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DAVID FOSTER WALLACE SPECIAL ISSUE

Conjuring David Foster Wallace's Ghost: Prosopopeia, Whitmanian Intimacy and the Queer Potential of *Infinite Jest* and *The Pale King*

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This article analyzes the ways in which Wallace's fiction stages homosocial intimacy between the (male) author figure and (male) reader through the conceptual metaphor of ghosts in both *Infinite Jest* and the unfinished novel *The Pale King*. I specifically contrast Wallace's use of prosopopeia, or inducing the reader to create the author's face in moments of undecidability, with that of one of his under-explored influences, Walt Whitman. Whitman used the technique to stage an intimate, homosexual encounter in the future between himself and his imagined, posthumous readership. Through this contrast, the article demonstrates that Wallace's narrative devices are particularly attuned to the production of the intimacies of male homosocial desire. I borrow my meaning of this term from Eve Sedgwick's *Between Men* (1985), in which she suggests that masculinity, by defining itself in opposition to male homosexuality, cannot acknowledge intimacy between heterosexual men as a manifestation of desire. Considering Wallace's revisions of both the conceptual metaphor of ghosts as well as use of prosopopeia across both novels, the article argues that the homosocial intimacy staged between the masculinized author figure and his primarily, though not exclusively, white, heterosexual reading public is a fundamental effect of his aesthetic practice. However, the discontinuity between male homosocial desire and male homosexuality make this effect a too often unarticulated component of Wallace's fiction and reception.

'The wigglers find [the ghost] companionable. But no one ever speaks of him.'

David Foster Wallace, *The Pale King,* 2011

When Don Gately desperately needs someone to talk to while recovering from a gun-shot wound, the 'generic garden-variety wraith' of James O. Incandenza, the auteur of the eponymous toxic video cartridge 'Infinite Jest', asserts himself as Gately's pri-mary dialogic partner (Wallace, 1996: 829). Likewise, in David Foster Wallace's unfin-ished novel *The Pale King*,[1] when the IRS 'wiggler' Lane Dean Jr. 'began imagining dif-ferent high places to jump off of', the ghost of Garrity, a long-passed IRS line worker, comes to have a conversation that puts Dean Jr.'s depression into a proper, historical context (Wallace, 2011: 379). In each case, though these spectral presences appear near the end of their respective texts, they provide a conceptual metaphor for how Wallace conceives of each novel as a relational mode between the author figure and his readership. Wallace's revisions of this conceptual metaphor across these novels, I argue, suggest his intention to produce an actual, immaterial presence such that he and his implied readers might, only in the future, share 'a kind of intimate conversa-tion' (Lipsky, 2010: 289). For a writer as meticulous with words as Wallace, the most obvious contrast between James O. Incandenza and Garrity may also be the most illuminating: his decision to change from the ambiguous term 'wraith' in *Infinite Jest*[2] to the more precise classification of 'ghosts' and 'phantoms' in *TPK*. I argue that this modification correlates with a shift in Wallace's aesthetic and narrative devices, namely the construction of an ontologically ambiguous authorial presence through his endnotes in *IJ* to the meta-fictional rendering of 'David Wallace' in *TPK*.

These spectral figures reveal the ways in which Wallace's aesthetic and narra-tive devices are contingent on the production and elision of intimacy between the (male) author and (male) reader. It is common in studies of Wallace's work to take for granted his emphasis of 'sincere' communication as, for example, an antidote to the saturation of postmodern irony and cynicism in contemporary life.[3] However, this

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[1] *The Pale King* will be cited as *TPK* in subsequent references.

[2] *Infinite Jest* will be cited as *IJ* in subsequent references.

[3] For a critical analysis of Wallace's relationship to these topics, see Lee Konstaninou, *Cool Characters: Irony and American Fiction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016).

arguably happens at the risk of neutralizing the intimacy that is staged and performed between the white, heterosexual, masculine author figure and his widely, although not exclusively, white, heterosexual, male readers.[4] Even in analyses that consider Wallace's commitment to an aesthetic production of intimacy, the word is often disarmed of its sexual signification. Clare Hayes-Brady (2016), for example, writes, '[t]he desire and expectation of completion, the dream of complete intimacy, of clear and unambiguous information transfer, exists for Wallace' (7).[5] Yet, we know that the 'dream of complete intimacy' is certainly not exclusively suggestive of a dream of 'clear and unambiguous information transfer', but also of a physical, potentially erotic, transfer as well. The etymology of the word intimacy suggests this duality. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, in its earliest known usage in 1648, intimacy meant that one shares knowledge of another's 'inner or inmost nature'. This type of open access to the inner natures of characters and narrators is precisely the fictionalized ideal of the 'form of the novel in place before even the rules of realism were fully formulated' that Andrew Hoberek (2013) notes was attractive to authors like Wallace invested in developing a 'post-postmodern novel' (220). However, within a single generation, by 1676, intimacy also became a euphemism for sexual intercourse. In this way, 'intimacy' is an ambiguous and fluid term, acquiring different meanings in different contexts. Moreover, in order to function as a euphemism, the interlocutors need to recognize or acknowledge that the word is shifting from the non-sexual into the sexual. In other words, to conceive of Wallace's fiction as a mode of intimacy is to consider it simultaneously as a mode of sincere

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[4] For an analysis of Wallace's reception, see Ed Finn, "Becoming Yourself: The Afterlife of Reception," *The Legacy of David Foster Wallace*, Ed. Samuel S. Cohen and Lee Konstantinou, (Iowa City: U of Iowa, 2012), 151–76. The demographic make-up of Wallace's reading public has been widely commented on, particularly in debates following the release of the film *The End of the Tour.* Molly Fischer has gone so far as to call Wallace's author figure and legacy as "lit-bro shorthand," a more self-aware and sensitive rendition of the "literary male chauvinism" Wallace charged to John Updike. See Molly Fischer, "Why Literary Chauvinists Love David Foster Wallace," *New York Magazine*. 12 Aug. 2015. http://nymag.com/thecut/2015/08/david-foster-wallace-beloved-author-of-bros.html.

[5] For an exploration of "radical intimacy" in Wallace's fiction, see Kathleen Fitzpatrick, "Infinite Summer: Reading, Empathy, and the Social Network," *The Legacy of David Foster Wallace.* Ed. Samuel S. Cohen and Lee Konstantinou (Iowa City: U of Iowa, 2012), 182–207.

communication as well as a mode of eroticism. I aim to show that the intimate relational mode Wallace models through his figuration of ghosts demonstrates a bodily, and even potentially erotic, (male) author/(male) reader relationship that always threatens to reveal itself.

