

A Preliminary Explanation/Summarization of A Preliminary Explanation/Summarization

The piece of work you are about to embark upon was written in the summer of 2010 for an individual study contract at The Evergreen State College. My aim with the following piece is to introduce people to *Infinite Jest* in a way that removes them from the *Oh-my-God-that-novel-is-huge* mentality but also invokes the possible reader of *IJ* to take action and to enjoy that action.

I began it (the piece) with the idea of writing a simple 10-page essay describing the themes and ideas at play within the Eschaton debacle on pages 380-442 of *Infinite Jest*. This initial idea was a failure. More importantly, however, the resultant piece was, I believe, a great success. And this is why: the piece below (d)evolves from the original idea into a (at times) chaotic, yet deliberate, exploration into many of the ideas present within *IJ* and I think that this (d)evolution happened because of the inherent traits of *IJ* as its own entity. What I mean is that because of the things at work within Wallace's novel (read as *world*) there is an organic need to explain and to understand all that Wallace is trying to do and say. And still even more simply: every aspect of *IJ* is intrinsically connected to every other aspect; and so for any singular *part* to make any proper sense there is a necessity for explanation of the *whole*.

Other than that, I think that the piece came out like it did, style-wise, because of two things: a) It is very hard *not* to mimic Wallace's writing style whilst reading anything by him, and b) because I was having a great deal of fun while writing it. And mainly I want to impart that—the literal, exhilarating *fun*—onto any reader of this piece and *Infinite Jest*.

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An Exhaustive Essay of pages 380-442 of David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*<sup>1</sup>

David Foster Wallace reintroduced the vast and extreme possibilities of fiction to the literary intelligentsia with his novel *Infinite Jest*. Considered his magnum opus, *Infinite Jest* sets a bar where few can venture and even less can properly intellectualize without scholarly help. And, before delving too deeply into the brilliant and often times schizophrenic ideas set forth by the novel, one must understand that “understanding *Infinite Jest*” is *almost* a contradiction in terms and so it becomes even more difficult to understand a *fragment* of *Infinite Jest* through the medium of essay—let alone the novel in its entirety—only because there is a certain level of misunderstanding that is rather imminent and, it could be said, expected or warranted.

**A Conceptual Preemptive Pre-Essay Instruction/Explanation on Why A Certain Level of Misunderstanding is Rather Imminent and, Actually, Almost Expected and Warranted w/in The Forth Coming Essay<sup>2</sup>:**

Without a brief synopsis of the entire novel *Infinite Jest* (which would be impossible, not to mention inappropriate) an essay about any section will be subject to digression, misunderstandings, neologisms, verbosity, and massive amounts of confusion being parted onto the reader of said essay. Therefore, henceforth, the reader of any essay (this one in particular) that suggests to submit (the essay which does) any thesis or interpretation of and about the novel *Infinite Jest* (henceforth referred to as *IJ* for sake of space, redundancy, and carpal neuralgia) will not be asked (the reader won't) to have any particular or substantial knowledge of the novel...and yet this stipulation, consequentially, might negate any reasoning to read said essay and so, sure, a brief synopsis might be acceptable, but only a quote from the back of the book; a blurb really, hardly doing any sort of justice:

Set in an addicts' halfway house and a tennis academy, and featuring one of the most endearingly [fucked]-up families in contemporary fiction, *Infinite Jest* explores essential questions about what entertainment is and why it has come to dominate our lives, about how our desire for entertainment affects our need to connect with other people, and about what the pleasures we choose say about who we are.

Equal parts philosophical quest and screwball comedy, *Infinite Jest* bends every rule of fiction without sacrificing for a moment its own entertainment value. It is an

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<sup>1</sup> Irony here is *sic*.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> See n.(whatever note ends up being a/b irony) *sub.*, but you don't have to; it is merely a suggestion. You'll get it.

<sup>2</sup> (Also a *Consideration* of the Nature of *Why* One Needs to Understand Why These Misunderstandings are Indeed Expected and Warranted and Probably Imminent)

exuberant, uniquely American exploration of the passions that make us human—and one of those rare books that renew the idea of what a novel can do. [Expletives mine]

If the reader knows anything about *IJ* then they know this blurb is somewhat a dope-slap to the face of David Foster Wallace (henceforth a.k.a. DFW) and all he attempted to do and say with what is widely considered his magnum opus. If the reader happens not to know, then the blurb and all the adjectives ascribed remain the same.

Ne'er you mind though: the point is that the following essay will relate the *ideas* and the *importance* sans too much philosophical or technical jargon (hopefully); the following will present the ideas *qua* ideas, how one (or even  $9.48683298^2 (=90)$ ) may/might relate to them (the ideas and philosophies) w/o actually having to read the book. And but, come to think of it, that prospect yet again negates any reasoning to explain/relate/write/talk a/b the novel in general.

**(a) Why, w/o the Reader of the Essay First Reading the Novel, it is Futile to Begin a Thesis on Any Particular Section of Said Novel:**

DFW created *IJ* to be read w/o passive consumption. Simply meaning that, by creating a non-linear 981 page novel (w/ over three hundred endnotes (& errata) which intersperse quite randomly and can get up to 15+ pages themselves), DFW wished that the reader would indulge himself (the reader's self) into the novel and the truths and knowledge therein. The point was to create something that a reader couldn't "veg-out" on and stare at w/o considering the implications of- or interesting facts a/b- the novel's world.

**(a.) How a Non-Linear Novel & 388 Endnotes Might Accomplish All That:**

When a novel's story line is fragmented and dispersed throughout different points in time the reader is presented with how life is experienced. DFW was adamant (and is pretty much correct) a/b the fact that in reality we as humans remember and see our lives not as linear but as random occurrences that never do themselves justice and that can never fully or rationally explain it all. Our memory and experience do not have a straightforward, relatable play-pause-rewind-function that we can employ any time we please; memory comes to us

at infrequent and chaotic moments, experience is fleeting and random. This is reflected w/in *IJ* by the jumping story line (w/in the same “chapter”<sup>3</sup> there can be a jump from 1963 to Y.D.A.U. (2009)) and the bits and pieces of info proffered the reader by the Notes & Errata section. Readers experience this disjunction as confusion and annoyance, but if they were to buck up and do a little research before diving head first into the novel then, possibly, they’d see what the conceptual idea is and either (a) be annoyed and confused by their own lives or (b) (the more appropriate) wouldn’t be as hard on *IJ* as is usually seen and would actually begin to experience it as something meaningful.

And therefore, b/c the novel is meant to be read w/o passive consumption, w/o closely considering everything a/b it, then trying to gain a semblance of it via essay or blurb or hearsay or dissertation or anything else, would be exactly what the novel is attempting to refract away from itself and from society at large.

The novel (as a text, as a tangible *piece*) *defies* passive consumption and also (w/in the narrative(s)) relates the consequences *of* passive consumption w/ regard to American (and human) culture.

Yet, despite the self-inherent futility of explaining/relating/writing/talking a/b/essaying a/b *IJ*, one (an essay) will still attempt to be constructed in such a way that all the ideals of the novel/narrative/author/multiple characters and not to mention the personal opinion of the essayist will be properly represented.

**(b) But Here is Why That Will be Next to Impossible:**

*IJ* is comprised of many characters, some of which aren’t even mentioned by a proper name e.g. “yrstruly” (pg. 128) and “C” (Ibid.), some characters that have little to no dialogue, i.e. John “No Relation” Wayne (who is a citizen of Canada (yet the renown John Wayne is a stereotypical American figure so read what you will into that...)) living in America and is one of the top ranked tennis players at E.T.A. (Enfield Tennis Academy (which is one of the most important places in the novel, where a great majority of the action happens))), even characters who aren’t alive when most

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<sup>3</sup> See n.21 *sub*.

of the novel takes place and are usually presented as memories and/or ghosts. The plethora of characters w/in *IJ* presents an interesting complication with regards to pinning down a philosophy of the novel that can be explained verbatim and/or objectively. The characters usually contradict themselves, others, friends, their Moms<sup>4</sup> ... anyone really... and so the problems this creates are two (possibly  $2^{n+1}$ ):

**(b<sub>1</sub>)** There is no discernable “main character” whom takes control of the presiding philosophy (in fact there is no “presiding” philosophy<sup>5</sup>) of the novel and each character has their own POV of life and so there is no way to say which philosophy holds sway over another and this leads into the negation/entanglement of any presented philosophy/idea/value/ethical code/etc. (henceforth a.k.a all-of-the-above) presented by any character w/in.

