snoot category; again, Wallace is striving to advertise himself as the owner of opinions that are not one-dimensional.

In the usage essay, Wallace displays a persona not unlike Anton Chekhov in "Gooseberries." Though Chekhov and Wallace write on disparate subjects, though "Gooseberries" is a short story and Wallace's text an essay, the structure of their arguments appears kindred; namely, both the structures sidestep one-dimensionality.

"GOOSEBERRIES"

In "Gooseberries," two friends, Ivan and Burkin, are out hunting on the plains of Russia, when Burkin reminds Ivan that Ivan is supposed to tell him a story (Chekhov 371). It starts to rain the moment Ivan is about to begin the narration (371). For shelter, they go to the farm of their friend, Alyohin; there the three swim in the river; of the three, Ivan appears to have the most fun swimming: he dives, floats, says repeatedly joyously, "By God! Lord, have mercy on me"; he savors the rain drops falling on his face, and is last to leave the water, and that too only when Burkin shouts at him to get out (374). Back in the warmth of the drawing room, Ivan, finally, begins narrating the story about his brother, Nikolay.

Hankering to own a property (with a gooseberry patch) in the countryside, Nikolay lives frugally; he marries a widow for her money and due to his frugality, she dies; after her death, he purchases a plot in the countryside. When Ivan visits Nikolay on his new estate, he sees a man in a fervent state of happiness. On the day of Ivan's visit, the gooseberry bushes bear fruit for the first time; Nikolay looks at the plateful of berries, silently, for a minute with teary eyes (380). Then he pops a berry into his mouth, and glances at Ivan with an expression analogous to a kid who finally gets the toy he has been nagging for everyday (380). Nikolay eats the berries rapaciously, and says repeatedly: "How tasty! Ah, how delicious" (380)! The sight of his happy brother sickens Ivan. About his aversion to happiness, to happy people, Ivan gives a speech to his friends:

> Behind the door of every contented, happy man there ought to be someone standing with a little hammer and continually reminding him with a knock that there are unhappy people, that however happy he may be, life will sooner or later show him its claws, and trouble will come to him—illness, poverty, losses, and then no one will see or hear him, just as now he neither sees nor hears others (381).

But the man with the "little hammer" does not exist, complaints Ivan; and the happy man—the man with few innocuous worries and much tranquility on his side—eats gooseberries (even sour and unripe ones like Nikolay) with relish, without a care for the unhappy lot (381).

The happy man is able to live happily because the unhappy man lets him; because the unhappy man chooses to carry his load, silently; because statistics, and not the unhappy man, wail, protest: so many children are dead due to malnutrition this year; so many people have been institutionalized this year; so many people have been poisoned to death due to consumption of spurious liquor this year (381). (The numbers on the page as though scream out, like the figure in Edvard Munch's *Scream*, with hands on its ears, enacting the angst, venting the pent-up unhappiness.) Ivan implores Burkin to work for the benefit of others, the unhappy mute people. Ivan says:

> There is no happiness and there should be none, and if life has a meaning and a purpose, that meaning and purpose is not our happiness but something greater and more rational. Do good (382)!

After his speech on "happiness," all three retire for the night. Ivan dozes off the moment he hits the bed, forgetting to throw away the stinky burnt tobacco of his pipe that he keeps on the table; Burkin is unable to sleep though; he tries to figure out the source of the odious smell (384).

In *A Swim in a Pond in the Rain*, Saunders discuses seven Russian nineteenth-century short stories; and "Gooseberries" is one of them. Apart from

Chekhov, the book features stories by Leo Tolstoy, Ivan Turgenev, and Nikolai Gogol. Though the stories might come across as not being concerned with protestations of any sort, as not being politically hued at all, as just being everyday domestic situations, Saunders refers to them as “resistance literature” (Saunders, *Swim* Introduction).

These are obliquely political stories, which are written by reformers in the climate of censorship, written keeping in mind that the slants and accents of their words might put them behind bars, or banish them from the country, or line them up in front of the firing brigade. These stories’ inexplicit resistance, reckons Saunders, not only comes from the “radical idea” of considering every person to be worth paying attention to; but also comes from the equally radical idea that by observing a single person, you are able to find “the origins of every good and evil capability of the universe” (*Swim* Introduction).

These Russian stories, says Saunders in his introduction to the book, are preoccupied with difficult questions such as: How to live here? What do you have to achieve here? What do you have to value? What does truth mean? How can you recognize truth? How do you stay joyful despite knowing that the people you love are inevitably going to die? How can you live peacefully knowing that some people have more than is sufficient and others have barely anything? And also Ivan’s tacit question in the aforementioned speech on happiness in “Gooseberries”: Since you know that there are unhappy people in the world, how can you be satisfied with your lot and yourself, how can you be happy?

Ivan feels an immense sadness at the sight of his brother, Nikolay, reveling in eating the gooseberries that have grown in his farm; the plateful of gooseberries doesn’t let Nikolay sleep; he keeps taking trips to the plate, over and over, throughout the night, to eat one more berry, one more berry, one more berry (Chekhov 380). And one more berry. What Ivan does not tell his brother, he tells his friends: the happy man must have in his room someone who can keep hitting him with a hammer, to remind the happy man of the existence of unhappy people; and also that no matter how happy he may be now, life’s vicissitudes are soon going to knock on his door (381). Ivan’s final declaration to his friends, Burkin and Alyohin, is: “There is no happiness and there should be none…” (382).

Burkin and Alyohin find Ivan's story about his gooseberry-obsessed brother (and the accompanying speech on happiness) to be dull: Burkin and Alyohin, sitting in the warm drawing room, drinking tea and having jam, hanker for a more elegantly laced story about people and women, stories about the animate-looking ancestors staring down at them from the gilded frames (383). To Saunders, it is obvious why Burkin and Alyohin do not find the story interesting; it is because these two exemplify the kind of people that Ivan is talking about: the well-fed, the immaculately washed, the happy bourgeois who do not like their pleasure-seeking to be interrupted, who are chronically deaf to despairing, mood-altering narratives (*Swim* ch. 6).

As a reader (unlike Burkin and Alyohin), you might support Ivan's thoughts on happiness at first, and travel with the moralist as if in his bike's sidecar, nodding in agreement with his arguments. But you are bound to reconsider your position vis-à-vis Ivan, the impressions that you form about him, after the second last paragraph of "Gooseberries," Saunders points out (ch. 6). The mind-turning paragraph tells you that Burkin is unable to sleep because Ivan—holder of the view that the happy man must be hammered continually to remind him about the unhappy people, and that there is no such thing as happiness, and that life's objective is not happiness but serving others—because, the anti-happiness evangelist, Ivan's unclean pipe gives off a stink. Ivan is oblivious. Ivan smokes, derives pleasure, and forgets to clean the pipe before going to sleep, forgets about his lecture on doing good, being thoughtful of others.

Does Ivan's careless gesture (with the pipe) subtract from the truth of his lecture? Is it still true? Suddenly, you are not so sure about Ivan; Ivan indulges in pleasure, happiness, but advises against happiness. Therefore, the question is: to indulge in happiness or not? Saunders turns the page back to the episode of swimming in a river in the rain to attempt to answer this question.

Ivan comes out of the bathing-cabin and throws himself into the river; the wild strokes of his arms on water create waves and disturb the lilies afloat; he swims to the mid-point of the river and plunges with an aim to touch bottom; he does this repeatedly; he plunges and touches bottom; Ivan even swims across to casually talk with the peasants; and then he dives back in and floats on water so

that the rain caresses his face (Chekhov 373-4). Only when Burkin shouts—"You've had enough!"—only then does Ivan emerge from the water (374).

Is Ivan for or against happiness? Saunders reckons that despite his anti-happiness lecture later in the story, Ivan still yearns for happiness; in fact, Ivan appears to yearn for it way more than Burkin and Alyohin in the swimming-in-a-river-in-the-rain situation (*Swim* ch. 6). Does this reading of a euphoric Ivan prove that he is for happiness? Does this mean the previous reading, of Ivan being against happiness, now stands cancelled? Saunders provides the answer:

> No. The two readings coexist, making a truth bigger than either would have alone. The story just got enlarged. It is, yes, still about the decadence of happiness, but it's also now about how trivial it is to hold a one-dimensional opinion. Or how impossible it is (ch. 6).