From the ghostly deferral of a sexual 'will to knowledge' in Henry James's *Turn of the Screw* (1898)[6] to the racialized sexual violence literalized by the eponymous ghost in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), ghosts have commonly been used as narrative means by which to think through, and even stage encounters of, (queer) intimacy. In this article, I specifically contrast Wallace's practice with Walt Whitman's poetic staging of a future-oriented intimacy between a male homosexual authorial ghost and an imagined, posthumous (male) readership. Shared by these authors is an experimentation on the device of prosopopeia, as interpreted by one of Wallace's cited philosophical influences, Paul de Man.[7] Through this contrast, I aim to show how Wallace's narrative devices are particularly attuned to the production of male homosocial desire. I borrow my meaning of this term from Eve Sedgwick's *Between Men* (1985), in which she suggests that (white) masculinity, by defining itself in opposition to male homosexuality, cannot acknowledge intimacy between heterosexual men as a manifestation of desire. As Sedgwick suggests, 'To draw the 'homosocial' back into the orbit of 'desire', of the potentially erotic…is to hypothesize the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual—a continuum whose visibility, for men, in our society, is radically disrupted' (1–2). Continuing the critical conversation started by Hayes-Brady on the role of gender and sexuality in Wallace's fiction, this article examines how, to use Wallace's word, the 'hideousness' of heterosexual masculinity is both critiqued and enabled by the intimate relational mode his narrative technique elicits. It is with this use of the phrase 'queer potential'

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[6] See Jonathan Flatley, "Reading into Henry James: Allegories of the Will to Know in The Turn of the Screw," *Affective Mapping* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2008), 85–104.

[7] Wallace called de Man a philosopher that, "the contemporary artist can simply no longer afford to regard…as divorced from his own concerns" (*Both Flesh and Not,* 63). At the Harry Ransom Center, one can also find and examine Wallace's thoroughly annotated copy of de Man's *Blindness and Insight* (1983). In the short story "Here and There" (1989), the protagonist-artist Bruce travels to Prosopopeia, fittingly located in a kind of liminal space in Maine, "almost at the Canadian border" (155).

that I aim to make visible the continuum of homosocial and homosexual desire evinced by Wallace's immaterial, ghostly presence.

1

In *IJ,* Wallace introduces the 'wraith' of James O. Incandenza, who died by suicide before the fabula of the text, at the very moment when Don Gately feels at his loneliest: struggling to resist any use of painkillers to help him cope with life-threatening injuries sustained while protecting a fellow Ennet House member. Gately's loneliness is not the product of an absence of visitors, but a result of him being totally bandaged and inaudible, only 'a sympathetic ear, or not even a sympathetic *real* ear, more like a wooden carving statue of an ear' (831). Gately cannot speak or have his needs, wants, or desires articulated and heard. Suffering in this way, the wraith asserts himself to engage Gately in both a rational conversation about their experiences as well as a reflexive, affective substitution that will offer each of them a space for an, albeit unacknowledged, intimacy.

Ghosts, as a literary device, serve as a direct evocation of what Paul de Man (1979) calls the master trope of reading: prosopopeia, literally meaning the creation (poeia) of a face (prosopon). As Jonathan Flatley (2008) explains, 'reading (in the sense of fixing a meaning) always requires first that you imagine a person having thoughts and feelings that the text itself leaves undecidable' (88). Flatley compares this imaginative process to a psychoanalytic dialogue and the potential desire that takes place between the analysand and the analyst during instances of transference—when a patient's cathexis to one object attachment is re-directed to a new one. As it goes, because the analyst is out of view, usually behind the analysand who is lying on a couch, the analysand must constantly 'conjure the [ghostly] face' of the other as they are speaking. The analysand becomes innervated by this imaginative conjuring, allowing himself to feel emotions that, 'like ghosts, it is in their essence to always only *return*' (89). The act of conjuring displaces these returning, often repressed, desires from their original source and onto the ghostly face: the analyst. In this sense, the ways in which Gately interprets moments of undecidability during his interactions with the wraith offer a window into any repressed desires that might

be returning—of particular significance if we can consider Gately as a surrogate for the reader himself, and the wraith as a placeholder for the authorial presence in the novel.

For example, Gately, unsure of with whom or what he is speaking, has the immediate reaction to pause at the terminology of wraith: 'Does *wraith* mean like a ghost, as in dead?' (833). As I expand in the below section on *TPK*, the term wraith does not necessarily mean 'like a ghost', in fact it also suggests the possibility of being a 'phantom', or a self-delusion. Yet, Gately, immediately rehearsing his Alcoholics Anonymous platitudes, 'decides' that he 'could maybe Identify [with the wraith], to an extent'. In other words, he chooses to believe that the wraith is the real material manifestation of a deceased man, rather than that the wraith is a self-delusion that serves to validate his victimhood. Similarly, when the narrator describes their initial interfacing, we see this confusion inflicted on the reader: 'The wraith says Just to give Gately an idea, he, the wraith, in order to appear as visible and interface with him, Gately, he, the wraith, has been sitting, still as a root, in the chair by Gately's bedside for the wraith-equivalent of *three weeks*, which Gately can't even imagine' (836). The wraith speaks through a free indirect discourse that merges the narrator, Don Gately, and the wraith together. The lack of demarcation between the direct discourse of the wraith and the narrator recalls the ways in which the wraith and narrator form an amalgam. But, moreover, the narrator uses a procession of 'explanatory' appositions that only seem to intensify the confusion between parties. The need to clarify each of these masculine personal pronouns—he and him—only exists because of the narrator's own spectral presence. These undecidable moments construct what de Man calls 'autobiographical moments' in reading: 'an alignment between the two subjects involved in the process of reading in which they determine each other by mutual reflexive substitution' (921). In a moment like this, de Man would argue that, just as Gately reads into the wraith for clarity, the reader imaginatively conjures an authorial ghost in an attempt to attribute appropriately, recalling Flatley's phrase, 'thoughts and feelings that the text leaves undecidable'.