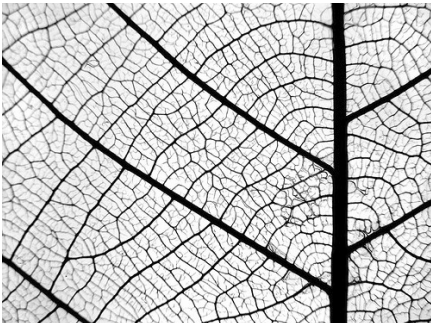
**(b<sub>2</sub>)** Any critique or criticism against any of the novel’s many philosophies can be critiqued themselves n<sup>10.something gargantuan</sup> times and then those subsequent critiques/criticisms can themselves be critiqued/criticized and so on ad infinitum; so, ergo—b/c there is this ever expanding cornucopian infinity of ridiculousness, of contradictions/counterarguments/counter-counterarguments/ etc. (which ends up turning into a mess of something like leaf veins intertwining and exponentially growing smaller, larger, into each other, and around themselves<sup>6</sup>)—but b/c of this, an essayist can never quite relate *everything* in way of all-of-the-above and have the essay be (a) objective and (b) encompassing of everything simply b/c there is no way to accomplish

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<sup>4</sup> The Incandenza’s (The “[fucked]-up” family referred to in the blurb above, a very important character, uh, “genus,” if you will...) refer to their mother as “the Moms” and their father as “Himself.” Just so you know.

<sup>5</sup> See n.14 *sub*.

<sup>6</sup> i.e.



representation of all the interrelated and opposing facts/rumors/falsities/etc.

...Here is a small section from *IJ exempli gratia* which can/will perform a preliminary cultivation of how the novel at large radiates w/ obscure and contradictory all-of-the-above. Enter the first 14 pages of the first section of the book: Year of Glad (approximately 2010 by the DFW calendar<sup>7</sup>):

“I am in here” (p. 3), Hal Incandenza, a main character (arguable), states after he

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<sup>7</sup> In DFW’s future time has been subsidized<sup>a</sup> and corporations bid on who gets to name the year that year. This begins in 2002 w/ Year of the Whopper wherein a “Freak Statue of Liberty Accident Kills Fed Engineer” and a “Brave Man on Crane [is] Crushed by 5 Ton Cast Iron Burger” (pg. 398) (which, it becomes apparent, means that the companies who win the naming-auction advertise their product by way of the Statue-of-Liberty-as-large-billboard (in the Year of The Depends Adult Undergarment Lady Liberty wears diapers) needless to say, but its going to be anyways, this has some intense symbolic representations in relation to America’s ménage trios w/ corporations and bought government; something all can rightly appreciate).

<sup>a</sup> On page 223 a list appears of all the subsidized years in order from Year of the Whopper (2002) all the way to Year of the Glad (2010) (other years include products such as Trial-Size Dove Bar (2004), Perdue Wonder Chicken (2005), Dairy Products from the American Heartland (2008) and more. There are interesting connotations to all of the year/product names w/ regards to the overall themes of the novel which can be more fully explored elsewhere<sup>a1</sup>) and please n.b. this list is inserted w/in the (circumstantially) main narrative—seemingly at random, and kind of as a large middle finger to the focused-on character—a/b a character named Joelle van Dyne who is a/b to commit suicide via smoking/snorting/doing a hefty amount of crack cocaine. Joelle is ruminating a/b her life (while cooking the crack in a bathroom while at a party is taking place on the lower level) up until the moment she is occupying in time and, also worthy of note, the narrative is her self-examined history which comes to the reader chopped and fragmented, jumping from one period to another at distorted intervals (much like the novel). This accomplishes an important allusion: Joelle is attempting, while poised on the edge of suicide, to piece together her life, to find cohesive meaning, trying to create a sense of personal, subjective, meaningfulness out of her encroaching demise and this is immediately contrasted by the destruction of time into items and products and corporations. Then four pages later, still w/in the same section on Joelle, a journalist’s vitae appears (pg. 227); each subsequent magazine or newspaper title the Journalist writes for shrinks in time, starting at *Time* and declining to *Decade* to *Annual* to *Week* to *Day* to *Moment* (this shows up the closer Joelle gets to the act of smoking all that crack in an attempt to eliminate her map<sup>a2</sup>) The juxtaposition of false-time references w/ a count down of the character’s life allows for the intertextual narrative to negate any individual subjectivity that the characters (especially Joelle at the moment) w/in the novel may presume to have of their personal history b/c the way they view time has been erased and subsequently their linear history has been ruined, creating a stasis where there was once a progression (albeit it’s merely a matter of inconsequential Gregorian ordination (which, itself, could possibly be seen as a comment on meaninglessness of life either way), but a progression nonetheless).

<sup>a1</sup> But not anywhere w/in this pre-essay (See Greg Carlilse’s *Elegant Complexity ad extra*.)

<sup>a2</sup> Throughout the novel “to eliminate one’s map” is to kill, commit suicide, or brutally beat in the face. This has darker connotations that are not immediately explainable. See n.30 *sub*.

describes how he is sitting with “posture consciously congruent to the shape of [his] hard chair” (Ibid.) and after he describes the room around him where he has come to meet with University Administration as to gain enrollment to Arizona State. Hal is speaking in the first person and he relates to the reader what the “three faces” say directly to him, which turns out to be a description of him (Hal): “ ‘You are Harold Incandenza, eighteen, date of secondary-school graduation approximately one month from now, attending Enfield Tennis Academy, Enfield, Massachusetts, a boarding school, where you reside.’ ” The talking heads go on to explain that Hal is a badass tennis player amongst many other honorary titles. This is all fine and dandy but the point is that the “three heads” of the administration refer to Hal as only a “jock” and continue to question his potential academic viability. This is important to the original point b/c Hal then, as he becomes more aggravated, retorts that he is “ ‘not just a boy who plays tennis. [He has] an intricate history. Experiences and feelings. [He’s] complex. [He] reads...’ ” (p. 11-12) Hal explains to the administration that he consumes libraries, that he has read everything they (the administration) have read, that he get’s into cabs and says things like, “The library, and step on it” (p. 12). So here is Hal explaining himself to the administration, refuting the accusations that he (Hal) is just “a jock with doctored marks.” (p. 10), making an honest effort to present himself as someone of substance. Then, it gets funny<sup>8</sup> b/c apparently Hal, instead of properly communicating, has been making “*Subanimalistic*” noises and has been “*wagging*”<sup>9</sup> (both p. 14) and the administration sees and hears *this* instead of what Hal relates to the reader via narrative. Everyone in the office thinks Hal is having a seizure while his uncle (Charles Tavis, headmaster of E.T.A., fascist), amid the chaos, begins to argue w/ the administration that “ ‘Hal functions... Given a supportive situation. He’s fine when he’s by himself... Hal is provably competent. Credentials out the bazoo... the boy reads like a vacuum. *Digests* things.’ ” (p. 15) This adds yet another level of misinterpretation and second-hand (by this point *third-hand*) explanation onto the whole debacle. The funniest/saddest/most blatantly point-giving-

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<sup>8</sup> Although DFW wanted *IJ* to be sad, and it *is* very sad at times, there are some incredibly funny parts. But this section in question is only funny if the reader can understand all the implications of what happens. Most don’t.

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away part of the section is, to the careful reader, that Hal is constantly and clearly saying to the reader (and himself)—but only w/ guttural nonsense to the room around him—that “I am not what you see and hear” (p. 13).

All this is conducive to speculations of the inability to honestly (or otherwise) communicate the Self and/or that no human can truly understand another human being,<sup>10</sup> or the pervasive contrast between an excess of data and personal truth (which is a point persistent throughout the novel) in our lives, and so on (see the reader’s guide by Stephen Burn or any general populous of scholarly dissertations for more interpretative accusations), but the idea trying to come across here in this pre-essay instruction is that each individual idea of what is being said is subjective and easily altered through tangible, colloquial, metaphysical, logistical, or spiritual means.<sup>11</sup> Here, in this example, we see exactly what DFW wanted from his readers and a perfect example of how the forthcoming essay will easily become intertwined upon itself w/ no remorse.

The novel/narrative/author/multiple characters and, but never limited to, the personal opinions of the essayist still hold sway of course if only b/c w/o them the novel and subsequent hopeful essay wouldn’t exist much less need to be explained here in full. And b/c these things are extant then it follows that—although it is demonstrably near impossible to construct an essay into any sensible format for which a reader of the essay will be able to come away thinking “oh yeah, I get it”—it is at least damn interesting to try.

**(c) Why is it Interesting to Try to Write and Essay in Which Nothing a/b the Subject of the Essay Can be Formally or Objectively Stated or Even Could Maybe be**

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<sup>10</sup> See? Sad.

