

printed from 1987 to 2020, compiled both thematically and alphabetically. The last text, the Afterword “New Doorways into Anzaldúa’s Creative Mind” by AnaLouise Keating, Anzaldúa’s literary trustee, describes the origins of The Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa’s Papers archive and its content which, as Keating claims, is enormous and a great potential for Anzaldúan scholars. The wide range of materials covers Anzaldúa’s entire life, from birth certificates to obituaries, since Gloria herself collected most of the materials related to her literary, intellectual, activist and daily life. Hence, the archive collection contains her fiction and poetry manuscripts and “highly significant authorial and editorial revisions; thousands of pages of notes; lots of correspondence with friends, publishers, scholars, fans and lovers; candle affirmations; tarot... astrology readings; favorite books filled with marginalia, drawings... audio and video recordings of writing workshops, meditations and over twenty journals” (544). The archive is still growing because Anzaldúa’s colleagues, friends and family donate more materials to the collection. Keating also describes nine stages in Anzaldúa’s writing process that have contributed to producing this immense number of artefacts. According to her, “a single essay or chapter might exist in thirty or more drafts—and Anzaldúa seems to have saved them all... which is a scholar’s dream, containing all sorts of intellectual and/or aesthetic nuggets” (545).

To conclude, the critical edition of *Borderlands/La Frontera* is intended for various international audiences and scholars working in different fields. It aims to enrich our knowledge of Anzaldúa’s writing theory and deepen our understanding of her teachings and concepts. It offers an insight into the author’s mind and life and the critical framework to the vast community of scholars who continue to study *Borderlands* in their everyday research and teaching, thus disseminating Anzaldúan studies across the globe.

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**Jarosław Hetman, editor. *David Foster Wallace*. Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2021, 154 pages.**

The volume *David Foster Wallace*, edited by Jarosław Hetman, provides the first comprehensive scholarly study in Polish of Wallace’s fictional and non-fictional work. Hailed as one of the best minds of his generation and as a worthy successor to the old postmodern masters, David Foster Wallace left, despite his relatively short life that ended in suicide at the age of 46, a strong and intense mark on American literature. In his eulogy at the funeral in mid-September 2008 Don DeLillo characterized Wallace’s work as animated by the effort “to reconcile what is difficult and consequential with a level of address that’s youthful, unstudied and often funny” and thus able to articulate “the loss and anxiety, darkening mind, self-doubt” with a persistent sense of vitality and stunned vigor. In closing his speech DeLillo called Wallace “a brave writer,” whose legacy will continue to resonate in the broad context of contemporary culture: “We can imagine his [Wallace’s] fiction and essays as the scroll fragments of a distant future. We already know this work as current news—writer to reader—intimately, obsessively. He did not channel his talents to narrower patterns. He wanted to be equal

to the vast, babbling, spin-out sweep of contemporary culture” (“In Memoriam”). The last fourteen years proved DeLillo’s prediction correct: Wallace’s work has attracted the attention of both academic and non-academic audiences not only in the US but also worldwide. Wallace’s novels, short stories and essays have been translated into several languages, including Polish. Jolanta Kozak translated two collection of short stories *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* and *Oblivion*, and the collection of essays *A Supposedly Fun Thing I’ll Never Do Again*; Mikołaj Denderski took on the challenge of trying his hand at Wallace’s unfinished experimental novel *The Pale King*. The translation of *Infinite Jest*, Wallace’s most celebrated work, a novel that catapulted him to fame and further released his talent for writing, has been scheduled for release in summer 2022. This growing interest in Wallace’s work created a need for a balanced and critical overview that the volume, published as a part of the series *Mistrzowie Literatury Amerykańskiej*, seeks to meet.