It is possible to read the means and outcomes of this ghostly relationship in multiple ways. For example, one of the central topics of conversation between Gately

and the wraith is the use of background characters who must remain silent, or figu-rants, in television shows and movies. Incandenza explains that 'he personally spent the vast bulk of his own former animate life as pretty much a figurant, furniture at the periphery of the very eyes closest to him, it turned out, and that's one heck of a crummy way to try to live' (835). Incandenza expounds on the impossibility of this position: 'And either the wraith was saying or Gately is realizing that you can't appre-ciate the dramatic pathos of a figurant until you realize how completely *trapped* and *encaged* he is in his mute peripheral status…No way for a figurant to win. No possible voice or focus for the encaged figurant' (835). Each character's crisis seems to stem from the fact that they have been forced into a position of inaudibility, 'furniture at the periphery'. Wraith-hood, the ability to project oneself beyond the grave, allows Incandenza to shift from the supernumerary into the essential, both as a literal char-acter in the text and as an asserted masculine figure. However, Incandenza's own sympathetic appeal to be seen and heard is undercut by considerable evidence to the contrary. Neither his perceived muteness in life nor his literal absence in the after-life accurately account for the power and influence he exerts over the shape of the novel, including the ways in which his life and death can be read into the neuroses affecting not only immediate family members but also nearly every character in the text. From the Québécois terrorist group seeking Incandenza's lethal video cartridge 'Infinite Jest', to the deeply affected youths at the Enfield Tennis Academy, nearly every character engages however obtusely with the legacy of Incandenza's life (and death). In other words, Incandenza, as well as Gately, could hardly be considered 'actual' figurants within the tome of *IJ*; they merely, but significantly, perceive and feel themselves to be figurants.[8]

    One might interpret this conversation as representative of what has been called a 'crisis' of heterosexual masculinity between Gately and Incandenza. Hamilton Carroll (2011) argues that, through the nineties and early 2000s, white masculin-ity responded to its perceived crisis against the growing rights of marginalized

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[8] Including the nicknames "J.O.I.," "J.O. Incandenza," and "Himself," a simple digital search of the text reveals that Incandenza is mentioned or discussed over one hundred times in the novel.

groups through a stance of 'lability', in the sense that both whiteness and masculinity are mutable, liable and 'prone to lapse'. As Carroll puts it, white masculinity adopts a stance of frailty only as a sleight of hand to acquire more 'rights and recognition by citing itself as the most needy and the most worthy recipient of what it denies it already has' (10). Similarly, Sally Robinson's (2000) study of the visibility of white masculinity reveals that it is most often represented in corporeal terms, as a wounded body. Robinson refers to this public display of suffering as an 'aesthetic of masochism', because in these cases 'the masochist's suffering must be made *visible* in order for him to experience the pleasure in pain' (13). Aside from the parallel questions of how and to whom a ghost becomes visible, the foundation of Gately and Incandenza's relationship is the reciprocal recognition that there is 'no way for a [white male] to win', except, perhaps, to be with one another and to become visible by expressing their pain. Wallace suggests a similar affective alignment with his (male) readers, stating:

> I think probably, what I've noticed at readings, is that the people who seem most enthusiastic and most moved by it are young men. Which I guess I can understand – I think it's a fairly male book...about loneliness... I was excited by [experimental literature] because I found reproduced in the book certain feelings, or ways of thinking or perceptions that I had had, and the relief of knowing that I wasn't the only one, you know? Who felt this way' (Lipsky, 273).

Scenes like this, in which Wallace '[becomes] visible' at a public reading to a number of similarly lonely white, male 'figurants', have contributed to his conflicted legacy as both a self-reflective critic of and complicit party in sexism and misogyny. As Hayes-Brady has pointed out, building a model of sincerity on just such a foundation provides an effective method 'to entrench and defend the privileged position of white American masculinity Wallace so obstinately foregrounds, and it is certainly clear that Wallace manipulated the sincerity of his tone in ways that force a specious rapport with readers' (35 fn 35).

However, is it possible that this affective alignment produces a separate, if not related, outcome: the particular intimacies of homosocial desire? And, if that is the case, we might see this 'rapport' between Wallace and his readers not as 'specious' at all, but a valid, if unarticulated, manifestation of this desire. To prove this point, I will take a brief detour through Walt Whitman's 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry', arguably a direct influence on Wallace's narrative technique, in which he similarly stages an intimacy 'between men' through the device of prosopopeia and the construction of a literary ghost.

2

The relationship between Whitman and Wallace has been relatively under-explored, especially given his literary engagement with the feelings of shame adjacent to those that weigh on the men of the novel, as well as in Wallace's fiction more broadly.[9] Specifically, as Michael Warner (2004) suggests, '[Whitman] seems to have felt a vocation to answer for a great many forms of inferiority: of class, of ignorance, of sex, of poverty, of disrepute and disability, of national provincialism' (xxiv). In answering for the shame of these 'forms of inferiority', Whitman viewed poetry as a potential way of transcending one's time and place, specifically to create a liminal space where a man's desire for another man could be shameless. For Wallace, as it was for Whitman, the possibilities of this liminal space are incredibly urgent. The (figurant's) need to have another sincerely hear and understand his pain is an essential thrust of *IJ*'s Alcoholics Anonymous. Coincidentally, Whitman, too, participated in temperance meetings of the 1840s (pre-dating Alcoholics Anonymous), and the only best-seller of his lifetime was his alcohol addiction novel *Franklin Evans* (1842). However, some scholars have theorized that, in contrast to Gately's platitude to 'maybe Identify', Whitman (1843) enjoyed the space the early temperance movement offered to hear and tell confessions 'of that grosser kind which is [riveted] by intimacy in

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[9] See Paul Giles, "Sentimental Posthumanism." Twentieth Century Literature 53.3 (2007): 327–44; Dave Eggars contribution to Steven Moore, et al. "In Memoriam David Foster Wallace." *Modernism/modernity* 16.1 (2009): 1–24. Wallace's e-mail address ("ocapmycap@comcast.com") was also a reference to Whitman's famous poem "O Captain! My Captain!"

scenes of dissipation' (243).[10] Fittingly, *Leaves of Grass* (1855), the collection that includes 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry', is referenced directly in *IJ* when, 'in part of grieving for Himself [James O. Incandenza]', the 'sweat guru' Lyle '[reads] *Leaves of Grass…* going through a Whitman period' (254). One can easily read into their relationship a homosocial, if not queer, desire; when alive, Incandenza would get 'libated late at night with Lyle' and 'pour his heart's thickest chime right out there', while Lyle, licking the sweat off of Incandenza's skin, 'would start to get tipsy himself as Himself's pores began to excrete bourbon' and read him poetry 'during these all-night sessions' (379). Given this relationship, it is not inconceivable that Lyle chooses this text precisely because he understood that Whitman's poetic use of ghosts, particularly in the poem 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry', offered a pathway for one man to project himself, through language, beyond the grave to meet, and be intimate with, another man.