<sup>11</sup> And see that’s part of the problem too. This specific passage not only expresses an example of impossible interpretation via the actual textual means (i.e. the point *I* am trying to get across while using the text as a text), but the passage itself is *a/b* that same issue (of not being able to communicate, the differences of interpretation, how contradictions are inherent w/in human interaction) and so it (this passage and the novel as a whole) not only encloses itself w/ self-aware contradictions and an inability to communicate (via characters) but also explodes outwards from it’s convoluted self (via life *outside* the novel) and so it (the point of it all) becomes this endless cycle of the attempt to explain and interpret while continuously attempting to explain and interpret those initial explanations and interpretations and c. (refer to n.14 *sub.* for further discussion and digression). Even this footnote *a/b* interpretation and explanation can be incorrectly interpreted or in some different way than I intend it to be interpreted.



**Incorporated Into Something a Little Bit Cleaner, well no, but More, well, Interesting and Palpable:**

The novel invites this kind of work to be done on it while simultaneously (as it's been stated) not allowing the work to be singular or necessarily extant. (This kind of work meaning this Interpretation and Explanation, this Interested Clarification. Very Hegelian) And so to actually do This Work—and what really gets the goat in theoretical/conceptual terms—the essay would have to be—HAVE to be—on the same level as the novel, i.e. DEFYING passive consumption and/by DEFYING Interpretation and Explanation as an essay. An essayist could NOT write an essay that the layman could pick up and by the end walk away w/ that lethargic but nice feeling of “oh okay, that's cool” b/c that feeling, unless one is incredibly knowledgeable and well-read already, is induced by just reading straight through something w/o any work being done to understand and to COMPLETELY grasp every and all concept(s) presented w/in the essay. So therefore an essay specifically written for *IJ* would need to be highly difficult and yet at the same time be easily accessible to a reader who could work to TRY and comprehend it. The essay would HAVE to model the novel itself, at least for starters, in terms of writing style.

**(c<sub>1</sub>) Terms of Writing Style:**

- 1) Mainly that of a kind of idiosyncratic charm built in which could, more or less, allow the reader to judge the character/tone of the author and/or character the author might wish to employ<sup>12</sup> if it were to be that kind of essay.

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<sup>12</sup> Throughout *IJ* DFW employs a technique where each section is told or written or conversed through varied narrators. Most notable—and most extravagant—are the sections concerned w/ “yrstruly” and “Wardine.” These sections appear in 1<sup>st</sup> person omniscient and/or experiential (i.e. the narrator knows pretty much everything going on b/c of their immediate experience w/ the story being told). In the sections dealing w/ “yrstruly” the reader sees this: “The AM were wicked bright and us a bit sick however we scored our wake ups boosting some items at a sidewalk sale in the Harvard Squar where it were warm upping and the snow coming off onnings and then later Poor Tony ran across an old Patty citizen type of his old acquaintance from like the Cape and Poor Tony got over and pretended like he would give a blow job On The House and we got the citizen to get in his ride with us and crewed on him good and we got enough \$ off the Patty type to get straightened out for true all day and crewed on him hard and C wanted we should elemonade the Patty's map for keeps and everything like that and take his ride to this understanding slope strip shop he knows in Chinatown but poor Tony turns white as a shit and said by no means and put up

2) Grammatical/syntactical/spelling errors would have to be not per se *abundant*, but should, for reasons of relatability to the reader and humor, be at least in places where, again appropriate to character, but more importantly at least reference themselves as incorrect for literary device and a sort of comment on the overall importance of grammar/syntax/spelling w/in in the culture. Also, n.b., this would engage the reader, i.e. give reason to figure out why exactly the author chose to create the neologism and/or purposefully grammatical error<sup>13</sup>—if there was a purpose at all.

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an argument and everything like that and we just left the type there in his vehicle off Mem Dr we broke the jaw for insentive not to eat no cheese and C insisted and was not 2Bdenied and took off one ear which there was a mess and everything like that and then C throws the ear away after in a dumster so yrstrulys' like so what was the exact pernt to that like.” (pg. 128-129) N has just one sentence. Further mor we get the pikchur here of sum sort of caracter, possbly a hairoin addic, and the grammeritacle issus and misspellings appear just enuf 2 allow a reeder to understand the kind of person who might have thees kinds of drug problems as not being educated or well versed. The point of this is 2 maybe relate a sertan kind of sadness of the situashun and to give substance to a caracter who might not have any substance if the nartive were to be red and writin in standerd english. Xcuse me... By using multiple narrators DFW accomplishes a few things: (1) there is distance between the authorial self and the novel, therefore eliminating any personal affiliation w/ the specific story line that may be flowing at any given moment (this would be advantageous if an author wanted to allow for a free, subjective reading of a novel w/o any prejudices being implied by the author, just by the characters. Open interpretation and all that). (2) It allows for the characters to take part in telling the story rather than some know-it-all author. This creates a sense of actual story telling and aliveness that would hardly be present otherwise. (3) The reader is able to experience multiple POVs and this allows the reader to listen (read) and judge the story/character/all-of-the-above for themselves w/o interruption from some God-like-finger poised at the margin scolding and saying, “This is what I intend for you to take from this passage, bitch.”

<sup>13</sup> In a section much later in the novel (pg. 539) the reader is thrown into the nocturnal activities of one Randy Lenz. Lenz resides at Ennet House Drug and Alcohol Recovery House (*sic*) (another prominent character locale/major-action-place in the novel) Suffice it to say that what his role is w/in the novel isn't all that important at this juncture, but his traits as a human are: Lenz narrates his own sections while they (the sections) still appear in the third person, which is confusing but that's just how it pans out. Lenz's section is disturbing to say the least, but what is really pertinent here is that he is helpless when it comes to correct usage. Lenz refers to his “recurring dreams”<sup>a</sup> (pg. 558) a/b three times w/o realizing anything amiss; he says “straightforwarder” (pg. 554) w/ the same consequentless result. My personal favorite, and the one that relates most to *Terms of Writing Style* (2) is this: “Lenz claims to remember some experiences which he says happened to him *in vitro*.” (pg. 559) “*In vitro*” of course, in Latin, means “in glass” and of course Lenz meant “*in vivo*” which means “in utero” and “in utero” means “in the womb” and so we see that Lenz's mistake refers us elsewhere to a few aspects w/in the larger piece of the novel: (a) Himself (the father of Hal Incandenza a.k.a J.O.I. (initials, James Orin Incandenza, also French for *joy, glee* (which is funny b/c Himself killed himself))) produced a movie titled *The Man Who Began to Suspect He Was Made of Glass*; a movie which features “A man undergoing intensive psychotherapy [who] discovers that he is brittle, hollow, and transparent to others, and becomes either transcendently enlightened or schizophrenic.” (pg.989n24) This movie is obviously a process of discovery of the self, which, of course, is partly

And for seconders the voice the author used—as way of mimicking (most of) the novel<sup>14</sup>—would HAVE to be conversational in disposition and sans jargonized rhetoric which (w-)could potentially, if it were to appear, breech the proverbial ontological line (the jargonized rhetoric (w-)could) and thus engender the needless yet inherent *a priori* psycho/philo-babble that, consequently, is ultimately importunate and, if you will, *emblazoned* into any symposium of the narritival work; thus, however, in retrospect, negating any alethiological and exegetical (of text in question and, respectively, of descriptive altercation authorized by authorial persons) endeavors w/ regards to ease and/or stupefaction

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one of the novel's major themes. And (b) Joelle, by way of eliminating her map, cooks cocaine into crack w/in a glass tube (“experiences... *in vitro*”) also along the same lines Lenz is a cokehead and, in fact, makes this Latinate mistake while high on cocaine. And still, something interesting furtherly, experiences in glass (when actually meaning in the womb) could point to some “test-tube baby”/artificial insemination that conceived Lenz—but that isn't all that important, just a nice red herring to catch. DFW does this for what I like to think of as “character creation” meaning that the mistakes and slip ups give the character in question more realness, more aliveivity.

<sup>a</sup> N.b. *Infinite Jest* is all a/b recurring and reoccurring and cyclical habits of nature, humans, culture, government, conversation, reasoning, et. all. And so this mistake w/ recurring is appropriate. (also N.b Marathe<sup>a1</sup> mixing up recircling in place of recycling.)

<sup>a1</sup>Marathe is a secret agent/assassin for the Quebecois separatist movement A.F.R. (*Les Assassins de Fauteuils Rollents* (The Wheelchair Assassins... don't ask)) He constantly confuses American words.