Ivan despises happiness; when he looks at a joyful man, an element of feverish despair grips him; but he, simultaneously, finds happiness to be indispensable in the river. Ivan sidesteps one-dimensionality, in other words; the stinky pipe in the second-last paragraph changes your understanding of him, makes Ivan ambiguous. If the speech on happiness sounds, on first instance, to be an angry protest on behalf of the mute, the downtrodden—"Look at life: the insolence and idleness of the strong" (Chekhov 381)—it now sounds merely like an ill-tempered outburst (*Swim* ch. 6). Ivan is not fond of the bourgeois (the strong) and their ways of living, but he is not fond of the oppressed (the weak) too (ch. 6): "The ignorance and the brutishness of the weak" (Chekhov 381).

Chekhov's story, obviously, proceeds through a method of self-contradiction: a paragraph or two highlights certain aspects of a concept (for example, happiness), while another paragraph counters these aspects. Chekhov's story, states Saunders, does not teach you "what to think" about the concept of happiness; rather it facilitates in thinking about the concept; the structure helps you to think (*Swim* ch. 6). And how does Chekhov's story's structure think?

The structure thinks, says Saunders, in terms of '"on the other hand"' declarations: Ivan loathes happiness, happy people; on the other hand, he is

rapturous while swimming in a river in the rain; Ivan's gestures in the water are self-centered; on the other hand, Burkin's constant tendencies to rein in Ivan ("You've had enough!") are also irritating; Alyohin is living a frugal life in his farm; on the other hand, Alyohin blackens the water due to his excessive neglect of personal hygiene; it may be petty to spend a disproportionate amount of time obsessing over owning a gooseberry-filled farm like Nikolay; on the other hand, Nikolay is at least passionate about something, even if it is a fruit of a particular type; on the other, other hand Alyohin is not responsible for someone's death (like Nikolay is) for practicing frugality (ch. 6).

The structure of Wallace's usage essay, similarly, thinks in terms of a series of "on the other hand" statements. Wallace creates a persona in the essay who keeps qualifying himself, and, thus, strives to sidestep one-dimensionality: Wallace declares himself to be a prescriptivist—a snoot (*Consider* 71n. 8); on the other hand, he is not a dogmatic snoot (the kind who finds no need to explain to the students about why SWE is a desirable dialect to master) (106); Wallace criticizes the descriptivists for thinking of themselves as "scientists," for thinking they are observing "scientific phenomena" of the way people use language, when what they are merely observing are "moronic" behaviors of human beings and tabulating it (89); on the other hand, he finds a number of traditional prescriptive rules to be "stupid," like splitting infinitives, and those endorsing it to be "contemptible and dangerous " type of snoots (100); Wallace lashes out at Gove's proclamations of language changing constantly and change being quite a normal thing (83); on the other hand, he acknowledges that conventions of usage and English itself change from time to time, and if it didn't, you'd all still be communicating like Chaucer (75); Wallace sort of laments that students are being taught to write descriptively in school, to write abandoning "systematic grammar, usage, semantics, rhetoric, etymology" (81); on the other hand, he is not an admirer of the prescriptive columnists or pop snoots (who grumble about English language blunderers) (79); Wallace finds certain dismissals of SBE, facile and disturbing, like Simon's comments in *Paradigms Lost* (80-1); on the other hand, he gives injunction to his students of color that they cannot use their native dialect—SBE—in their essays (108); on the other, other hand Wallace uses nonstandard English of Rural Midwestern with his peers, not just to be accepted in the group,

but also because he finds some of the "RMisms" to be superior than their SWE equivalents (99).

In the above list of contradictory "on the other hand" statements, does a latter reading (Wallace actually, sometimes, has descriptivist inclinations) override the earlier one at the beginning of Wallace's essay (Wallace is a prescriptivist, a snoot)? The answer, following Saunders, is no. Both the "readings coexist, making a truth bigger than either would have alone"; the essay's canvas just gets bigger (*Swim* ch. 6). The essay is, of course, still about a language fanatic (a snoot, a prescriptivist), but it's also now about how petty it is to have a one-dimensional attitude/opinion. Or how it is not possible to be one-dimensional.

Wallace declares in the usage essay that it is always tempting to slide into the "established dogmatic camp," and to let your stance solidify around the stance of the camp and "become inflexible," and to start thinking of the other camp as devilish or mad, and to begin expending disproportionate amount of energy/time trying to out-shout them (*Consider* 72). Wallace submits that it is way easier to be on the side of the dogmatic than the democratic camp (72). By making his arguments on usage through the structure of "on the other hand" statements—which structural play might not be noticeable on first read because Wallace does not lay out the above self-contradictory parts, explicitly, one after the other—Wallace presents a flexible persona; a persona that makes you reconsider, again and again, your previous judgment of him.

"Gooseberries," likewise, is structured with the aid of self-contradictory "on the other hand" declarations, reckons Saunders, because it wants you to refrain from reading on automatic pilot, and to stay attentive to the idea that the concept of happiness is not treated simplistically, and that the concept does not harden at any point and develop falsity (*Swim* ch. 6). Chekhov's story, therefore, keeps clarifying the concept, and, in the process, keeps defeating your attempts, over and over, to "judge" it (ch. 6). You want to decide, once and for all, whether the story is "for" or "against" the concept of happiness, so that you too can be for or against it; but the story thwarts your instinctive move of gaining a firm foothold; the story desires to defer judgment, endlessly (ch. 6). Saunders writes:

> It's hard to be alive. The anxiety of living makes us want to judge, be sure, have a stance, definitively decide. Having a fixed, rigid system of belief can be a great relief (ch. 6).

You can decide not to swim in the rain in the river, or not to swim at all and to sell off your swimming trunks/suits; you can choose to shrug your shoulders and look away in the presence of beauty; you can aim to live as a fervent advocate of "anti-happiness," and drive away the constant uncertainty (ch. 6).

Or you can, on the contrary, live as a fervent advocate of "pro-happiness," deciding that every step of yours must be in the service of some form of enjoyment, celebration, unabashed merrymaking, and, thus, extricate yourself from the constant confusion (ch. 6).

Every viewpoint, for Saunders, is problematic; if you fanatically believe in it, the point of view turns erroneous (ch. 6). Saunders is not trying to dissuade you from taking a stance regarding something; rather he is trying to convey that no stance is tenable—"correct"—for too long (ch. 6). Saunders writes:

> We're perpetually slipping out of absolute virtue and failing to notice, blinded by our desire to *settle in*—to finally stop fretting about things and relax forever and just be correct; to find an agenda and stick with it (ch. 6).

Saunders tells you that he likes reading Chekhov because the author appears to be totally sans "agenda"; the Russian author is curious about everything, but he is not zealously attached to any belief system (ch. 6). In Wallace's essay, to begin with, you find a persona zealously attached to a particular belief system of English usage; he is a prescriptivist, a snoot, Wallace openly declares; but then he turns a traitor.

PART II

AGRAMMATICALITY (THE LIMIT OF LANGUAGE)

In his "Authority and American Usage," referred to here throughout as his usage essay, Wallace, in a private conference, gives an injunction to his black students about not using SBE in their essays: the double negatives, for example, are not OK as per the grammatical rules of SWE; the nonuse of subordinate clauses in early parts of sentences, or using the subordinates in early parts of sentences but without a comma to set it off, are also unaccepted in SWE (*Consider* 108). The black students, in other words, are not to disturb the equilibrium—the homogenous system, the constant terms and relations—of SWE.