In 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry', Whitman uses the liminal space of the ferry to look beyond the faces of the people physically on the boat along with him and instead towards a future (male) reader. Michael Moon (1993) characterizes this device as a 'long view', or 'a mode of vision and perception extended and removed beyond the specular field of two persons which situates itself between a gazing subject and a distant object' (90). The poem opens, 'And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence are/more to me, and more in my meditations, than you might suppose' (132). By alternating from a 'facing' of those on the boat to those in the future, Whitman creates a spectral presence that more readily equips him to '[explore] certain difficult questions of desire' (Moon 107). The following stanzas evidence this direct correlation between the poet's spectral presence and the reader:

> The men and women I saw were all near to me,
>
> Others the same—others who look back on me, because I Looked forward to them.
>
> …

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[10] For more on Whitman's fiction as literature of addiction, see Michael Warner, "Whitman Drunk," *Breaking Bounds: Whitman and American Cultural Studies,* Ed. Betsy Erkkila and Jay Grossman (New York: Oxford UP, 1996), pp. 30–43. For more on his participation in the temperance movement and sexuality, see also Vivian R. Pollak, *The Erotic Whitman* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), specifically chapters 1 & 2; Michael Moon's *Disseminating Whitman,* pg. 57.

> Who was to know what should come home to me?
> Who knows but I am enjoying this?
> Who knows, for all the distance, but I am as good as looking at you now, for
> all you cannot see me? (135–136)

Here, Whitman gestures to the conditions of reciprocal intensity for his ghost to succeed, a liminality that allows both to occupy the same space at the same time. It is notable how Whitman constructs these lines as a conjunction: 'others who look back on me', only do so because 'I looked forward to them'. It is a matter of effort. And, just as for Wallace, while the invitation purports to be open for both the 'men and women I saw were all near to me', the aim for a male homosexual relationship— 'hot wishes I dared not speak' because they were foreclosed by the historical present of the narrator—is undeniably the primary thrust of the poem, at least, for a reader attuned to reading the intimacies staged euphemistically (135). What distinguishes Whitman from Wallace, then, is their differing stakes in 'universalizing' communication. As Warner articulates, 'Certainly not least of the motives behind [Whitman's] well-to-dignity is the need to 'clarify and transfigure' a kind of sex and lust that had no voice of its own, and could only be expressed in a language of the severest moral anathema' (xxv). Clearly, this function is only accessible to a reader who fulfills the 'mutual reflexive substitution' posited by the text. That is, only he who shares 'hot wishes I dared not speak' would understand the excitement of the communion suggested in the closing stanza, 'Flow on, river! Flow with the flood-tide, and ebb with the ebb-tide…drench with your splendor me' (135; 137).

The deferral and foreclosure of physical intimacy between men, imbued as it was and remains with shame, might help explain why this second stanza is tinged by the bittersweet: 'Who knows but I am enjoying this?' The interrogative is followed by the acknowledgement that 'I am as good as looking at you now', illustrating the slippage between the simile 'as good as' and the equivocation between bodily presence and textual presence. Moon argues that, by producing 'just such an uncanny place where the reader can "look at" the poet from the precise textual "spot" where the poet once "looked at" the reader', Whitman shows that the very recognition of this

place eliminates its fixity (109). In this way, he re-produces the liminality of the ferry crossing as one between 'reader and poet, past and present, on which these respective positions cross and re-cross each other's paths without being permitted by the text to "settle" at any of the terminal points of these paths' (109).

Returning to *IJ,* the wraith and the authorial ghost appear also to construct a textual, or linguistic, meeting place between men. At first, the straightforward desire of communication qualifies this goal: 'No! *No! Any* conversation or interchange is better than none at all, to trust him on this, that the worst kind of gutwrenching intergenerational interface is better than withdrawal or hiddenness on either side' (839). But the 'conversation or interchange' that takes place between Gately and the wraith far surpasses the typical back-and-forth of ideas and experiences. The seemingly therapeutic, even psychoanalytic, dialogue becomes a more physical 'interchange' as well. When pain from Gately's wound shoots through his body, 'the wraith gasps and almost falls off the monitor as if he can totally empathize with the dextral pain. Gately wonders if the wraith has to endure the same pain as Gately in order to hear his brain-voice and have a conversation with him. Even in a dream, that'd be a higher price than anybody's ever paid to interface with D.W. Gately' (839–40). Though Gately is not sure of the authenticity of the feeling, he follows the affective polarity of their communion, choosing to believe that the wraith truly cares and is paying 'a higher price than anybody's ever paid to interface'.

In this context, it is therefore perhaps unsurprising that Gately senses, and repels, the potentially sexual undercurrent to this dialogic relationship. When Gately's 'brain-voice' utters the unfamiliar word 'PIROUETTE', he conflates this linguistic marker of the wraith's reality as a sexual threat: 'which term Gately knows for a fact he doesn't have any idea what it means and no reason to be thinking it with roaring force, so the sensation is not only creepy but somehow violating, a sort of lexical rape' (832). This is precisely what makes the conceptual metaphor of the wraith so revealing. Through almost-superhuman effort and rhetorical force, taking the form of the wraith allows Incandenza the facility beyond the grave to engage in a dialogic relationship with Don Gately that was supposedly socially foreclosed to him

in real life. Yet, in this relationship, the two (male) bodies are so attuned that 'either the wraith was saying or Gately was realizing' at the same moment, the two are indistinguishable, they cross and re-cross one another, feel one another, and become-with one another. Yet, the potential reality of Incandenza's existence precisely poses the threat that something more than hetero-Platonic dialogue is taking place, that a potentially queer desire is unfolding.