<sup>14</sup> Not particularly though. An essay wouldn't HAVE to mimic the novel in this regard b/c DFW philosophy states (or is guessed at and/or analyzed via aloof scholarly types into...) that if one is to gain any *true* knowledge (not just that of an encyclopedic nature) of any subject/aspect/corner/degenerative-part of life then one must go it on one's own per se. Meaning that there is no real knowledge gained or introduced w/ the mere quoting of an author's opinion, to spatchcock them *supra* conversational or essay-esque theses as it were, b/c reciting a learned regimen of impressive, scholarly facts (e.g. “Well Flaubert says...” & “I believe it was Barthes who said...” etc.) propagates the well known appearance of those pretentious asses who, it's obvious, have never had any original brain function since they finished their freshmen year at Dartmouth. DFW is insanely well versed in the laying-down-a-broad-definition-and/or-aspect-of-life-and-then-quite-bluntly-telling-the-reader-that-they-(the reader)-should-expand-study-or-disregard-whatever-it-is-he-(DFW)-presents kind of writing style. But then again, all this postulation here is just (a) spouting an authors opinion/idea and (b) contradictory to the sub-point I am trying to make in the pre-essay instructional above (we could add a (c): contradicting the contradictions of the above instructional while contradicting the footnote's own contradicting contradictions as well—I don't know where that leaves us...). Furthermore, this talent of DFW is made apparent through previously discussed issues of contradiction and differentiation between all-of-the-above (a.k.a in case you forgot: philosophy/ideas/values/ethical codes/etc.). This laissez-faire approach to all-of-the-above is very complimentary to a progression of multifaceted POVs of life at large. Basically DFW submits an open-ended questioning of everything for consideration of the willing reader.

of the (or *any*) lexicon w/in said novel/novel-description. So ergo an adopted conversational tone would do three very important things: (1) disallow meaning to slip by the “less-inclined” reader, ultimately encouraging those w/o as much “scholarly” and/or “literary” experience to feel welcome and/or interested. (2) “[creates] a faux sloppiness...enabl[ing] discuss[ion] w/ varying degrees of fluency...” (pg. 70 *Infinite Jest: A Reader’s Guide*; which was quoting pg. 15 of Dale Peck’s “Well, duh” (appearing in *London Review of Books*) which critiqued/criticized or did something w/ *Infinite Jest* in mind). (3) B/c conversation warrants digression<sup>15</sup>—and digression warrants explicated points and explicated points warrant a deeper and fuller cognizance of said conversation and since a deeper and fuller cognizance of a conversation warrants an appreciation of it (the conversation) and an appreciation warrants enjoyment and the enjoyment of an understood conversation warrants a hunger for the continuation of conversation and b/c a continuation of conversation which is knowledge- and information-based discourse w/in public settings begets knowledge- and information-based *thinking*—b/c of all this, I submit that digression used properly is a main catalyst for a full-fledged return to an informed and knowledgeable manner of public relations, interconnections, and individual thought (places where, recently, society has drifted).

Thirdly and I think the most bestest reason the essay would be interesting to at least *try* to write is b/c of the infinite amount of *fun* the author could have relating the novel not just via textual content but by experimenting w/ style, voice, layering, Microsoft Word<sup>16</sup>, contradictory theses, non(and/or anti-)-theses giving

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<sup>15</sup> I.e. rants, diversions, footnotes, parenthetical side quips, and tangential seeming-bullshit that isn’t actually bullshit more like sub-sub-sub (etc.) sections/notes that may divert the attention but can also reiterate a point so perfectly that a reader would have no choice *but* to understand the original argument. But and then *that*—the removal of choice—may be counterproductive to the original point b/c the original point—at least if it w/re dealing w/ fiction that is pointed in this direction, as most fiction *should* be striving for—is to produce meaning, thought, and *true* education and forcing all that is more or less analogous to torturing a prisoner until he tells you what you want to know, whether or not he (the prisoner) legitimately knows *anything*. DFW exquisitely creates an atmosphere for this (w/o the whole torture/prisoner thing) by using a non-linear narrative and the Notes and Errata section (see section **(a)**).

<sup>16</sup> I’m sure one of these symbolic representations of ownership are appropriate, maybe... no...

way to semblances of could-be-theses which are actually not theses at all just rants, and seeming nonsense which—if actually taken time to carefully understand—would reveal deeper truths a/b the novel and/or life. Literally any/everything would be fair game<sup>17</sup> thus moving the authorial scope and direction to some higher understanding of the novel and all of it's many parts for his (the author's) benefit as well as the reader's.

However, just being interesting is not enough for the prospective essayist; especially one who feels the need to stay absolutely true to what the prospective essay is going to describe (in this case *Infinite Jest*) and—let's be honest—going to paraphrase. I use *paraphrase* because that is all an essayist *can* do when working w/in the realm of fiction (and therefore abstraction). And so, considering all of the fore-mentioned prospects and impossibilities and contradictions etc., there still remains Jorge Luis Borges. This guy Jorge Luis Borges wrote a parable titled “Of Exactitude in Science” and this parable leaves a taste of dismay and head-hung shame in the mouth of any prospective essayist worth his salt and/or pepper:

...In that Empire, the craft of Cartography attained such Perfection that the Map of a Single province covered the space of an entire City, and the Map of the Empire itself an entire Province. In the course of Time, these Extensive maps were found somehow wanting, and so the College of Cartographers evolved a Map of the Empire that was of the same Scale as the Empire and that coincided with it point for point. Less attentive to the Study of Cartography, succeeding Generations came to judge a map of such Magnitude cumbersome, and, not without Irreverence, they abandoned it to the Rigours of sun and Rain. In the western Deserts, tattered Fragments of the Map are still to be found, Sheltering an occasional Beast or beggar; in the whole Nation, no other relic is left of the Discipline of Geography.<sup>18</sup>

The moral of the story is this: a *truly* precise and accurate map of a territory (whether it be an empire or a novel) must match that territory perfectly; and when map matches territory there will be no room for

most likely all of them: ®/©/™

<sup>17</sup> Mainly b/c w/in fiction—*IJ* being no exception—there are limitless rules to break as far as language, Standard Written English, form, content, structure, supposed laws of non-contradiction, and anything-else-you-might-think-of goes. And if the essay/ist were obliged to mimic a work of fiction then the same rules would—by a kind of superjacent proxy—have to apply to the essay/ist as well. Only though as long as w/in the essay those fiction-unique rules were broken as they are in fiction: w/ a specific goal in mind, i.e. the brokenness of the rule is progressing or disrupting an idea/deep-seated human value; *purpose* must be inherent in the destruction of the constructs that hold things together.

<sup>18</sup> (Fictionally credited to “Suarez Miranda, Viajes de varones prudentes, Libro IV, Cap. XLV, Lerida, 1658.” Original credit placed w/ “Jorge Luis Borges; March 1946 edition of *Los Anales de Buenos Aires, año 1, no. 3.*” But quoted here from “A Universal History of Infamy” (translated by Norman Thomas de Giovanni), Penguin Books, London, 1975.”)

territory so one or the other must be destroyed<sup>19</sup>. The reason this parable is important and dismaying to an essayist presented w/ the task of compiling an essay for *IJ* is, or at least should be, damn evident. But just for a further understanding of this much-needed distinction between map and territory (representation and reality, dream and awake, fiction and nonfiction, connections and missed connections,<sup>20</sup> entertainment and experience) let us journey into the bowels of *IJ* itself and see where the novel stands on notions such as this.

Nearly a third of the way through *IJ* (pg. 321) the reader is presented w/ a heading<sup>21</sup> claiming the date to be

“8 NOVEMBER

YEAR OF THE DEPEND ADULT UNDERGARMENT

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<sup>19</sup> And how can you tell the difference between reality and representation if they coincide perfectly<sup>a</sup>? And, even if you could tell the difference somehow, which one would you pick to destroy? What would keep you from choosing a mere representation of reality? And but then would it even *matter* if you were to pick representation over reality? Do you care? These aren't rhetorical, answer the questions.

<sup>a</sup> Could the “succeeding Generations” in the parable tell the difference?

<sup>20</sup> See n.72 *sub*.