On the other hand, though, Wallace himself puts the homogenous system of SWE in disequilibrium to achieve certain stylistic effects in some of his works. In his masterpiece, *Infinite Jest*, in one of the passages, for instance, Wallace does not complete a couple of subordinate clauses, even as he opens newer ones:

> The low-pH Daddy's enormous stress had apparently erupted, right there at the table, with his grown daughter's white meat between his tines, in the confession that he'd been secretly, silently in love with Madame Psychosis from way, way back; that the love had been the real thing, pure, unspoken, genuflectory, timeless, impossible; that he never touched her, wouldn't, nor ogle, less out of a horror of being the sort of mid-south father who touched and ogled than out of the purity of his doomed love for the little girl he'd escorted to the movies as proudly as any beau, daily; that the repression and disguisability of his pure love hadn't been all that hard when Madame Psychosis had been juvenile and sexless, but that at the onset of puberty and nubility the pressure'd become so great that he could compensate only by regressing the child mentally to an age of incontinence and pre-mashed meat, and that his awareness of how creepy his denial of her maturation must have seemed—even though

> neither the daughter nor mother, even now wordlessly chewing candied yam, had remarked on it, the denial and creepiness, although the man's beloved pointers were given to whimper and scratch at the door when the denial had gotten especially creepy (animals being way more sensitive than humans to emotional anamolies, in Molly Notkin's experience)—had raised his internal limbic system's pressure to near intolerable foot-kilo levels, and that he'd been hanging on for dear life for the past nigh on now a decade, but that now that he'd to actually stand witness to the removal of Pooky and Urgle-Bear et al. from her ballerina-wallpapered room to make space for a nonrelated mature male whose physical vigor through the peephole the Daddy'd exerted every gram of trembling will he'd possessed trying not to drill the hole in the bathroom wall just above the mirror over the sink whose pipes made the wall behind the headboard of Madame Psychosis's bed sing and clunk, and through which, late at night—claiming to Mother a case of skitters from all the holiday nibbles—hunched atop the sink, every night since Madame Psychosis and the Auteur's son had first arrived to sleep together in the unstuffed-animal bed of a childhood through which he'd been all but tortured by the purity of his impossible love for the (794)—

In the passage above, the operatives of the United States Office of Unspecified Services (U.S.O.U.S.) are interviewing Molly Notkin. Notkin recounts Madam Psychosis's father's confession of being in love with his own daughter, and how this event eventually leads to Psychosis's face's disfiguration. In his essay, "They All Sound Like David Foster Wallace," Simon de Bourcier refers to the above passage from *Infinite Jest* to highlight certain typicality of the Wallace sentence—which typicality Bourcier is able to pluck out by following Steven Poole's review of Wallace's collection of short stories, *Oblivion*, in *The Guardian*. In the review, he declares that all the narrators in *Oblivion* "sound like David Foster Wallace"; and

that all of them articulate in “huge, looping sentences, nests of parentheses and involutions” (Poole).

Using Poole’s analysis of Wallace’s prose as a template, Bourcier finds the above 392-word sentence from *Infinite Jest* to be “huge”; and also to contain nested parentheses in the form of five em-dashes and the words—“animals being way more sensitive than humans to emotional anomalies, in Molly Notkin’s experience”—in round brackets (Bourcier 6). Notkin, as mentioned above, is the speaker of the above sentence; she is a PhD from M.I.T. and speaks in a convoluted way, with proliferating relative and subordinate clauses, and zig-zagging parenthetic thoughts which are not always easy to follow—she speaks in “academese” in other words. In *Garner’s Modern English Usage*, Garner defines academese as: “The style typical of scholarly writing; esp., a mode of discourse that typifies the least appealing qualities of academic writing, namely, obscurity, pedantry, and pomposity” (*Garner’s* Glossary). In his essay on usage, Wallace terms academese to be “verbal cancer” (*Consider* 114).

Bourcier tells you that the incompleteness of the syntax in the passage above—the sentence finishing off with a dash—is indicative of Madam Psychosis’s father’s wife interjecting the father’s incestuous confession (Bourcier 6). Even before the wife interjects, though, the father does not complete a couple of his subordinate clauses because, according to Bourcier, the father is in a “psychological bind”: he is torn “between his incestuous desire and his need to deny it” (6). He also does not complete the clause because, despite his earlier claims in the passage above about not ogling his daughter, completing it is going to mean that he is in fact been doing so; that through the hole, above the bathroom mirror, he has been seeing his daughter and her boyfriend having sex (7). But the father is in a bind; he desires to express his incestuous feelings and, simultaneously, to refrain from it; and, thus, instead of the subordinate clauses—“whose physical vigor” and “through which, late at night”—getting to their verbs, the sentence changes the direction of its movement.

Bourcier provides the missing verb for the subordinate clause, “whose physical vigor”; he presumes it might be either “he had observed” or “he had envied” (7). You might provide the missing verb for the other incomplete

subordinate clause in the sentence, “through which, late at night”; you presume the verbs to be similar in tone to Bourcier’s: “he peeked at them” or “he sneaked a look at them” or “he witnessed them.”

In the section, from which the above long passage is taken, Notkin mentions to her interrogators that the myth about the purported existence of a lethal entertainment cartridge—*Infinite Jest*—illustrates French philosopher Gilles Deleuze’s philosophy of “commodity as the escape-from-anxieties-of-mortality-which-escape-is-itself-psychologically-fatal” (792). Notkin claims that this theory is clearly explicated in Deleuze’s posthumous work, “*Incest and the Life of Death in Capitalist Entertainment*” (792). Deleuze has not written a book by this name; but the mention of the French philosopher might be an indication to read the Notkin-section through him; to especially read the above long passage of *Infinite Jest*—the incomplete subordinate clauses, the syntactical anomaly—through Deleuze’s theory of language and style in his final collection, *Essays Critical and Clinical*.

In one of his essays on Herman Melville, Deleuze looks at a line from the first stanza of E. E. Cummings’s Poem 29 to define grammatical anomaly, or “agrammaticality” (*Essays* 68). Below is the first stanza of the American poet:

> anyone lived in a pretty how town
> (with up so floating many bells down)
> spring summer autumn winter
> he sang his didn’t he danced his did (Cummings 515).

To write “he danced his did” in English is equivalent to saying in French that “he danced his began” instead of “he began to dance,” Deleuze points out (*Essays* 68-69). Following the linguist Nicolas Ruwet, Deleuze tells you that “a series of ordinary grammatical variables” have “an agrammatical formula as their limit”; for example, Cummings’s words, “he danced his did,” is the agrammatical limit of the grammatically correct expressions: “he did his dance, he danced his dance, he danced what he did” (69).

Reading Cummings's Poem 29 in his book *Deleuze and Language*, Jean-Jacques Lecercle enumerates more agrammaticalities. Line 1 of the poem, states Lecercle, contains a wrongly placed adverb ("a pretty how town"); instead you can place an adjective there; this aspect compels you to take note that the word, "pretty," has two possible values, grammatically: the value of adverb ("this town is pretty large"); and the value of adjective ("this large town is pretty") (141). Both these values are "virtually present" in line 1 of the poem, says Lecercle (141). In line 4 of the first stanza ("he sang his didn't he danced his did"), the line Deleuze also comments on, you can remove the ill-placed auxiliaries ("didn't" and "did") from the positions of noun, and place, well, nouns, to turn it into a syntactically correct sentence: "He sang his song and did his dance" "He didn't sing his song, but he did his dance" "He sang about what he didn't do, he danced about what he did" (142). Again, these are the series of correct expressions of the agrammatical limit: "he sang his didn't he danced his did."

In the same vein, in the abovementioned long passage of *Infinite Jest*, by breaking off the syntax, Wallace provides the agrammatical limit: "whose physical vigor through the peephole" (*Infinite* 794)… Instead of the verb, an adverb is positioned ("through"). When Bourcier, in 'They All Sound Like David Foster Wallace,' provides the missing verbs ("he had observed" "he had envied"), he is making a series of correct expressions of the agrammatical limit (Bourcier 7): "whose physical vigor through the peephole…" Just as another agrammatical construction in Wallace's sentence—"through which, late at night—claiming to Mother a case of skitters from all the holiday nibbles—hunched atop the sink, every night…"—the agrammatical construction (with the missing verb) stands as the limit of a list of correct expressions—"through which, late at night, he peeked at them" "through which, late at night, he cursed at them silently" "through which, late at night, he eavesdropped on them," etc. Wallace's sentence comes to an abrupt end; it ends without a period, with an em-dash.

Wallace, in other words, provides a fragmentary sentence, one of the many mad sentences in *Infinite Jest*. Deleuze reminds you in an essay that the poet, Walt Whitman, thinks that American writers have to dedicate themselves to

fragmentary writing, which is precisely what Wallace does in *Infinite Jest* (*Essays* 56).