By describing this exchange as a 'lexical rape', Gately recalls the threat that Eve Sedgwick (1990) describes as 'homosexual panic', meaning when a heterosexual man might be induced to gay-bashing 'by a pathological psychological condition, perhaps brought on by an unwanted sexual advance from the man whom he then attacked' (19). Sedgwick goes on to explain that,

> In effect, the homosexual panic defense performs a double act of minoritizing taxonomy: there is, it asserts, one distinct minority of gay people, and a second minority equally distinguishable from the population at large, of 'latent' homosexuals' whose 'insecurity about their own masculinity' is so anomalous as to permit a plea based on diminution of normal moral responsibility. At the same time, the efficacy of the plea depends on its universalizing force, on whether…it can 'create a climate in which the jurors are able to identify with the perpetrator by saying, 'My goodness, maybe *I* would have reacted the same way'. (20)

The use of the word 'rape' seems to function to similarly distance Gately from any queer potential that might be read into this ghostly exchange, and is in fact a temporary act of disavowing the relationship altogether. If a courtship is taking place, it is certainly not the result of any consensual agreement on his part. Meanwhile, as Andrew Warren (2012) points out, ''Lexical rape', of course, is no more in Gately's wordbank than 'pirouette'' (402). As a repetition of the very 'violating' intrusion that induces the charge of 'rape' in the first place, the phrase postpones clear interpretation. Moreover, through his self-admission of the 'creepiness' of his desire to 'interface', Incandenza also defuses the suspicion that he might be there for an intimate

encounter. As readers and critics alike accept, of course Incandenza is simply interfacing with Gately 'to communicate, in some way and at some time, perhaps indirectly, with Hal' (Warren 403). Through his honest self-awareness, Incandenza is simply appealing to the reader's mutual understanding that any genuine attempt to initiate an interfacing 'between men' is at risk of being construed as 'creepy', exactly the impetus for and contradictory defense of 'homosexual panic'. Foreclosing the possibility that this homosociality might be interpreted as a manifestation of intimacy or desire, the (male) author/(male) reader relationship adopts a similarly problematic stance.

In light of this reassurance that no overt, or even 'latent', homosexual desire exists between these characters, the narrative provides the most direct explanation of the aesthetic practice of *IJ* as a kind of mirrored reflection of Incandenza's own 'Infinite Jest', a reproduction of a baby's view of his mother from a crib. Lee Konstantinou (2012) argues that if we read Incandenza as an extension of Wallace in this sentimental manifesto, we can see him 'simultaneously critiquing the hyper-self-involution supposedly characteristic of the avant-garde as well as the infantilizing tendencies of the mass media' (103). In other words, Wallace views his specific, 'sincere' iteration of the literary novel as a liminal space between a particular reading he has of 'art for art's sake' avant-garde art and mass culture, pulling from mass media the objective '*to entertain'* and from the legacy of 'serious fiction' the more effortful demands of aesthetic difficulty. By contriving, some would argue unfairly, this liminal space between mass culture and the avant-garde, between entertainment and aesthetics, Wallace begins the important process of becoming, himself, a kind of ghost. In thinking about masculinity, Robinson argues that this 'middlebrow' space critically serves as an opportunity for the artist to become 'the great unmarked, the phantom figure against whom differences become visible—but…himself deeply invested in coming to visibility' (14–15). Wallace's ability to construct a narratorial position as 'the great unmarked, the phantom figure' is crucially how he actualizes with the reader the 'mutual reflexive substitution' we see between Gately and Incandenza.

This, in part, might help us understand what role the medium itself plays in facilitating, mediating, and disciplining the potentially erotic intimacies staged between

author and reader. In the filmic 'Infinite Jest', the physical relationship between the viewer and the stunningly beautiful Joelle Van Dyne, the actress playing the mother, is mimetically produced through the physical relationship the viewer has with the formal qualities of the film: the camera wobble, the bending of the light. The transferability of these attachments, from the narrator-character to the materiality of the medium and vice versa, is re-created for the reader through the endnotes of the film's echo, *IJ*. The moving back and forth in the book similarly uses the physical relationship between reader and book, and the physical relationship between the reader and the language, in order to allow David Foster Wallace's authorial ghost to cross between the frontiers of self and subject and make his body available to the reader. In this way, the endnotes function to literalize the spectral metaphor of Wallace's wraith. Yet, as Timothy Aubry (2011) persuasively argues, the clearest presence of his authorial figure is when the narrator uses the space of the endnotes to correct and expand on the linguistic choices of the characters. In other words, much like the use of the words 'pirouette' and 'lexical' indexed the potential reality of the wraith, the linguistic corrections in the endnotes make the authorial figure both a fictional and a real-life presence. In this way, Aubry convincingly argues that the effect of these endnotes in *IJ* is to elide any definitive claim to reality or fictionality: 'Though self-referential, Wallace's persona does not assume the form of a tangible individual whose status as either real or fictional becomes the central object of speculation. As merely a voice, the author-protagonist in *IJ* identifies himself with the text itself and thereby evades questions about which world, real or fictional, he inhabits' (125). In other words, the reader does not question the ontological nature of the narrator, but engages, instead, directly with the contrivance that they are in communication with 'another human being', the author figure himself.

But, was this not precisely the kind of linguistic substitution that caused Gately to step back, offended at the prospect that he had been (sexually) violated, victim of a 'lexical rape'? Appropriately, just as with Whitman's qualification 'I am as good as enjoying this now', Wallace qualifies this relationship as a hypothetical: the wraith gasps 'as if' he can totally empathize. The maintenance of his spectral metaphor as a 'crossing' or liminal space is absolutely crucial in *IJ*. Don Gately immediately has

concerns over whether the wraith is 'real' or not, but is persuaded quite easily by the wraith that intimacy ought to supersede these concerns:

> The wraith made a weary morose gesture as if not wanting to bother to get into any sort of confusing dream-v.-real controversies. The wraith said Gately might as well stop trying to figure it out and just capitalize on its presence, the wraith's presence in the room or dream, whatever, because Gately, if he'd bothered to notice and appreciate it, at least didn't have to speak out loud to be able to interface with the wraith-figure. (830)

In this way, Wallace's construction of 'sincerity', or what I would call 'intimacy', also initiates the process by which the face of Wallace we conjure is de-faced. By constructing an aesthetic practice by which the attributes of his face are created by the reader, Wallace reveals the disfigurement of that very face by revealing the double-sidedness of writing as always grounded in fictions and never 'real'. This is why, for de Man and for Wallace, these 'mutual reflexive substitutions' are so bound up with death and the figure of a ghost. It is, ultimately, the orientation of the (white, heterosexual male) reading public that chooses to believe that Wallace is paying 'a higher price than anybody's ever paid to interface', not the definitive reality of the wraith as such.