<sup>21</sup> The novel is, according to Greg Carlisle, split into 28 thematically unified chapters. The beginnings of the chapters are signified w/ shaded circles. W/in the chapters there are sections that are signified either by a small spacing in the paragraphs or by a date, a heading, a place, or sometimes all three. W/in a certain section of the novel (and I believe anywhere else the narrator of the section in question wishes to express his/her individual subjectivity) there appear headings such as this: “HAL INCANDEZA’S FIRST EXTANT WRITTEN COMMENT ON ANYTHING EVEN REMOTELY FILMIC, SUBMITTED IN MR. OGILVIE’S SEVENTH GRADE ‘INTRODUCTION TO ENTERTAINMENT STUDIES’ (2 TERMS, REQUIRED), ENFIELD TENNIS ACADEMY, 21 FEBRUARY IN THE YEAR OF THE PERDUE WONDERCHICKEN, @ FOUR YEARS AFTER THE DEMISE OF BROADCAST TELEVISION, ONE YEAR AFTER DR. JAMES O. INCANDEZA PASSED FROM THIS LIFE, A SUBMISSION RECEIVING JUST A B/B+, DESPITE OVERALL POSITIVE FEEDBACK, MOSTLY BECAUSE ITS CONCLUDING ¶ WAS NEITHER SET UP BY THE ESSAY’S BODY NOR SUPPORTED, OGILVIE POINTED OUT, BY ANYTHING MORE THAN SUBJECTIVE INTUITION AND RHETORICAL FLOURISH.” (pg. 140). These kinds of drawn out headings are used in place of the simple stating of the day, month and subsidized year b/c they allow the narrator to express their individuality where subsidized time reduces personal, subjective history<sup>a</sup>. By distinguishing the placement of when the paper was written w/ a before-and-after kind of timeline the un-ordinal era’s timeline is disrupted and therefore leaves some squeeze-in space for the individual, personal, subjective, and true. And it seems that the people of DFW’s future (our present) need this kind of squeeze-in space for the sake of mental health.

<sup>a</sup> See n.7<sup>a</sup> *supra*.

## INTERDEPENDENCE DAY

### *GAUDEAMUS IGITUR*<sup>22</sup>,

and the section immediately jumps into the Tennis Academy's celebrations of "Interdependence Day"<sup>23</sup> which includes a game the young kids play called *Eschaton*<sup>24</sup>. *Eschaton* is played on tennis courts that represent the earth and certain sections of the courts represent the countries of the earth. You see where this is going yet? Any how, the kids, by means of very intense calculus and a computer programmed w/ decision trees<sup>25</sup> and layers upon layers of acronyms for countries, alliances, and specific situations or actions (e.g. INDIR for Infliction of Death, Destruction, and Incapacitation of Response (pg. 324)) or circumstances that all get very mixed up w/in the head of the reader and of yrstruly. The point, though, of the game, is essentially to strategically defeat and debilitate countries/alliances other than your own by means of "firing" "nuclear warheads" at specific landmarks—e.g. socks as a target of interest—"nuclear warheads" here being old tennis balls that are "so dead and bald they can't even be used for service drills anymore" (pg.322) and "firing" here meaning lobbing the old tennis balls w/ meticulous aim via tennis racket (of course this is easily done by the Tennis Academy kids). To get on w/ it: w/in this section there is an absurd amount of mistaking the game for reality w/in the narrator's word/pgrase usage and also w/in the activity of the game itself. E.g. "A couple ostensible world leaders run here and there in a rather unstatesmenlike fashion with their open mouth directed at the sky trying to catch bits of the fall's first snow." (pg.332) and the tennis balls are always referred to as "warheads." The most

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<sup>22</sup> From a semi-reliable source (Wikipedia.org): "De Brevitate Vitae" ("On the Shortness of Life"), more commonly known as "Gaudeamus Igitur" ("Let Us Rejoice") or just "Gaudeamus", is a popular academic commercium song in many European countries, mainly sung or performed at university graduation ceremonies. Despite its use as a formal graduation hymn, it is a jocular, light-hearted composition that pokes fun at university life. The song dates to the early 1700s, based on a Latin manuscript from 1287. It is in the tradition of *carpe diem* ("seize the day"), with its exhortations to enjoy life. It was known as a beer-drinking song in many ancient universities, and is the official song of many schools, colleges, universities, institutions, and student societies.

<sup>23</sup> I don't really want to add more to the footnote... but okay, basically around the turn of the millennium in *IJ* America doesn't have any foreign enemies (meaning the U.S. should focus on its *appearance*) and so the president (Johnny Gentle, Famous Crooner, OCD hygiene fanatic, once Las Vegas Entertainer (a nice shout out to *Amusing Ourselves to Death* by Neil Postman)) decides (in a long, convoluted, really un-summerizable way) that North America will become the Organization of North American Nations (O.N.A.N. ha ha) by U.S.A. essentially conjoining Canada and Mexico to territorial U.S.A. So the long and short of it is that "Interdependence Day" is the day that that happened in a/b 2000-2001ish.

<sup>24</sup> From the Greek *eschatos* meaning *last*. Normally seen as *eschatology* meaning *study of the last*; in reference to the last moments of history.

<sup>25</sup> Again, kind of like the leaf thing at n.6 *supra*.

important part however is when a character begins to claim “now that it’s snowing the snow totally affects blast area and fire area and pulse-intensity and maybe also has fallout implications...” (pg.333). And, to summarize, this indiscrimination between map and territory is a mistake that sets a chain of events in motion which (a) reverberate through the rest of the novel and (b) let’s us see the consequences of mistaking map for territory.

**(d) Why Mistaking Map for Territory is Indeed a Huge Mistake**

Simple: *the map is not the territory*; what effects the map does not affect the territory and vicey versey.

**(d<sub>1</sub>) How (d) Relates to Writing an Essay a/b A Novel so Daunting and Explicit and In-depth as *Infinite Jest***

B/c if, like we’ve seen, one wants to relate something true and sincere to the original then one has to create it verbatim, precise, and essentially copywrite-infringe upon it b/c to be 100% honest and to relate 100% of the knowledge/understanding therein of whatever might be of interest (in this case *IJ*) there can be nothing left out, no mystery left unexplained<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Except though, that’s kind of humorous b/c *IJ* leaves an incredible amount unexplained and up to the reader to piece together (*no passive consumption*), but b/c *IJ* is attempting to relate and reflect life in some manner (just as most fiction attempts to do but even then fiction tries to *expand* upon where life leaves off, or, some may think (rightly), fiction tries to *shrink* life into explainable pieces and foci and then that just throws the whole concept into a whacked-out belligerent self-contradictory and –awareness that belies anything of blaiaaaaaaaaaaaaa—), the narrative would *have* to leave things up to the reader and out of reach b/c that is how life *is* when you get right down to it: nobody knows everything and you have to go find it out but sometimes you just *fucking can’t* b/c everything is so intricate or explosive or *goddamn enormous* or even goddamn infinitesimally *microscopic*. But in this regard *IJ* and DFW are (were) of course significantly overwhelmed and somewhat insufficient b/c they are (were) attempting to reflect life w/in a novel (itself) and that, of course, is just not possible. And further down the hole→ if an essay were wanting to reflect some meaning a/b *IJ* then the essay would *also* have to reflect life summarized/possibly-expanded more than *IJ* summarized/possibly-expanded life and that *too* isn’t fucking possible b/c it’s a goddamn essay and therefore limited to less ink, paper, authorial knowledge, subject of essay, (even more so than the novel was) and so there are so many *more limitations* and ergo there is no bloody point in attempting to do anything by way of defining or recreating or explaining-to-hopeful-reader-of-said-novel/essay what could possibly be some of the most important things/aspects/schools-of-thought to consider and instead the essayist will have to resign to a clusterfucked half-semblance of pseudo-reasonable and almost-logical dissection of *why* there is no fucking way to even *begin* anything *near* an essay that would actually do any justice to *IJ* (or maybe *anything* but let’s leave that alone for now) as (a) a novel



and no comma missing but then that creates a forgery of the original and a forgery isn't true at all it's just a contrived and pointless *thing* b/c the original already exists (but really, the original is just a *thing* as well...) and then so what's the purpose of even *trying* to create something true and honest a/b something already in existence (or something original even)? But to take it a bit further, if an essayist using his art (the essay) were to expand on the original (b/c, really, he'd have to as to get concrete understanding across to the reader-of-essay and hopeful-reader-of-novel, (b/c one of many points in reading an essay is so you can tell if you'd want to read the material the essay is on, no?) b/c if an essayist just left out what the novel left out then there would be no point in trying to explain...right? The reasoning being b/c if there was no explanation of the mystery's of the novel then it'd just be the novel...), explaining every small detail, every interconnection, every seemingly or otherwise inconsequential but purposeful grammatical/syntactical/whatever error and/or blunder, every philosophy/idea/abstraction/value/danger/etc. presented, and even every character (etc.) then basically... okay imagine a *guide* to an amusement park or something that was (the guide was) actually *better* than the actual place itself, what would be the point of the amusement park or whatever? And then if the amusement park or whatever were to be shut down b/c everyone was just buying the guides for chrissakes then what would be the point of the *guide*? I'll tell you: it wouldn't be a damn *guide* anymore, it would be the neo-amusement park or whatever, but then it would *still only be a forgery* of the original just w/ added perks and therefore something else entirely, at first negating the original but then exemplifying itself as *new* and *original*. So if an essay is aiming to *explain* a fucking novel as insanely in-depth and rigorous as *IJ* then the *essay* would have to be even *more* in-depth and *more* fucking confusing and even *longer* than *IJ*. There's no way to tell how fucking long the essay could last, how much

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(b) as a brilliant work of art (c) as the collected thoughts of a genius (d) as a pretty damn good suggestion on how to view and work through life or maybe just how to avoid-/bring yourself close to- certain terrible/brilliant aspects of life, either one and/or both and/or all.

time it may consume, how insanely *contrived* and *pointless* it would ultimately *be*, how fuc—

**(d<sub>1</sub><sup>1</sup>) But if the essayist was trying to create something better than the original then could this essayist even be called an essayist? or would he just be a conartist? a dealer in false goods? Or would he be a non-fiction novelist? I guess title doesn't matter; but really, what happens to the essayist who honestly 100% attempts at fully explaining the material he is assigned (either by a magazine, university or his own conscious)?**

Truth is he probably goes insane trying, or quits. And if he were to accomplish his goals then would that shatter some border which shouldn't be crossed? Would he destroy the line between map and territory? Or would the line just be reinforced?