Writing in fragments is innate to the Americans, writes Deleuze, while to the Europeans what comes naturally is organic composition; if the Europeans are to write in fragments, they have to reflect on a tragedy or undergo a disaster; but if the Americans have to write in fragments they can do so non-reflectively, without expending any effort (56). The Americans plan, but when the time comes to execute it, they "tumble the thing together, letting hurry and crudeness tell the story better than fine work" (56). The Americans write in fragments, spontaneously; their literature is in a state of convulsion, naturally: their writings are "parts of the actual distraction, heat, smoke, and excitement of those times" (56).

Wallace's sentences—the whole of *Infinite Jest*—are not beautifully, nor organically, composed: as you enter his sentences, you often lose your path and thus have to retrace it; as you accompany the sprouting em-dashes and parentheses and prolongations and digressions and ruptures and bifurcations and leaps of associations, you often forget where you are at in the narrative. Many of Wallace's sentences in *Infinite Jest* appear to be collections of patchwork; their beauty—their charm—lies in their apparent crudeness: the syntactical madness, the syntactical convulsion, take apart what Wallace refers to in his usage essay as the Standard Written English (SWE), the major language of America, the language used by hyper-educated Wasp (*Consider* 107-8).

This is literature's effect on language; on the site of literature, language is dismantled. Deleuze, following Marcel Proust, tirelessly declares in many of his works, but especially *Essays Critical and Clinical*, that masterpieces—great literature—are created through torturing—contorting, deforming—the syntax; through placing the grammar in disequilibrium. Through creation of syntax, the writer pioneers "a new language within language"; for the new language to be born, the initial language is sort of forcefully yanked outside of its confinement: the standard rules (*Essays* V). Deleuze writes:

> As Proust says, it [literature] opens up a kind of foreign language within language, which is neither another language nor a rediscovered patois, but a becoming-other of language, a minorization of this major language, a delirium that carries it off, a witch's line that escapes the dominant system… Syntactic creation or style—this is the becoming of language (5).

The incomplete subordinate clauses in his sentence exemplify Wallace's syntactical creations. To invent this syntax, Wallace does not collate two different major languages in his sentence; does not even collate a minor language (for example, SBE) with a major one (SWE); rather, he makes a minor use of the major language; sculpts "a foreign language *within* his own language"; effects a becoming-other of language through agrammaticality (110).

Deleuze and Felix Guattari tell you in *A Thousand Plateaus* that it is clear to everyone that language, in its essence, is a "heterogeneous, variable reality"; which is why the French philosophers criticize the scientific endeavor of linguists to create a structure defined by homogeneity, standardization; by invariables and constants—phonological, syntactical, and semantic constants; or, to put it differently, defined by the "power (*pouvoir*) of constants" (*Thousand* 118).

The scientific model of studying language—of abstracting constants from variables—is entwined with the political model; because in the political model, too, "language is homogenized, centralized, standardized, becoming a language of power, a major or dominant language" (117). The prerequisite for submitting to the laws of the society, for declaring yourself as a sane person, is to write grammatically correct sentence; someone committing solecisms is fit as though for the mental health institution, Deleuze and Guattari state sardonically (117-118).

Your mother tongue does not have hold over you as much as the dominant or the major language, Deleuze and Guattari point out; and the dominant language's assumption of control proceeds sometimes along a localized and sometimes massive area; sometimes at various centers simultaneously;

sometimes conceivably and sometimes inconceivably: the dominant language, SWE for example, finds various ways to percolate—infiltrate—and to homogenize, centralize (118).

The scientific model of abstracting constants and maintaining constant terms and relations always allies with the political model of foisting these constants—the standards—on speakers (118). As mentioned above, in his usage essay, Wallace, too, tells his black students, about the politics of the major language—SWE. Wallace gives injunction to his black students that they cannot write in SBE in the essays; and that in his English class the black students must master the rules of SWE; and that, instead of SWE standing for "Standard Written English," it might just as well stand for "Standard White English," because white people are not only the developers of the language but they also use it, especially educated and influential white people in America (*Consider* 108-109). In other words, Wallace orders the black students to "write white," which is a sort of riff on the Canadian poet Michele Lalonde's "Speak White"—a poem that Deleuze and Guattari quote in *A Thousand Plateaus* to emphasize the political ramifications of SWE:

> Speak white and loud
> yes what a wonderful language
> for hiring
> giving orders
> appointing the hour of death in the works
> and of the break that refreshes (*Thousand* 118)…

If one kind of language is termed a major language—a language which has a mighty hold on your tongue, and which is used with cunning to move you about, and which is defined by power (*pouvoir*) of constants; the second kind of language is termed a "minor" language; it is defined by the power (*puissance*) of continuous variation; the minor language puts the major language—the standard, the constants—into variation (118).

A minor language, therefore, does not exist independently of a major language; they exist only in relation to a major language (122). A writer's strength working in the realm of major language lies in carving a minor language—turning his own major language into a minor one. The writers who are able to do this are anointed "minor" and the "only greats" by Deleuze and Guattari (122). These writers are bi- or multilingual in their own language; they set out to conquer their own language, in the hope of finding previously unseen or unknown minor languages (122). When writers invent a minor language, they begin to write as a foreigner or a minor in their own language (122). This foreign language does not mean a different language, not even a marginalized one, but a becoming-minor, becoming-other of the major language itself through syntactic creation.

Like Wallace, Saunders decomposes—minorizes—the major language. In his short story, 'Elliott Spencer,' Saunders contorts the syntax of 89/Greg/Elliott, places the grammar in disequilibrium (agrammaticality), which is the limit of language.

In 'Elliott Spencer,' 89 is a kind of a guinea pig for a company, which picks up vagrants living under bridges, and "scrapes" their memory and language, and re-teaches language and syntax, and gives them jobs of what they (the vagrants) believe to be protesting for the weak—protesting by bellowing company-tutored words (bastard, turd, creep, idiot) at the oppressors (*Liberation* ch. 8). The geriatric 89 has limited vocabulary; he does not know the meaning of the words he needs to bellow; his language tutor, Jer, defines the words, which, 89 figures, have all the same meaning: "individual standing across from us" (ch. 8).

In the morning 89 gets syntax training by Jer; and at night, by a tape; but 89's first-person narration indicates that he is far from fluent and stumbles, syntactically, frequently: "And at night all night as every night a tape playing in here helps improve me our Syntax" (ch. 8). This is an agrammatical construction that gives you the limit of correct grammatical expressions: "And every night a tape plays in my room to help improve my syntax," "And, to help improve my syntax, a tape plays all night long," "And at night—the whole night—a tape on language plays to improve our syntax," and so on.

Saunders shows 89's syntactic stumbles, his difficulty in finding his way around language, through various quirky means: 89's thoughts are sometimes presented in fragments ("Today is to be Parts of the Parts of my"); sometimes a sentence is fractured ("Job One turns out per Jer is"); often a full-stop is absent, and yet the next word is in capital ("I will stand for freedom For poor and sick Will defend weak From oppressors") (ch. 8). What also shows 89's stumble through syntax are the blank spaces that frequently occupy between fragmentary, fractured, syntactically contorted sentences; the blank spaces also sever the adverbs ending in *–ly*: "sad ly" "quick ly" "soft ly" "low ly" (ch. 8). The blank spaces—which are shown by employing three or more spaces between words or letters instead of just one—attempts to communicate "tentativeness" of 89, whose memory and language have been expunged, states Saunders concerning 'Elliott Spencer' in an interview with Deborah Treisman in the *New Yorker* (*Bafflement*).

Saunders uses some of the above techniques—styles—in his 2017 Man-Booker-prize-winning novel, *Lincoln in the Bardo*. Two wraiths in the bardo, Benjamin Twood and Jasper Randall, are said to be indulging in an endless conversation; they are both unable to express themselves. While in the above instances of agrammaticality, you are able to provide a series of correct expressions, i.e. alternative sentences in formal syntax that keeps the language in equilibrium; the conversations between Twood and Randall, though, is a touch difficult to correct. Following is an example of Twood's inarticulateness: "Drag out the big signage Immediately put it away again Drag it out again Not let slip from grasp Significantly reduced women's" (*Lincoln* 132). And here is Randall's gibberish: "Yield the seat Here's a fellow who can really Tinkle the twinklers And the blokeat the piano would proffer his Then it was all me" (132).