Conceived in this way, the relationship that develops between Gately and the wraith provides a convincing conceptual metaphor for the author-reader relationship that *IJ* constructs more broadly. When asked to 'imagine his readership', Wallace states that they are 'people more or less like me…with enough experience or good education to have realized that the hard work serious fiction requires of a reader sometimes has a payoff' (Burn, 2012: 22). Inflecting this reading public's attunement to the 'hard work of serious fiction', arguably, is a crisis of masculinity that the reading public he calls into being shares: a perceived inability to connect with others 'more or less like me' precisely because one's (masculine) self has been culturally under fire during this same period. The process of conjuring this authorial ghost is, just as for Gately and the wraith, 'hard work'. Authorial effort demands readerly

effort, and through that exchange presumably each can become visible to the other as an act of 'trust or faith', a belief in ghosts (Kelly, 2016: 201).

Adam Kelly's description of Wallace's gesture towards sincerity rings true in this sense. Kelly states, for Wallace, 'The author and reader really do exist, which is to say they are not simply *implied,* not primarily to be understood as rhetorical constructions or immortalized placeholders. The text's existence depends not only on a writer but also on a particular reader at a particular place and time' (206). Of course, we might define these 'not simply implied' persons as innocently as Wallace had. Yet, what happens if we think of the urgency of these physical bodies that 'really do exist' across textual time and space, even beyond death, as Whitman had thought of them: an opportunity to stage the intimacies of homosexual desire? Understanding this process as a function of intimacy and desire, in contrast to 'sincerity', is essential to fully appreciating the so-called 'specious' rapport Wallace's narrative technique facilitates with (male) readers. Furthermore, the specific reading public Wallace calls into being makes it especially important to consider the way their orientation to the literary novel as a genre and medium reveals itself as simultaneously rational and affective, or bodily. Following Eve Sedgwick's statement that 'in any erotic rivalry, the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved', one might argue that Wallace positions the historical form of the novel, the safe 'beloved', as a field of contestation and struggle 'between men' (21). This field of contestation simultaneously produces and obscures the male homosocial desire between the reader and the author figure. In other words, the 'literary novel', as staged by Wallace, becomes, rhetorically, the last remaining safe space for 'sincere' intellectual kinship and, relatedly, the intimacies of male homosocial desire.

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The Pale King is largely seen as an exploration of boredom as the 'flip side' of entertainment, the thematic focus of *IJ.* At least on the topic of ghosts, however, these two texts share a key conceptual metaphor. Described as 'tornadic' by editor and compiler Michael Pietsch, the unfinished novel is an episodic investigation of working at the

IRS through the eyes of various low- and mid-level employees (xii). The 'fabula', if one can call it such, revolves around a number of characters arriving at the IRS for orientation, including a metafictional rendering of David Wallace, the 'living human holding the pencil'. As David Hering (2016) first observed, early drafts of *TPK* suggest that the novel was initially planned to be narrated by a ghost or a ghost-writer. However, the 'early draft' ghost that Hering refers to, as well as the ghosts that do emerge within the 'final' draft of *TPK*, present a marked shift from Incandenza's wraith, namely in the ways in which they are classified. This evolving spectral metaphor is congruent with the stylistic choices in these novels: the ontologically ambiguous author figure posed by *IJ*'s endnotes to a metafictional rendering of an autobiographical 'David Wallace' in *TPK*—a practice one sees in early drafts of *IJ* as well as some short stories like 'Good Old Neon'.

In the unfinished novel, IRS employees, whose textually defined 'heroism' equates to their role as national, public 'figurants',[11] achieve an almost Zen-like state through the deep concentration on their work. One outcome of this concentration is an encounter with a phantom, a self-delusion, a vanity, a psychoanalytic conjuring of one's own face:

> *Phantom* refers to a particular kind of hallucination that can afflict rote examiners at a certain threshold of concentrated boredom…One way you know they're not real ghosts: Every visitee's phantom is different, but their commonality is that the phantoms are always deeply, diametrically different from the examiners they visit. This is why they're so frightening. They tend to present as irruptions from a very rigid, disciplined type of personality's repressed side, what analysts would maybe call a person's shadow. Hypermasculine wigglers get visits from simpering queens in lingerie and clotted vaudevillian rouge and mascara, nancing about. (314)

In light of my analysis of *IJ*, that a repression of desire facilitates the 'hypermasculine wigglers' conjuring their inner 'simpering queens in lingerie…nancing about' stands

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[11] See Chapter 22, *TPK.*

out as humorously self-aware and self-effacing. Yet, Wallace expressed deep antagonism towards this type of spectral/specular presence, the self-delusion of accomplishment, and any author-reader relationship that would enable it.[12] To Wallace, this sort of phantom-like conjuring in which one might only reflect on the self was perhaps the worst outcome of how readers engaged with *IJ*, simply folding back in on oneself and not engaging in the conversation. This is precisely where Wallace pushes the classification of phantoms in *TPK* towards a more clear delineation of that which is pure vanity and that which is the *real* immaterial presence of the authorial figure in the work: the ghost.

Unlike the phantoms that are the product of self-delusion, the narrator explains that the 'non-hallucinatory ghosts' are real, 'companionable' beings that many people (or, specifically, the class of 'wigglers') don't speak of (318):

> Ghosts are different. Most examiners of any experience believe in the phantom; few know or believe in actual ghosts. This is understandable. Ghosts can be taken for phantoms, after all. In certain ways, phantoms serve as distracting background or camouflage from which it can be difficult to pick up the fact-pattern of actual ghosts. It's the old cinematic gag of someone on Halloween being visited by a real ghost and complimenting what he thinks is a kid in a really great costume. The truth is that there are two actual, non-hallucinatory ghosts haunting Post 047's wiggle room (317).