**(d<sub>1</sub><sup>1</sup>) But then what happens to the *original* in this scenario? If the map/territory line is destroyed then what happens to the territory?**

I think that if the line is crossed and/or destroyed then the only logical exit route is a blurring, a combination, a consensus, a compromise.

**(d<sub>1</sub><sup>1</sup>) But that just becomes convoluted and innately pointless and the author of both would...**

...you know what would happen, the art forms would cease to exist. Fiction and essay would implode upon one another.

**(d<sub>1</sub><sup>1</sup><sub>1</sub>) Chaos:**

$$|\delta Z(t)| \approx e^{\lambda t} |\delta Z_0|$$

**& Self Similarity:**

$$\mathcal{L} = (X, S, \{f_s\}_{s \in S})$$

**& Heine definition of  
Continuity:<sup>27</sup>**

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} x_n = L,$$

**& Frequency of  
Certain Language  
used being  
measurable w/ (s) as  
distribution and as  
long as (s) is > than 1:**

$$\zeta(s) = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^s} < \infty.$$

**& Reductio ad  
absurdum:**

$$A \rightarrow (B \wedge \neg B) \vdash \neg A$$

**& Double negation  
elimination:**

$$\neg \neg A \vdash A$$

**& Undefinability  
theorem:**

There is no *L*-formula

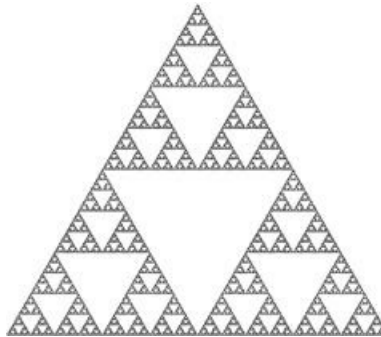
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<sup>27</sup> Basically saying that small changes in the input result in small changes in the output causing a continuous flux and infinite fluidity w/in a given aspect of something.

*True(x)* which defines  $T^*$ . That is, there is no  $L$ -formula  $True(x)$  such that for every  $L$ -formula  $x$ ,  $True(x) \leftrightarrow x$  is true.

( $d_1'$ ) Maybe though it wouldn't be all that dramatic...?

( $d_1'$ ) But, hmm... here: please, let's work our way back from all that... although it *is* true that to deny all of those inner workings would be to deny the territory. So instead of redacting them keep them in mind, just don't focus on them *too* closely or else you'll begin to see something like this:



which is a Sierpinski gasket and, if you were to zoom on just one equilateral triangle you'd notice the pattern repeating ad infinitum.<sup>28</sup> And to see that just makes a

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<sup>28</sup> "That's one of things structurally that's going on [*in LJ*]... it's actually structured like something called a Sierpinski gasket which is a very primitive kind of pyramidal fractal. Although what was structured as a Sierpinski gasket was the first... was the draft that I delivered to Michael [*Peach, editor at Little, Brown*] in '94. And it went through I think some *mercy* cuts so it's probably kind of a lopsided Sierpinski gasket now. But its interesting, that's one of the structural ways its supposed to kind of come together...but it [*a Sierpinski gasket*] looks basically like a pyramid on acid with certain interconnections between parts of them that are visually kind of astonishing and then the mathematical explanations of them are interesting... It seems to me that so much of pre-millennial life in America consists of enormous amounts of what seems like discreet bits of information coming in and that the real kind of intellectual adventure is finding ways to relate them to each other, to find larger patterns and meanings." David Foster Wallace

person lose their proverbial/allegorical marbles—as witnessed by Kate Gompert, a secondary character,<sup>29</sup> who, by proxy, admits that a large, dark, “triangular horror” (pg.650) is inside of her that she has let loose herself; hence my belief that this admission is a hint at DFW’s “pyramid on acid” that has “certain interconnections between parts” and it also structuring his novel in a way that shows his view of “pre-millennial life in America” to be *like* a Sierpinski gasket and that he thinks the “real intellectual adventure is finding ways to relate them [*the interconnections*] to each other” and to find “larger patterns and meanings.” (n.26 for reference) (Kate Gompert, in *IJ*, is pretty much always haunted by the “triangular horror” and is pretty nuts when it comes to suicidal tendencies and the reasoning(s) behind the attempts; shows you what a gasket can do. Just theory.)

(d<sub>1</sub>) Ahem...I feel as if I’ve “wandered disastrously into the sort of pseudophilosophical mental labyrinth that...” a good amount of pseudointellectual essayists “are always wandering into and getting trapped in and wasting huge amounts of time inside...[and]...cannot negotiate [any] way out... and by the time [the original issue]...ha[sn’t] been resolved the abstract problem that put [me] into the labyrinth [is] abandoned [altogether].” (pg.1048n269) However I am confident I can somehow get out if I just...

(d) The map and territory can coincide however; we see it everyday. We use maps to get some place, but we don’t use territories to get to maps (circumstances permitting) and we don’t use territories to explain maps, really. The mistake lies

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interview w/ *Bookworm* of KCRW-Santa Monica.

<sup>29</sup> Fun Fact: DFW used the name of a real person that he had known back in the day, subsequently leading to legal action against him (the Kate Gompert in *IJ* is suicidal, sad, and a marijuana addict; also she claims herself to be a “*shitty lay*” on pg.782).

in replacing territory for map or map or territory.<sup>30</sup> The mistake is to confuse reality and the representation of that reality and ultimately replace it w/ something false. Though there is no mistake in *having* a map for the territory.

The reverberating consequences of mistaking map for territory are pure examples of cause and effect and it is not a coincidence that DFW chose to start the chain of events (what the chain-of-events is isn't too important for this preemptive pre-essay instructional) w/ the disastrous game of Eschaton (disastrous b/c a few kids get injured, one even ending up w/ a computer smashed over his head, eliciting extensive surgery to clear away the precarious broken glass encircling his neck and life-supporting arteries. The computer literally encases the character's head; complete w/ eyeholes cut into it, it's damn funny). By confusing map for territory the characters are injured either physically or mentally (mentally as in w/ Hal Incandenza who is somewhat forced to subside his marijuana use and addiction which causes "loss-trauma" or *anhedonia*<sup>31</sup> which is explained at length on pages 692-698 via Kate Gompert). So

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<sup>30</sup> The term *map* connotes a way to see a representation of something and this is why DFW creates the slang "eliminating one's map" in his near future (our present) to connote killing yourself or killing someone else. If *map* is taken to mean the representation of our Self that we present to society then it is entirely appropriate b/c when we present ourselves to society we are presenting a social self that is not the true "version" of us, it is only a representation, a false front, a kind of guide to who we are or might be. Q.v. pg. 144-151 where DFW presents the reader w/ an interesting anecdote on "WHY... WITHIN LIKE 16 MONTHS...THE TUMESCENT DEMAND CURVE FOR 'VIDEOPHONY' SUDDENLY COLLAPSED LIKE A KICKED TENT, SO THAT BY [Y.D.A.U.]...THE AVERAGE U.S. PHONE-USER DECID[ED] THAT S/HE ACTUALLY *PREFERRED* THE RETROGRADE OLD LOW-TECH BELL-ERA VOICE-ONLY TELEPHONIC INTERFACE..." (pg. 145) The reasoning being b/c users of 'video-phony' (nice pun, DFW) were so disenchanting at having to pay such close attention to their 'video-phony' conversation partner (b/c, the reasoning goes, when one is simply on the phone w/o video, one can do whatever one wants i.e. "perform a close tactile blemish-scan of your chin" (pg. 146) w/o "the thought that your phonemate was perhaps also devoting a good percentage of her attention to a close tactile blemish-scan." (Ibid.)) and also so distraught by seeing their own face (on a smaller screen superimposed on the screen where the phonemate appeared. Like present day Skype<sup>a</sup>) that technology continuously progressed until there were little "tableaus" that were like camera lenses one placed over the camera part that housed pictures of models on them so that they the model pictures were projected to the phonemate's videophone screen and soon everyone was just conversing to pictures of models w/ full knowledge of what the hell it was they were doing. Anyways, the point being that humans are so concerned w/ their "map" that they would go so far as creating a map *for* their map. Get it? Fucked right? So this "mistaking the map for the territory" thing plays in on a ridiculous amount of levels and works on all of them just as well as in the parable by Borges and in *IJ*'s Eschaton.