Willie Lincoln's words in *Lincoln in the Bardo* also come punctuated with blank spaces—blank spaces between words and letters—like Saunders's 89; Willie's blank-spaced broken-up sentences throughout the novel give you syntax in the process of becoming: a carving of a new language within language. Willie reports to you in first person with the aid of blank spaces:

Could Walk Could skim Could even walk-skim
A little walk-skim was bully by me Something was lying untoward below us, in a box inside that little house
Untoward ly (34).

Similarly, in *Infinite Jest*, a first-person narration by "yrstruly" swarms with agrammaticality, syntactic contortions, misspellings, repeated punctuation errors, and whatnot; the language in the yrstruly-section appears to be trembling for the entire eight pages; the agrammatical limit is drawn over and over. Below is an example:

> Poor Tony seems white and detracted on the train playing with his feather snake and says he says he seems in his mind maybe to recall an involvment in some type deal where Dr. Wo might of got slightly got over on and burnt and that maybe down in Chinatown we could air on the side of low profiles and try to cop some where else except from the Wos' (*Infinite* 131).

In the yrstruly-section, a single letter often falls off a word, an act of subtraction, of making the major language fall apart: "diffrent" "dyng" "aile" "Squar" "materil" "pouning" (129); the author also binds two or sometimes three hyphen-less words, decomposing the major language again, in other words: "yrstruly" "brightred" "kindof" "outof" "allofa" "goodold" "outwego" "happenbychance" "downhegoes" "hereonout" (132-135). Saunders also conjoins four words without hyphens in 'Elliott Spencer': "*BastardTurdCreepIdiot*" (*Liberation* ch. 8)! And in *Lincoln in Bardo*, he conjoins two hyphen-less words ("firesound"); and sometimes three ("matterlightblooming" "blankblankblank") (96, 281).

Blank spaces also make appearances in the "yrstruly" section of *Infinite Jest*; words are split into two: "de parts" "some how" "any thing" "some where" "some body" "out side" (*Infinite* 130-132). Wallace's blank spaces, though, are not as eye-catching as the blank spaces of Saunders, because Saunders puts three or four spaces between words and letters and Wallace puts only one between

letters. But both the authors' blank spaces—which are being considered here as sort of a syntactic marker—serve the same purpose of drawing up the limit of language.

Another syntactic marker, the apostrophe, erroneously and profusely used in the yrstruly-section, provides series of the limit of language. Not once does the narrator, yrstruly, use the apostrophe correctly; errors in contractions are especially in abundance: "dont'" "its'" "cant'" "hes'" "your'" "theres'" "were'" "hasnt'" "thats'" "isnt'" "weve'" "wed'" didnt'" "doesnt'" (129-133). Wallace's incorrect apostrophe-sentences are analogous to suspended exclamatory-sentences in Louis-Ferdinand Celine's *Guignol's Band*, which sentences, Deleuze states, produce "explosive visions and sonorities" (*Essays* 5). The repeatedly misplaced apostrophes as the limit of language, like the repeated use of exclamations in *Guignol's Band*, make the words dance (112).

STUTTERING (A TENSION IN LANGUAGE)

Apart from making minor use of language through agrammaticality (the limit of language), Wallace also minorizes the major language through "stuttering" (a tension in language) in *Infinite Jest*: It is not merely the character that stutters in the novel, but the language also stutters, or the author makes the language stutter.

In his essay, "He Stuttered," Deleuze begins by writing about how mediocre novelists attempt to embellish the dialogic attribution (he said/she said); they use expressions such as, "he murmured," "he stammered," "he sobbed," "he giggled," "he cried," "he stuttered"—these dialogic markers indicate the different voice modulations of characters' speeches; these markers "tell" you that a character is murmuring, stammering, stuttering, and so on (*Essays* 107).

Deleuze, however, is not interested in novels where authors merely tell you that the character is stuttering, tell you about their various intonations of speech; rather he is keen on authors who do not just tell you, but also show you; show you how the form of expression (he stuttered) replays—sort of doubles—in the corresponding form of content. Or, to put it differently, the stutter transfers from

one plane of language to another plane; from the form of expression to a form of content. Defining the form of content, Deleuze writes:

> [It's] an atmospheric quality, a milieu that acts as the conductor of words—that brings together within itself the quiver, the murmur, the stutter, the tremolo, or the vibrato, and makes the indicated affect reverberate through the words (108).

The abovementioned long sentence of Molly Notkin in *Infinite Jest* is in the indirect reported speech; the incomplete subordinate clauses do not just indicate agrammaticality, it also indicates that Notkin, or even Madam Psychosis's father about whom Notkin is talking to the interrogators, is stuttering.

But it is not just the character who stutters; Wallace does not merely "tell" you that Notkin is stuttering and leave it at that, at the level of speech. Wallace also "shows" the stuttering; he becomes a stutterer himself, as the stuttering goes beyond speech or "individual discourse" (*parole*) toward the "collective system" (*langue*) (Lecercle 231).

By contorting the syntax of the sentence, by keeping subordinate clauses incomplete, Wallace, writing in the third person, indicates Notkin's stutter (or Madam Psychosis's father's stutter). Here, the stuttering is at the level of parole; but Wallace also shows the affect of stutter on speech's contents, on non-linguistic elements, on *langue*. At a party given by Notkin, her academic friends, who have nasal voices and habitually stutter at the beginning of their sentences, do the stuttering dance: they slow down the Mambo, a hip-intensive dance requiring nimble intricate footwork, to a minimal movement; and they appear to be just short of "standing still," and almost dancing, and possibly snapping their fingers or hinting at it (*Infinite* 229). At the same party, Joelle van Dyne (aka Madame Psychosis) thinks of the unreleased cartridge, *Infinite Jest*, which uses a stuttering, automatically wobbling lens (230).

While the actions, the gestures, and the attitudes of the minimally dancing academicians, are the qualities of the atmosphere, the milieu that coalesces

within itself the stutter of Notkin; in the latter case, it is the object of the wobbly lens that gathers within itself the affect, or Notkin's stutter.

The language and speech stutter; the language, its interior elements—phonological, semantic, and syntactical—are put through a continuous variation and this effect the non-linguistic components as well: The actions, passions, gestures, attitudes, objects, and so on, are also put through a continuous variation. About this coupling, the linguistic plus non-linguistic, Deleuze writes in 'One Less Manifesto':

> One cannot treat the elements of language and speech as so many interior variables without placing them in a reciprocal relation with exterior variables, in the same continuity, in the same flux of continuity" (Murray 248).

The minorization of the major dominating language entails escaping the confinement of the power of constants or standard grammatical rules; and, similarly, or in the same movement, actions and gestures escape the dominating system that organizes it (248): the dancers contravene the grammar of Mambo steps; the dancers display stiff gestures; and the camera lens of the unreleased movie, *Infinite Jest*, operating as though its machine is rusty, also work stiffly.

The stutter of yrstruly's speech above, with regular snipping off of single letters ("diffrent") and cutting off of one word ("de parts"), has a reciprocal relation with the action of the character named C chopping off an old citizen's single ear that causes a bloody "mess" and throwing it away in the bin (*Infinite* 129). Saunders' 89's stutters—his incomplete sentences, his fractured sentences, his three or four blank spaces between words and letters—are like his walk: "weird and slow" with a need to gasp for breath (*Liberation* ch. 8).

These readings show that it is possible to stutter the language without confusing it with speech, without merging it with speech. If you consider language to be a system in equilibrium, which is ruled by constant relations, then the disequilibrium or variations or bifurcations occur at the level of speech; but if the

language system appears to be ceaselessly in disequilibrium—if the terms are put through continuous variation—then language itself begins to scream, stutter, stammer, vibrate, without being mistaken for the affectations of a character's speech (*Essays* 108). The readings of the texts above also show that agrammaticality (the limit of language) and stuttering (the tension in language) are correlative.