The narrator, in a move similar to *IJ*, disavows ownership of these ghosts, stating 'much of the following info comes after the fact from Claude Sylvanshine' (317). The possibility of mistaking a phantom for a ghost and vice versa is particularly revealing in a return to *IJ* when the figure of the author is rehearsed as the 'wraith' of James Incandenza. The term 'wraith' has 'obscure origins' and duplicitously means 'an appa-

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[12] In another of his draft journals for *TPK* (undated), Wallace sketched out among his ideas the following to appear in the novel that exemplifies his disappointment in this readerly possibility: "New kind of Rubik cube that, when you get the pieces aligned, are four different bodies whose 4 necks share the same head—and the head is YOU, it looks like YOU, not like anyone else, but to you it looks just like you, maybe because of all the work you had to put into solving the puzzle" (62).

rition or specter of a dead person: a *phantom or ghost*' (OED, emphasis mine). This undecidability of the wraith as phantom or ghost calls into question whether or not the author figure is simply a self-delusion of the reader (the vanity of a 'hypermasculine wiggler') or a bodily presence, an actual projection into the future with all of the rhetorical urgency and assertiveness of Walt Whitman. The poles of these two definitional claims cannot be more stark, but, in Wallace's typical stylistic ambiguity, also closely related.

Similar to Incandenza stepping in when Gately most needs someone, Garrity comes to Lane Dean Jr. in a moment when Dean 'felt in a position to say he knew now that hell had nothing to do with fires or frozen troops' (379). However, unlike the wraith of James O. Incandenza, the ambiguity of the ghost's (and by extension Wallace's) presence is elided. Garrity is not a phantom; he is a ghost, the actual 'immaterial part of man' that can be launched across temporal and spatial distance into the same, liminal textual space (at least for just a moment) to face the reader. This revised categorization of ghosts and phantoms suggests a yearning to define once and for all a specified presence of an authorial body, one that can stage an intimate meeting with the reader's body.

The categorization of ghosts and phantoms sheds light on the shift from the ontologically ambiguous narrator of *IJ*—the voice from beyond the grave preserved in the endnotes—to the metafictional rendering of 'David Wallace' in *TPK*. Like the 'wraith' of James O. Incandenza, we might conclude that identification with Wallace succeeds because of the nuance of the term: he is simultaneously a 'phantom', or self-delusion, and a ghost, the actual immaterial presence of the author. In other words, based on the 'sincere' effort of the communication, and the 'sincere' effort on the part of the reader to push through the aesthetically difficult novel, both author and reader need to decide actively to believe in the other. This both/and quality allows the reader to slide from one pole, self-delusion, towards the other, a real, staged encounter between two (male) bodies. However, in the case of *TPK,* the combination of Wallace's recent biographical suicide and the construction of the book itself by his editor make all too real the closure of the textual space in which the author and reader might meet. And, it is perhaps most fitting that one example of

this closure occurs in a footnote, the same space that allowed Wallace to actualize voice from beyond the grave in *IJ*.

In 'The Author's Foreword', appearing as Chapter 9 in the unfinished novel, the metafictional David Wallace facetiously asserts that the text is true, despite the disclaimer on the copyright page that 'the characters and events in this book are fictitious', a disclaimer that by definition must also include the voice that is insisting the book's truth. The chapter begins, 'Author here. Meaning the real author, the living human holding the pencil' (68).[13] He goes on to define his precise location, 'addressing you from my Form 8828-deductible home office at 725 Indian Hill Blvd., Claremont 91711 CA, on this fifth day of spring, 2005' (68–69). It is noteworthy that Wallace considered deeply this decision to make himself into a character. In the margins of his very first draft of this 'Author's Foreword', Wallace (Undated) expresses doubt about this use of his own name as a character: 'Dumb? The real-or-fiction theme is cool. But it could get annoying, especially if it keeps interrupting the narrative' (123). This definition of a time and space that the author-narrator occupies simultaneously obscures and reveals the possibility of Whitmanian intimacy. The author is not so much 'here' as is 'there', a place always separate from where the reader is, and in a different time than the reader is. In another of his later handwritten drafts—dated December 2006—of Chapter 24, which also opens with the line 'Author here', Wallace, with characteristic irony, writes at the top-right corner, boxed off, 'I'm not here'. The more and more precise that Wallace becomes in defining his location, the greater the distance between his body and the reader's becomes; the liminality of the crossing is foreclosed. And yet, the rhetorical energy of this chapter recalls Whitman's ferry crossing, 'What is it then between us? What is the count of the scores or hundreds of years between us? What ever it is, it avails not—distance avails not, and place avails not' (135). The presence/absence of Wallace remains contingent on a reader that looks backward to him because he looks forward to them.

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[13] For related analyses of this section, see Henry Veggian, "Anachronisms of Authority: Authorship, Exchange Value, and David Foster Wallace's *The Pale King*," *boundary 2* 39.3 (2012): 97–124; Marshal Boswell, "Author Here: The Legal Fiction of David Foster Wallace's *The Pale King*," *English Studies* 95.1 (2014): 25–39.

Yet, fascinatingly, as the classification of phantoms and ghosts suggest, what is privileged here is not the mental (concentration produces the self-delusion) but the physical, the contact between these two male bodies across time and space.

But, this interplay between presence and absence is never more urgent than in the very decision to publish *TPK* in the first place, and what impact this has on this readerly relationship to the authorial ghost. Michael Pietsch's emotional appeal to readers in closing his 'Editor's Note' makes Wallace's ghostly absence/presence central: 'But an unfinished novel is what we have, and how can we not look? *David, alas, isn't here* to stop us from reading, or to forgive us for wanting to' (xiii-xiv, emphasis mine). In the literal sense, of course, Wallace is tragically not 'here' to 'stop us from reading, or to forgive us for wanting to'. This, on the one hand, assumes that Wallace was ever present to stop or 'forgive' readers from, for example, mis-reading his work or giving up halfway through *IJ.* His presence, in other words, was always already a fiction. On the other hand, this statement also under-emphasizes the ways in which, aesthetically, his ghost is designed to be 'here', to haunt the reading process of *TPK.* As David Hering's research on the construction of *TPK* concludes, inserting himself as a character was perhaps the single, defining turning point in what Hering calls his 'compositional crisis', from seeing the novel as impossible to possible. And, not only did Wallace aim to insert himself as a character, but as a 'ghostwriter' or a 'friendly ghost'.