<sup>a</sup> I'm sure warrants a ® or © or ™.

<sup>31</sup> "*Anhedonia* was apparently coined by Ribot, a Continental Frenchman, who in his 19<sup>th</sup>-century *Psychologie des Sentiments* says he means it to denote the psychoequivalent of *analgesia*, which is the neurologic suppression of pain." (*IJ* pg.1053n280)

essentially, what I'm trying to convey here is that the prospective essayist of *IJ* is doomed to perpetuate these almost radically involuted and/or dysphoric<sup>32</sup> consequences of cause and effect if he begins even attempting *to attempt* to deliberately (b/c writing an essay *is* deliberate) explain *Inifinite Jest* in anyway that isn't physically handing over the tangible form of the novel itself to his (the essayist's) prospective audience—and that just causes negation of the essayist (see **(d<sub>1</sub><sup>1</sup> 1<sub>1</sub>) Double negation elimination** *supra.*).

Ergo the essayist, as a kind of awkward conciliatory conclusion—and for all truths/intents/purposes/conceptual theories/etc.—, is just a middleman. Or to be allegorical a/b it: the literary equivalent of a high school semi-friend/acquaintance you talk to every once and awhile on those special occasions who won't give out his pot-dealer's number to anyone and is (the semi-friend/acquaintance) dead set on staying in his Go-To-Guy position for indiscernible reasons. And so, in the end, to truly understand any section or chapter or page or word or phrase or *anything* in the novel readers would have to prepare w/ extensive research beforehand<sup>33</sup> to understand it all for- and by-themselves or—quite honestly—their knowledge will tend towards incompleteness and insufficiency; their experience w/ the piece (essay *or* novel) will consist of meaningless abstractions related in a way where only the thing itself can describe itself to any degree of fluency. But all this is really just a small stipulation of the larger pretense that *The Novel and/or Essay Only Exist if the Reader of Essay and/or Novel Actually Cares*.<sup>34</sup> And so, understandably—and rather annoyingly—w/in that pretense there is a whole other proverbial can of something diverging and contemptible to the presented conceptual pre-essay outline instruction thingy invoked above. And thus:

**A Post Script to Conceptual Preemptive Pre-Essay Instruction/Explanation on Why Misunderstanding is Probably Imminent and, Actually, Almost Expected and Warranted w/in The Forth Coming Essay. Mentioned Post Script Being a Discussion of the Pretense That The Novel and/or Essay Only Exists if a Possible Reader of Essay and/or Novel Would Actually Care Enough *A Priori*, As it Were, to Read the Essay and/or Novel Given That it (the Novel/Essay)—it Could Easily be Said—is Discriminatory Towards an Apathetic Attitude Towards Endeavors Such as Careful and**

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<sup>32</sup> **adjective**-[dis-fawr-ik, -for-]: *To be in a state of dissatisfaction, anxiety, restlessness, or fidgeting.*

<sup>33</sup> And if they wanted to understand the essay properly the Extensive Research would have to be reading the novel w/ the Extensive Research that comes along w/ that whole endeavor.

<sup>34</sup> All this really means is that if the reader didn't care then the publication in question wouldn't have a very long shelf life. *IJ* has been around and prominent for over ten years.

**Introspective Reading, Understanding Understanding (*sic*), Self Reliant Education, So On So Forth<sup>35</sup>.**

B/c apathy is rampantly possible (and b/c statistical evidence shows that 76% of average Americans are apathetic towards three main subjects (i.e. Politics, Where They Get Their Money, and Literature<sup>36</sup>)<sup>37</sup>) and yet novel and essay (in all forms) still exist, so we must get to the bottom of the question that is begged from the above-mentioned supposition. That question would be: *Why Should the Reader Care Enough to “Allow” the Existence of the Novel and/or Essay?* The Easy Answer is that b/c *IJ* in particular is such a vast and all encompassing book it follows that it (the novel) would have some purpose, some substance, some higher moral<sup>38</sup> value to extend towards the curious and willing reader. To back up this Easy Answer we have Dave Eggers, who wrote the foreword to the new edition of *Infinite Jest* in 2006:

In commissioning this forward, the publisher wanted a very brief and breezy essay that might convince a new reader of *Infinite Jest* that the book is approachable, effortless even—a barrel of monkeys’ worth of fun to read. Well. It’s easy to agree with the former, more difficult to advocate the latter. The book is approachable, yes, because it doesn’t include complex scientific or historical content, nor does it require any particular expertise or erudition. As verbose as it is, and as long as it is, it never wants to punish you for some knowledge you lack, nor does it want to send you to the dictionary every few pages. And yet, while it uses a familiar enough vocabulary, make no mistake *Infinite Jest* is something *other*.

and,

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<sup>35</sup> Including but w/ room for expansion: drying up four packs of cheap *Bic* pens and eventually replacing them w/ those really nice *G2 bold* pens only to realize those too dry up faster than you’d think (and are painfully expensive, like \$6.85 a four-pack) and so finally settling on some nondescript faux-classy looking pens branded w/ only the word TUL on one side; completely filling a 5-course *Five Star*® notebook (and then some) w/ random notes you may or may not need but keep for the sole purpose of gaining a self-righteous sense of accomplishment; spending over two months in your campus library/basement-of-house-w/-desk-w/-lamp-and-computer-trying-to-get-out-of-ear-shot-of-excruciatingly-loud-stoner-“doom”-metal-(whatever that is)-which-, -w/o-fail-, -is-played-incessantly-at-all-hours-of-the-day-; -said-metal-also-coming-w/-complimentary-drunk-roommates-at-equally-sporadic-hours/coffe shops; etc. Please feel free to add any in red ink.

<sup>36</sup> W/ sub-groups pertaining to Literature including *Real Literature* (as defined by the 2009 edition of *O.E.D.*), *The Propagation of Knowledge*, *The Ability to Come Off as Intelligent and Thus Demean Individual Interests or Lack Thereof*, etc.

<sup>37</sup> This is only a pompous (yet experiential) guesstimate brought to you by one M. Badger III.

<sup>38</sup> Or if that specific term doesn’t rub you the right way then here, *in loco morālis*: ethical, meaningful, inner-psychological/philosophical connotations that may be advantageous to ephiphanic repercussions w/in the desired individual.



It was occasionally trying [*Infinite Jest was*]. It demands your full attention. It can't be read at a crowded café, or with a child on one's lap. It was frustrating that the footnotes were at the end of the book, rather than on the bottom of the page, as they had been in Wallace's essays and journalism. There were times, reading a very exhaustive account of a tennis match, say, when I thought, well, okay. I like tennis as much as the next guy, but enough already.

And yet the time spent in this book, in this world of language is absolutely rewarded. *When you exit these pages after that month of reading, you are a better person.* It's insane, but also hard to deny. *Your brain is stronger because it's been given a monthlong workout, and more importantly your heart is sturdier, for there has scarcely been written a more moving account of desperation, depression, addiction, generational stasis and yearning, or the obsession with human expectations, with artistic and athletic and intellectual possibility.* The themes here are big, and the emotions (guarded as they are) are *very real*, and the cumulative effect of the book is, you could say, seismic. It would be very unlikely that you would find a read who, after finishing this book, would shrug and say, "Eh." [*all italics mine*]

and one more,

...this is his [*DFW's*] extraordinary, and irregular, and not-normal achievement, a thing that will outlast him and you and me, but will help future people understand us—how we felt, how we lived, what we gave to each other and why.

And that is the Easy Answer.