Through agrammaticality or stuttering, the writer carves a new language that is not outside language but "outside of language" (112). The new language, the syntactical contortion, is what Deleuze refers to as:

> A painting or a piece of music, but a music of words, a painting with words, a silence in words, as if the words could now discharge their content: a grandiose vision or sublime sound. What is specific to the drawings and paintings of great writers (Hugo, Michaux…) is not that these works are literary, for they are not literary at all; they attain pure visions, but visions that are still related to language in that they constitute an ultimate aim, an outside, an inverse, an underside, an inkstain, or unreadable handwriting… Words create silence (113).

In the opening section of *Infinite Jest* itself, Wallace creates music of words, creates silence; he attains visions and auditions of the outside of the language. According to the testimony of the deans, Hal Incandenza makes animalistic sounds and noises when he attempts to speak; Hal bleats like a goat; it is his form of expression (*Infinite* 14). Wallace confirms Hal's bleating through transferring of the form of expression to a corresponding form of content: the uncontrollable waggling, wriggling, and flailing of Hal's arms (14).

In the opening section of "The Metamorphosis," Franz Kafka too creates music of words, attains visions and auditions of an inverse of the language. Gregor Samsa, as he metamorphoses into a giant insect, notices that his voice, though his own, is squeaking rather than speaking; the chief clerk tells Samsa's mother that Samsa's voice is not the voice of a human; it's animalistic (*Collected* ch. 22). Kafka, says Deleuze, confirms the twittering squeaking voice of Samsa

with the corresponding helpless waving—the ceaseless uncontrollable waving in several directions—of his numerous legs and his rocking, hard-to-maneuver body (*Essays* 108).

Another painter with words or creator of music of words is Herman Melville. In *Pierre or The Ambiguities*, the summer forest's unceasing humming, the house's silence, the soft to-and-fro footsteps in the silent house, the murmuring guitar—these are qualities of the atmosphere that are evidences of Isabel's murmurings, her soft foreign voice, in the novel, Deleuze points out (108). Isabel murmurs and sings to the newly strung guitar and the guitar murmurs and sings back to Isabel: a murmuring, melodious, reciprocating friendship begins.

These writers strain the language to such an extent, they build up such a pressure, that, not speech, but language itself begins trembling: stuttering, stammering, bleating, squeaking, murmuring. And then the entire language is yanked to the limit, the outside, the outside of the language—where language encounters silence (*Essays* 113).

What is the style of a great writer? In the documentary *Gilles Deleuze: From A to Z*, Deleuze declares that style means to deform the syntax of the language in which the author writes and speaks; the great stylists make the language stutter or stammer; they burrow a new language within a language; it is their first move (02:03-04:38). "The only way to defend language is to attack it….Every writer is obliged to create his or her own language," writes Marcel Proust in a letter (*Essays* 5). Through the process of syntactical contortion, the stylists dig the language out of its straight furrows and carry the language to a frontier that separates it not only from silence but also music, mentions Deleuze in the documentary (04:39-05:11).

To put it slightly differently: When writers create a new or foreign language in one language (*langue*), the language in its entirety (*langage*) gets driven to the outside of language comprising "Visions and Auditions," which are not part of any language (*Essays* 5). These visions and auditions are what stylists (like Wallace) see and hear in the intervals of language: silence in words; music of words; painting with words; ideas (5). The writers considered great by Deleuze are the

seers and hearers of literature; through their original syntactic treatment of language, they are able to release ideas, life (5).

FOOTNOTES + DIGRESSION + STUTTERING

In a television interview with Wallace, Charlie Rose asks the author about the three-hundred-and-eighty-eight footnotes that take up ninety-six pages in *Infinite Jest*. In reply, Wallace tells him that the reality in which he lives appears to him to be "fractured"; and that it is difficult to write about this reality because the text is "linear" and "unified"; and that he is constantly looking to fracture his texts that does not disorient the readers too much (17:51-19:28). The alternative to the footnotes might be to jumble up the lines, but the readers are not going to be able to comprehend it, and hence Wallace uses the footnotes—the footnotes are analogous to a "second voice" in his head, Wallace tells Rose (17:51-19:28).

The Spanish novelist, Eduardo Lago, tells Wallace in a magazine interview that he sees footnotes to be a patent of "academic writing"; and also an original technique to structure plots, to produce fragmentary stories; he asks whether Wallace has a poetics of the footnote. Wallace declares that he doesn't have one; and that he uses footnotes in *Infinite Jest* to induce "doubleness" (Wallace, *Electric*). It is a cause of irritant, says Wallace to Lago, that most works of fiction present experience, thought, and perception as though they are "linear and singular"; and that these works do not consider that a person might be having paradoxical, mutually exclusive emotions and thoughts at a point in time (*Electric*). Therefore, the footnotes in Wallace's works are attempting to be as close to reality as possible through a sort of "doubling" (*Electric*).

In a 1998 interview, "There can be no Spokesman," author Tom Scocca tells Wallace that Wallace's footnotes break the reader's flow or stride and compel them to backtrack (*The Last* ch. 2). Scocca asks Wallace whether he has, in his mind, the amount of work that the reader has to put in while reading his (Wallace's) work (ch. 2). Wallace declares that he does not wish to anticipate, tantamount to a chess player, the reaction of every reader reading his work (ch. 2). Wallace states:

> It's [footnotes] a kind of loopy way of thinking that it seems to me is in some ways mimetic. I don't know about you, but certainly the way I think about things and experience things is not particularly linear, and it's not orderly, and it's not pyramidical, and there are a lot of loops… The footnotes I think are better representations of, not really stream-of-consciousness, but thought patterns and fact patterns (ch. 2).

D.T. Max reckons in "The Unfinished: David Foster Wallace's Struggle to Surpass '*Infinite Jest*'" that Wallace's use of footnote is "his way of reclaiming language from banality, while at the same time representing all the caveats, micro-thoughts, meta-moments, and other flickers of his hyperactive mind" (*New Yorker*). Ira B. Nadel reckons in 'Consider the Footnote' that Wallace's use of footnote (or the endnote) is the "visual expression" to confirm that what is going on in his head is not exactly linear (*Legacy* 219). Wallace's obsession with the footnote begins, perhaps, because of his undergraduate studies in philosophy and mathematics (222).

The use of the mathematical concept, "Axiom of Choice," in Wallace's *Everything and More: A Compact History of* ∞, gives you a kind of explanation, according to Nadel, about why he uses the footnotes the way he does (224). Regarding the Axiom of Choice, which is a concept belonging to the Set Theory, Wallace tells you that "from any S you can construct a subset *S*′ with a particular property even if you can't specify a procedure for choosing the individual members of *S*′" (224). The explanation of this concept, says Nadel, also explains, partially, why Wallace uses footnoting freewheelingly; the footnotes, like subset, do not adhere to any specific rules: the concept of Axiom of Choice allows Wallace to digress, diverge, to include comic elements in his footnotes (224). The relationship between the primary text and the footnote share the same sort of relationship as the set and its subset; the primary text consists of "reality or events," according to Nadel, while the footnotes are its subsets; and, just as the Axiom of Choice, there is no "logical extension" from the primary text (set *S*) to the footnotes (subset *S*′) (224). Nadel thinks that Wallace's footnotes replace the

standardized “information-based functionality” with an “emotional design”: the unexpected content and design of the footnotes, the disorientation you feel while navigating through them, provide an emotional reading (225). The unanticipated features of his footnotes provide a sense of “double consciousness” for Wallace and a “hypertext” for the reader, says Nadel (226). The visually intimidating design of the footnotes throws up a dimension of space that symbolizes the difficulty of the prose: the footnotes create a “*mise-en-page”* (234). Among Wallace’s non-fiction works, the most visually menacing is perhaps “Host”: an essay about a right-wing radio host. The essay does away with footnotes and introduces boxes and arrows that usher you to the boxes: you are given a thorough optical workout as your eyes have to move every few lines to another box and then to another and so on. What is fascinating to Nadel is how, progressively, the box notes begin to intrude on the primary text: how the design of the page overwhelms the content (235).