Appropriately, then, a 'sincere' readerly engagement with this metafictional ghost figure provides the most potent source of shame in *TPK.* In this Foreword, an intentionally crafted footnote stresses where this text should appear in the body of the book: 'The Foreword's having now been moved seventy-nine pages into the text is due to yet another spasm of last-minute caution on the part of the publisher, re which please see just below' (69). When the reader follows suit and looks 'just below', he sees the number sixty-seven, not seventy-nine. This might prompt the 'hard-working' reader to examine if paratexts account for the discrepancy, as the listed page number often does not correspond to the actual pages of the book. What becomes evident, then, is that it is only through the inclusion of Pietsch's 'Editor's Note' that this page exists on the seventy-ninth page (listed sixty-seventh). What

in reality is a benign editorial decision[14] presents the reader with an interpretive conundrum. The author's sincerity in this Foreword becomes bound up with his dependence on Pietsch writing an 'Editor's Note' of a specific page length, and his ordering of chapters that might make this one specific stage direction achievable. Moreover, if the page formatting had broken slightly different, it would allow, as one would see in his drafts, that 're which please see just below' might not refer at all to the page number, but arguably to the next footnote. Even more problematic, in the subsequent paperback edition of *TPK*, promotional blurbs are added into the front of the text. However, this footnote is left unchanged, making the page number simply factually incorrect. In other words, if the reader, trained to make an effort to fulfill their 'sincere' obligation, were to try to assess the discrepancy, they would be sent directly to the mechanisms by which Wallace's body is disseminated and consumed commercially, rather than literarily. This, it would appear, is an unintentional, albeit powerful, manifestation of undecidability with much different stakes than whether or not the reader should, recalling Gately's decision regarding the wraith, 'maybe Identify'. Unlike in *IJ* when the endnotes nurtured an affirmative physical relationship between author-narrator and the reader, *TPK* reveals the negative side of this relationship. The promise of 'serious fiction', in this case, as an affirmative marker of the last remaining safe space for intellectual kinship and, relatedly, male homosocial bonding, becomes exposed as an outcome of desire, a willingness to believe that Wallace's ghost was paying 'a higher price than anybody's ever paid to interface' with the individuated, male reader. Instead, the material production of the book reveals itself as a monument to the 'phantom' of Wallace, the unrelentingly solipsistic commercialism that neither the novel nor Wallace can ever truly escape. In other words, the material book, the safe 'beloved' that arguably mediates the competing affections and desire of the two heterosexual men, is exposed, in part, as a kind of intimate betrayal.

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[14] In the actual editing of the text, Pietsch is actually just following suit: Wallace's manuscripts of this chapter leave "(TK)" as the place marker for the page, which simply signifies "to come" in revisions. See draft six of the "Author's Foreword," David Foster Wallace, "From his desk: clean print outs," TS, box 36, file 1, David Foster Wallace fonds, Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin Library.

I would like to pause on the potential of shame in this moment as a way to expose intimacy and desire as part of the author-reader relationship constructed by Wallace's fiction. As Flatley (1996) suggests, the conjuring of another's face makes 'prosopopeia…the trope of fame and shame alike' (106). This is because, as the psychologist Silvan Tomkins (1995) has argued, despite being 'felt as an inner torment, a sickness of the soul', shame is social: it is a facial reaction that provides involuntary, direct communication from one person to another. (133) However, as Tomkins suggests, '[Shame] operates only after interest or enjoyment has been activated, and inhibits one or the other or both. The innate activator of shame is the incomplete reduction of interest or joy' (134). Seeing another's face as experiencing shame, particularly when that other is someone we are attracted to or cherish, transfers those affects of shame to the proximate party, like a contagion.

With this in mind, Whitman's phrase 'Who knows but I am enjoying this?' seems an apt description of a reader response to encountering this author's preface in the context of the book's publication. Marshall Boswell has stated that the presence of the character David Wallace is 'one of the more striking, and at times, off-putting features of [his] unfinished novel' (25). By drawing attention to Wallace's, to borrow Hayes-Brady's provocative phrase, 'unspeakable failure', Wallace's ghost in *TPK* initiates the production of shame and the inhibition of joy. Part of this is captured by the anxiety over whether or not it was appropriate to publish, look at, and read *TPK* at all, evidenced in 'The Editor's Note', or whether or not readers should read his fiction teleologically to deliberate on the circumstances of Wallace's own suicide. However, these questions are, in part, bound up with the affective capacity of the language and storytelling to facilitate and mediate desire between the (male) author/(male) reader. I concur with Konstantinou on this point when he argues, 'The problem…is not that 'reading' a life as literature debases life, but rather that to assume that one 'merely' reads literature without having to take its conceptual commitments seriously—to assume that writing is merely a gesture—debases literature' (105). The production and intensity of shame in these reading moments, as that of intimacy and homosocial desire before it, are not entirely abstract or

extra-textual constructions. These spectral revisions demonstrate that the production of these affects is integral to the aesthetic and narrative devices Wallace uses in his fiction.

We might see, then, this moment as an inversion of what Whitman had hoped for in 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry': a space and time, in the future, when two men could be shamelessly intimate. Instead, what the production of shame, in opening and reading and conjuring Wallace's ghost in *TPK*, corresponds with is the potentiality of one (male) reader's intense interest, and desire, for the (male) author. In short, this rupture simultaneously produces Wallace's real immaterial presence, and exposes it as a fictional production.[15] Moreover, the very intensity of a readerly interest in that ghost reveals itself as a real desire to meet and cross the boundaries of one another in a 'dream of complete intimacy' (Hayes-Brady, 7). To be sure, in examining Wallace's project as one determined to produce an intimate relational mode, I do not intend to read Wallace as an affirmative 'queer' figure, nor his fiction as constructing queer relational modes. In fact, following Sedgwick (1985), in Wallace's fiction one can note 'the radically discontinuous relation of male homosocial and homosexual bonds' (5). That the cathexis between so many (male) readers and David Foster Wallace's authorial ghost remains invisible despite its palpability supports Sedgwick's comment that, 'what *counts* as the sexual is…variable and itself political' (15). Yet, recognizing that desire and articulating how his narrative and aesthetic devices are designed to provoke just such intimate interest, we might begin to mine the queer potential of his fiction. Likewise, in noting the resistance to this recognition, within and outside of the novels,[16] we might question the universalizing intent to 'sincere' communication routinely associated with his legacy.

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[15] In fact, this is precisely the double-bind that Paul de Man describes as the de-facement of autobiographical moments, or that which produces the authorial face also exposes it as a fiction. (920–921).

[16] Potential Instances of queer romance in *IJ,* for instance long passages describing Orin Incandenza's (Hal's older brother) intense attraction for the cross-dressing undercover agent Hugh/Helen Steeply, serve primarily as a heteronormative wink and an elbow nudge between the author and reader.

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