And now for the Difficult Answer:

There is a (not so) surprising amount of substance and meaning lacking from our lives, from our culture as humans, from American-consumerism society in particular, from our entertainment, from the relationships we have with others, from the relationships we have w/ intelligence, and c. Apart from having all that (potential for) substance and meaning which our culture lacks held w/in its pages, *IJ* also reflects this absence back to us—all good fiction should reflect at least *something* back at the culture that created it—and b/c *IJ* cannot be ignored<sup>39</sup> w/in the context of our society the truths also cannot be ignored, causing a chain reaction of reactions, if you will, which do things like: turn physical heads, break proverbial barriers, climb metaphorical walls, alter subconscious preconceptions, ignite epiphanic flames of change. Well, as we have seen w/ the advent of 2010, nothing has changed b/c of *IJ* (except, of

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<sup>39</sup> Mainly b/c of its intellectual weight, the infamy of its brilliancy, the reputation of being such a difficult piece of literature and yet also allowing for a common person to pick it up and read it w/ the right amount of willingness. Exempli gratia: anywhere I pulled *IJ* out of my backpack (w/ it's extravagant rainbow of color-coded post-it notes and it's reader's-guide-for-bookmark) w/in a public setting I was inevitably asked a/b it: "Oh, is that *Infinite Jest*? I've been meaning to read that. Is it any good? Isn't it really *hard*?" I'd usually reply w/, "Yes. You should. It's *indescribably* good. No, this is the paperback version," to mixed result.

course, the POVs of select individuals who chose to take the messages seriously). Consumerism and mindless entertainment have grown exponentially and decidedly worse, but that isn't the focus here. The focus is that to answer *Why Should the Reader Care Enough to "Allow" the Existence of the Novel and/or Essay?* we have to acknowledge that, at least when referring to *IJ*, that if the possible reader *didn't* care about the ideas that make up *IJ* then that ex-possible reader would essentially be disregarding and refusing a so-called human condition: an individual *search* for meaning.<sup>40</sup>

To further take us through the Difficult Answer we have pages 795 to 808:

**(a) Pages 795 to 808 in sum:<sup>41</sup>**

We meet up w/ Hal Incandenza again (not meaning that we haven't seen him since the beginning of the novel. This time though the year is Y.D.A.U (2009, the most important year to the novel) whereas in the first example w/ Hal it was Y.G. (Year of Glad, 2010)) and this time around he's taking action and (b/c of his suspicions of being addicted to marijuana) is headed to a NA<sup>42</sup> meeting he drove "fifty oversalivated<sup>43</sup> clicks to..." (p.808). Hal finds the place where the supposed NA meeting is and searches throughout the "Rubickular cube..." of a building (p.799) for the meeting room in question. Hal finds something completely different: "one of those men's-issues-Men's-Movement-type Meetings" (p.804) where members are encouraged to portray their "Inner Infant" (Ibid.) to the group; where "full bearded men" use teddy bears "*in loco parentis*" (p.805) b/c their own parents did not give them enough attention. And now that the setting is established, here is the point:<sup>44</sup> The

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<sup>40</sup> Camus might enjoy *IJ*.

<sup>41</sup> Obviously an oxymoron, but what can you do? (Microsoft Word autocorrected "do" into "does" here.)

<sup>42</sup> Narcotics Anonymous, an Alcoholics Anonymous offshoot for uh narcotics.

<sup>43</sup> Apparently one of the withdrawal symptoms of marijuana: one's mouth creates too much saliva. This is according to DFW.

<sup>44</sup> I believe the msg of this section (as pertaining to *IJ*) is *almost* unrelated to how I am using it here. But here, for contrast, is the point that is being made w/in *IJ*: Every grown man Hal has stumbled upon "has a beard, and each wears chinos and a sweater... [w/] no footwear..." (p.799), they are grouping together and subsequently regressing to an infant-like state and literally *projectile* crying their eyes out for their Mommy and Daddy to "...come love me and hold me" in a kind of monotone of pathos." (p.804) This section appears right at the end of the second to last chapter,<sup>a</sup> a chapter in which there is an overwhelming amount of apprehension and climatic build w/in the narrative(s) movement: dates are closer together, run on sentences turn to entire multiple-page-long paragraphs, sections end more abruptly and are shorter, etc. all of

grown men crying and chanting for “ ‘Needs, Needs, Needs,’ ” (p.808) are representative of the potential reader of *IJ*. The *grown men* desperately want something to be given to them free of effort and work; the only self-involvement they desire is that they themselves *receive* the pleasure via an authority figure whom they can trust. The reader-as-sobbing-grown-man wants and wants from fiction what they never work for (substance and meaning and truth and *life* as a inherent part of fiction) and “need” an author to hand this over to them via text. This can be transposed onto culture, how the bitching and moaning *for* substance and meaning as an *inherent* part of life is all too common but w/ one absurd stipulation: they (the readers-as-sobbing-grown-men viz. culture-at-large) never strive or make any effort w/ their own minds & sweat & hearts (even if its just taking two months to read *IJ*) to support or propagate this end result;<sup>45</sup> *they want it given*. This is essentially the Difficult Answer in a sub-noted nut-shell: our way of life is so fixated, so completely obsessed on the end goal of Good, Meaningful, Substance/Pleasure-based things in life that we cannot fully realize what the means are to attain what it is we proclaim to need; and so ergo to wipe away the apathy inherent in the kind of mentality that sees reading *IJ* as a waste of time or as a fruitless endeavor only fitted for the intellectually inclined would be to clear room for a proactive and responsible mentality of action- and

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which creates a sense of rush or something building to an extreme point of revelation. The reader begins “hoping desperately for some sort of hopeful feeling to emerge” (p.801) w/in the story line of *IJ* but, in the end—as this section (pgs. 795-808) shows—, no feeling of hope emerges and in place of a dramatic climax or some huge explanatory revelation or an exposé of brilliant meaning and knowledge and inside info, the reader instead gets the anticlimax of a need wanting to be fulfilled. And, consequently, this is exactly what is happening w/ the grown, bearded men and Hal alike. Hal has taken action to see to his supposed addiction w/ a failure to find the right place or group and so he feels that he *wants* and *needs* to retract his actions (or at least to be somewhere else i.e. “Hal now starts scrolling through an alphabetical list of the faraway places he’d rather be right now.” (p.806)). Whereas these men—throughout their infant lives where needs are most highly sought after—were ignored by their parents’ love and affection and embrace and so have an absence which “needs” to be fulfilled. These men *want* an authority or parental figure to *give* them their satisfaction w/o cause, w/o effort b/c they never got it from their *real* parents. This can be directly correlated to, I think, a culture who *wants* and *needs* their desires for comfort and love and support and understanding *handed* over to them w/o any sort of effort on their (the culture’s) part. DFW denies any sort of satiation, any sort of authorial *handing over* and forces (nicely and w/ tact) the reader to work for understanding by himself and for himself (the reader’s self, that is).<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> See n.21 *supra*.

<sup>b</sup> See n.14 *supra*.

<sup>45</sup> The end result being: meaning, connection, substance, depth, purpose, etc..

knowledge-based interaction w/ the world at large causing the meaning/substance/depth/purpose thing to be *synthetic*, of our own volition, of *our own making*.<sup>46</sup> *Non loqui sed facere*<sup>47</sup>.

Further along the dusty trail and in regards to the essay portion of that trail, if an essay were to attempt to relate aspects and sections of *IJ* to the prospective reader in a scholarly fashion, then the essay would be, by proxy, reflecting a small portion of life, only w/o the understanding part (b/c, as it's been iterated dozens of times over, the essay requires knowledge of the novel<sup>48</sup>) and that is why the essay *almost* matters but only as a precursor to potential and it (the essay) certainly doesn't matter enough to actually warrant existing beyond any unconscious *desire* of the individual essayist. But, as discussed above, a *proper* essay, especially one that will eventually be turned in for collegiate credit, is nearly impossible.

**Why an Essay of *IJ* is Nearly Impossible w/o Giving Into Some Real Bad Collegiate Bullshit:**<sup>49</sup>

**See A Conceptual Preemptive Pre-Essay Instruction/Explanation on Why A Certain Level of Misunderstanding is Rather Imminent and, Actually, Almost Expected and Warranted w/in The Forth Coming Essay *supra*.**

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<sup>46</sup> This is a very bold statement. I stand behind it w/o any tongue in any cheek.

<sup>47</sup> Something like: No talk, just action.

<sup>48</sup> And if one has knowledge of the novel then one has knowledge of life and if one has knowledge of life (as pertaining to *IJ*'s POV) then one has no need to read the essay which just reflects *IJ*'s POV of life. The essay is *pointless* if one actually understands the novel.

<sup>49</sup> *non compos mentis*



(the continuation of)

An Exhaustive Essay of pages 380-442 of David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*<sup>50</sup>

n/a

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<sup>50</sup> *non sequitur.*