What Nadel, though, does not point out in the essay is that the procedure of inserting footnotes, endnotes, and boxnotes, overwhelms the language itself; that through the delirious speeds, bifurcations, divergences, intervals—through digressions—Wallace makes the language stutter. Wallace makes the language grow grass-like; his sentences are rhizomatic: they grow from the middle; grow between the beginning and end of a primary text’s sentence (*Essays* 111). For instance, on page 278 of Wallace’s essay, “Host,” before the sentence of the primary text ends, the text ramifies off the word “peaking”; an arrow from “peaking” ushers you to the first box note, where Wallace provides the definition of the word (“peaking”); the first sentence ends in the first box (*Consider*). Before the second sentence can complete in the first box, it breaks off of the word “analog”; an arrow from “analog” ushers you to the second box, where he provides the definition of the word (“analog”); at the end of the third sentence in the second box, the arrow ushers you to the third box (*Consider* 278). But since the third box begins only after the end of the sentence in the second box, you do not take it into consideration as far as the growing of language is concerned from the middle; here you are only considering sentences that diverge before it reaches the period and opens onto a box note (*Consider* 278).

Wallace, the stutterer, frequently starts another sentence before completing one: many sentences in “Host” produce offshoots. After you finish reading the third box note on page 278, you have to backtrack, go back to the first box note, where the second sentence breaks stride by deviating off the word “analog” to give you second and third box note; when you finish the first box note, the arrow ushers you to the fourth box note, but then again strictly speaking, the fourth box note does not sprout from the middle of a sentence in the first note; the fourth box note is after the cessation of the sentence in the first box note (*Consider*). After reading the fourth box note, you get back, finally, to the primary text; but the sentence that stumbles on the word “peaking,” and opens onto the first, second, third, and fourth box note, stumbles again, before completion of the sentence, on the word “Prophet”; and again another arrow ushers you to the fifth box note to provide the definition of the word; and then you return to the primary text; and the rhizomatic—grassy—sentence at last comes to an end (*Consider* 278).

On page 307 of “Host,” the sentence ramifies off the word “Arbitron,” and two arrows extrude and go off in two different directions; one goes off to the box note on the same page; and the other one shoots off to the box note on the previous page; the language stutters, plus the readers too stutter: which box should they read first (*Consider*)? This is another instance of rhizomatic sentence.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari constantly create an opposition between two absolutely different methods of thinking: the rhizome (grass) and the tree. Whereas the tree thinks in terms of filiations, hierarchy, roots, origins, points, future and past; the rhizome thinks in terms of alliance. The rhizome thinks not in straight lines that go from point to point, but lines that pass between the points; the rhizome does not concern itself with the future and past, but present-becoming, like becoming-animal—in which a man establishes an alliance with an animal and becomes neither man nor animal; both the animal and the man are pushed out of their own original territory.

The tree gives the logic of the verb “to be” or “IS”; while rhizome gives the logic of conjunction “AND” (*Thousand* 26). While “IS” acts as the “constant” in

language; the “AND” puts the language in continuous variation, carves a minor use of language, makes the language stutter and stammer in itself: “and…and…and…” (26). The entirety of grammar maintains the subordination of “AND” to “IS”; Deleuze asks you, instead, to replace “IS” with “AND”; he asks you not to think “IS,” but to think with “AND”: “A *and* B” (*Dialogues II* 57).

The conjunction—“AND”—is powerful enough to root out the “to be” verb. There are some questions that automatically turn false, turn useless, when you write/think with the art of the “And” (*Thousand* 26). Questions like: “Where are you going? Where are you coming from? What are you heading for” (26)? These questions are of no purpose to the writers writing with “AND,” especially American and English writers, who begin differently from their French counterparts, states Deleuze in the essay that endorses that Anglo-American literature is superior (*Dialogues II* 39).

The French writers are interested in tabula rasa, in beginning again (anew); they look for a base or a foundation or a certain point from which to begin and to anchor (39). The Anglo-American writers, on the other hand, take up a line that has come to a halt, say before two rocks, and they attach it to another segment to make it pass between the two rocks (39). The Anglo-American writers are not inclined to beginnings and endings; beginnings and endings are points. To them, what is intriguing is the middle (39). The Anglo-American writers move and travel from and through the middle; they come and go rather than start and finish; they operate between things, establishing the logic of “AND,” cancelling out beginnings and endings, obliterating bases: The middle is where things speed up, reckon Deleuze and Guattari, like a stream that, without bank in sight, gathers momentum—rapidity—in the middle (*Thousand* 27).

The middle is where you begin again. The French writers think in terms of roots and peaks: trees. And the Anglo-American writers think in terms of grass, and they make language grow grass-like from the middle, and put language through a line of flight, and make language stutter and stammer, and do not let it take root; in other words, because the Anglo-American writers stutter language, treat language as a rhizome, they keep language out of kilter, perpetually. “We

have grass in the head, not a tree: what thinking signifies is what the brain is, a 'particular nervous system' of grass," writes Deleuze (*Dialogues II* 39).

Deleuze points out a number of authors in his essay, "He Stuttered," whose different techniques make language grow from the middle. About Samuel Beckett, Deleuze writes:

> Beckett's procedure…is as follows: he places himself in the middle of the sentence and makes the sentence grow out from the middle, adding particle upon particle…so as to pilot the block of a single exploring breath…Creative stuttering is what makes language grow from the middle, like grass (*Essays* 111)

This is a procedure that Wallace employs in the essay about the right-wing radio presenter, "Host," which pullulates with box notes. Wallace makes the primary text's sentence grow from the middle by placing himself in the middle of the sentence; he interrupts a line in the text and joins a segment (a box note) to it, and interrupts the sentence in the box note too and joins another segment (another box note) to it. Wallace's particle is his box note, to which he keeps adding; the pile-up of box notes—"and…and…and…"—is Wallace guiding the block of his long-drawn-out feverish breath.

Or, as Deleuze points out, maybe Raymond Roussel's procedure in his poem, "New Impressions of Africa," his relentless digressions, is nearer to the proliferating, maddeningly digressive, growing-from-the middle technique of Wallace in his non-fictional as well as fictional works. Roussel keeps inserting propositions into the middle of the preceding sentence with the aid of more and more parentheses, so that, at one point in the poem, five parentheses line up one behind the other (*Essays* 111-112). (It is as though the poet is at work in his room, and you can see him erasing and rewriting, over and over, and deciding eventually that he wants to keep both the erased and the rewritten part; and thus he turns his dithering into a fragmented style of making language grow from the middle, of stuttering.) In the poem, Roussel snips and pastes, snips and pastes, on the

tumescent belly of the alexandrines, between “drawing rooms…” and “Of opaque fronds, fruits, and sunbeams”; more and more things keep opening out in parentheses; long footnotes also branch out profusely in the poem:

Skimming the Nile, I see two shores passing covered
With flowers, wings, flashes of lighting, luxurious green plants
One of which would suffice for twenty of our drawing rooms
Of opaque fronds, fruits, and sunbeams.
…in twenty of our drawing rooms
(Sweet drawing rooms where as soon as one turns on one’s
heels
Different rumors are spread about the person leaving)
Of opaque fronds, sunbeams, and fruits.
(Sweet drawing rooms where as soon as one turns on one’s
heels
((By making fun either of his cowardice
Or of his subtle talents, no matter what he does or says))
About the one who leaves, rumors are spread)
Of opaque fronds, sunbeams, and fruits.
(Sweet drawing rooms where as soon as one turns on one’s
heels
((By making fun either of his cowardice
(((Particularly strong whatever one does or says to them
Judging the punishment of an unwise action
Returning a greeting for an eye and a smile for a tooth))) (Foucault,
Death and the Labyrinth 128-9)…

In his essay on stuttering, Deleuze quotes from Michel Foucault’s book on Roussel, *Death and Labyrinth*, concerning the profusion of parenthesis in “New Impressions of Africa”; Deleuze, endorsing Foucault’s analysis, reckons that with each addition, the parenthesis “overwhelm[s] the language” (*Essays* 112).

Parenthetical thoughts, which come in the form of box notes, overwhelm the language in Wallace's "Host": The frequent popping up of box notes effect stuttering.

In Roussel's poems, stutterers do not finish their sentences because they have begun another sentence and then another one, states Lecercle in *Deleuze and Language* (243). "Here, style as stuttering works against the determinacy and fixity, the teleology of meaning. It enforces the open-endedness of sense," writes Lecercle (243).

Of course, Wallace does not take it to the Roussel's level of stutterers who never finish their sentences; the stutterers in Wallace's texts—including Wallace—do indeed finish; but there are frequent digressions—delaying of the end—as the primary text swerves to a box note and that box note's sentence cuts midway to another box note, so that when you return to the sentence of the primary text that breaks off from between, you have to read it from the beginning again.

Wallace in "Host" observes that the host of the radio talk show, Ziegler, waves his arms around while hosting the show and is fidgety and "bobs slightly up and down in his executive desk chair, and weaves" (*Consider* 277). Wallace's sentences too weave; they grow out from the middle, rhizome-like; sprout lateral shoots—box notes; create a tension in language; place language in variation. And along with the syntactical component of language in continuous variation, there is also continuous variation in non-linguistic elements—such as passions and gestures—in the same manner: there is weaving both in the form of expression and the form of content: the language stutters: "And…And…And…" In an interview, Wallace talks about obsessing over digressions; he says:

> I often feel very fragmented, as if I have a symphony of different voices, and voice-overs, and factoids, going on all the time and digressions on digressions on digressions. I know that people who don't much care for my stuff see a lot of the stuff as just sort of vomiting it out. That's at least my intent. What's hard is to seem very digressive and bent in on yourself and diffracted and also have there

> be patterns and significances about it and it takes a lot of drafts, but it probably comes out just looking like a manic, mad monologue or something. I don't know that I'm more interested in trivia or factoids than anyone else—I know that they sort of bounce around within my head an awful lot (*Conversations* 132).

In *Infinite Jest*, a mid-sentence fracture on page 311 takes eighteen pages to complete; or rather you are able to come back to the primary text after you read eighteen pages of endnote 110. The sentence fractures when the narrator is telling you that, although Hal Incandenza does not find the history class uninteresting, he finds the topic of the way Quebecois separatists think to be confusing; the sentence breaks off, funnily, on the word, "parsing" (311).

Endnote 110 begins with what Hal is doing later in the same day of the history class; he is going through letters in his elder brother's (Mario's) shoebox; the next section of the endnote is an example of the letter that Hal's mother (Avril) has written to Hal's eldest brother (Orin); this section of endnote contains sentences that stumble in the middle and usher you to more notes (1006). The next section of the endnote is an example of Orin's response to his mother's letters, which also contains a note that intrudes a sentence (1007); and the last section is a fifteen-page dialogue between Hal and Orin, which again has sentences breaking off and leading to notes; and then you get to finally return to the primary text word, "parsing," and complete the sentence that, as if, does not want to end (311).

REPETITION + STUTTERING

In *Infinite Jest* through repetition—repetition of words and repetition of syntactic structure—Wallace strains the language, pushes language to its limit, provides another way of growing from the middle: stuttering. In a section of the novel, the narrator tells you that Ken Erdedy is waiting at his place for a woman to deliver marijuana.

The Erdedy-section is written in what Saunders calls, in an interview, third-person ventriloquism, a technique where writers enter the thoughts or

imaginations of their characters and begin to use their (the characters') dictions (Saunders, *NPR*). Wallace thinks in Erdedy's voice. Erdedy, who is a marijuana-addict and who stumbles again and again in his attempts to overcome addiction, has a repetitive diction, or rather thinks in a repetitive manner: "Where was the woman who said she'd come. She said she would come. Erdedy thought she'd come by now" (*Infinite* 17). Erdedy quits ingesting drugs; but after a week or two, he always retrogresses; he wants to ingest once more, for one final time: "…and then he'd think and decide to have some [marijuana] in his home one more last time. One last final time" "Each time he got some he knew this time had to be the last time" (18).

Once the woman, like other previous drug-dealers, promises to Erdedy about giving him the substance, Erdedy, compulsively, gets certain things done; and Wallace/Erdedy expresses—ventriloquizes—these compulsions through a huge list of "He had to…" clause openers: "He had to clean his bedroom"; "He had to throw out all his beer and liquor"; "He'd had to do some shopping"; "He had had to buy soda, Oreos, bread"; "He'd had to log an order to rent film cartridges"; "He'd had to buy antacids" (19-20).

By recommencing with the same words, over and over, Wallace turns the prose in this section into an invocation of sorts; through the repetitive invocatory prose, Wallace's words, though "intact, complete, and normal," become "disjointed and decomposed members," much like Charles Peguy's, the French poet who repeats, exaggeratedly and obsessively (*Essays* 111). Below is one tiny glimpse of Peguy's iteration in *The Passion of Our Lady*:

> For the past three days she had been wandering, and
> following.
> She followed the people.
> She followed the events.
> She seemed to be following a funeral.—
> She followed like a follower.
> Like a servant.
> Like a weeper at a Roman funeral.—

As if it had been her only occupation.
To weep.—
That is what he had to his mother.
Since the day when he had begun his mission.—
You saw her everywhere.
With the people and a little apart from the people.
Under the porticoes, under the arcades, in drafty places.
In the temples, in the palaces.
In the streets.
In the yards and in the back-yards.
And she had also gone up to Calvary.
She too had climbed up Calvary.
A very steep hill.
And she did not even feel that she was walking.
She did not even feel that her feet were carrying her.—
She too had gone up her Calvary.
She too had gone up and up (*Poem Hunter*).

In the Erdedy-section of *Infinite Jest*, the transfer from the form of expression (repetition of words) to the form of content is stark: Erdedy carries out, compulsively and repeatedly, certain actions before taking drugs (like buying a bong, parking his car away from his house, vacuuming the windows, curtains, and blinds before closing them, and so on); while taking drugs (watching T.V., running repeatedly to the refrigerator to drink ice water and soda); and after the session of drug-ingestion (wrapping the bong in several plastic bags and throwing it away) (20). Erdedy's repetitive stuttering transfers to the repetitive movements.

Similarly, in another section of *Infinite Jest*, Hal narrates Mario's film, *Tennis and The Feral Prodigy*, by recommencing sentences either with the phrase—"Here is how"—or—"This is how" (172). Wallace uses these two phrases thirty-one times in this five-page section as a sort of homage to the Antiguan-American

writer Jamaica Kincaid's short story "Girl"; Kincaid also repeats these imperative phrases thirty-one times, points out Thompson in *Global Wallace* (68). While, in Kincaid's story—which is a single sentence—the mother gives instructions to her young daughter on how to conduct herself: "this is how you smile to someone you don't like too much; this is how you smile to someone you don't like at all; this is how you smile to someone you like completely" (Kincaid, *New Yorker*); Wallace's Hal, as a senior tennis player in the Academy, instructs the juniors on how to negotiate the rigors of the sport and so on: "This is how to hold the stick" "This is how to hold it" "Here is how to weep in bed trying to remember when your torn blue ankle didn't hurt every minute" "Here is how to take nonnarcotic muscle relaxants for the back spasms that come from thousands of serves to no one" (*Infinite* 172-174).

After the afternoon matches and before the supper, Hal has a penchant for smoking cannabis, covertly, using a one-hitter in the underground Pump Room of the Enfield Tennis Academy (49). Hal haunches and crawls to the Pump Room, carrying his tennis kit in his teeth, and switches on the exhaust fan and smokes and exhales through the blades (52). After smoking, he haunches and crawls into a vacant men's room, where he brushes his teeth and washes his face and applies eye drops and splashes Old Spice and eats chewing tobacco, so that nobody comes to know he has been smoking dope (54). This is Hal's afternoon routine; this is how Hal's form of expression—his repetition of phrases, his manner of speaking—transfers to the form of content—repetition of actions and gestures; or you can also say the reverse: Hal speaks (in the section above) like his repetitive acts.

Wallace's obsessive repetition—the incantatory repetition of phrases—turns the prose into a "prayer" (Lecercle 243). The repetitions create another language within language—a foreign language—and push language to its limit. The limit, which is outside of language and not outside language, contains visions and auditions that do not belong to any language, but which language alone helps to see and hear. The great minor writer—or the writer that makes a minor use of language—paints (with words), composes music (of words), and shows silence (in words). Through agrammaticality, through digression, through repetition, through

syntactical stuttering, Wallace conquers fragmentary visions that pass through a poet's words, a painter's color, and a musician's sound.

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