In the editor’s introduction, Jarosław Hetman discusses the work, life, and posthumous reception of Wallace and his writings, examining questions of artistic intent, emerging narrative strategies, literary and philosophical inspirations, and more. There is also a discussion of feminist readings and the ensuing accusations of a misogynist perspective embedded in some of Wallace’s narratives. While the David Foster Wallace phenomenon has undeniably been fueled by a cycle of biographical appraisals and re-appraisals, assessments and re-assessments including all aspects of his public persona,<sup>4</sup> the central focus of the volume is on Wallace the writer, whose treatment of female characters, as Hetman shows, is nuanced and capable of inducing a self-reflective stance on misogyny and the objectification of women’s bodies. A case in point is the collection *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*, which as Hetman contends, can be interpreted as specifically directed at a male audience, ironically encouraging them to make a list of sins and offences and to re-assess their habitual ways of thinking and acting. In the first two chapters of the volume Hetman traces trajectories connecting the early texts, *The Broom of the System* (1987) and *Girl With Curious Hair* (1989) with the monumental narrative of *Infinite Jest* (1996) by placing Wallace against the background of postwar American literary tradition, in particular postmodernist writing. Regarded as a worthy successor of such prominent writers as John Barth, William Gaddis, Robert Coover and Thomas Pynchon, Wallace was exceptionally self-aware of this legacy to the point of being haunted by a feeling of belatedness. In a persistent effort to chart a new direction, Wallace tried out all kinds of possible ways to move beyond postmodern self-reflexivity and the meta-fictional trap. As A.O. Scott put it, “if one way to escape from the blind alley of postmodern self-consciousness is to turn around and walk in another direction.... Wallace prefers to forge ahead in hopes of breaking through to the other side, whatever that may be” (41). Wallace succeeded in breaking through with the publication of *Infinite Jest*, praised for its exuberance and intellectual impishness, a brilliant work of “a writer of virtuosic talents who can seemingly do anything” (Kakutani). Hetman insightfully discusses this enthusiastic reception of *Infinite Jest*, arguing that its unexpected success, a true Black Swan event, is due not only to its sophisticated, nuanced conceptual framework steeped in mathematical and

4 For a critical overview of this phenomenon, see for example Moats’s essay “Year of David Foster Wallace.”

philosophical ideas (in particular that of Waław Sierpiński, William James, Søren Kirkegaard), but also its strong “prosocial” stance and direct, unpretentious insistence on being a decent human being. Good fiction, as Wallace observed in an interview with the literary critic Larry McCaffery, “could have as dark a worldview as it wished, but it’d find a way both to depict this dark world *and* to illuminate the possibilities of being alive and human in it” (26, emphasis in original).

The question of the writer’s capacity to capture reality’s infinite complexity by revealing its (blocked, neglected or aborted) possibilities is the central concern of Marek Paryż’s contribution that discusses Wallace’s non-fictional work *A Supposedly Fun Thing I’ll Never Do Again*. Paryż sees this collection of essays as co-shaped by the tradition of American New Journalism that Wallace the reporter had been aware of and exposed to. By carefully constructing his journalistic persona, Wallace successfully combined postmodern sensibilities and a self-deprecating, absurd sense of humor with a sensitive ear for the polyphonies of contemporary American speech to produce a wildly funny, discerning and approachable body of texts that diagnose “a great despair and stasis in U.S. culture” (Wallace, “E Unibus Pluram” 49) and the American way of life. Wojciech Drąg in his contribution to the volume turns his attention to some of the shortest (and therefore frequently undervalued or marginalized) stories in *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* to study Wallace’s original appropriation of the microfiction genre. Drąg argues that Wallace, keenly aware of postmodern mannerism, explores the potentials of this genre so that he can move beyond unrelenting irony and create intimate zones of communication, in which manifestations of empathy are not merely thinkable but also desirable. In his critique of the post-industrial condition of society Wallace joins the ranks of other contemporary authors such as Dave Eggers and Mark Z. Danielewski, whose fictions acknowledge the importance of empathy and human commonality. Tymon Adamczewski likewise addresses the issues of communication and commonality by reading the collection of short stories *Oblivion* (2004) as a sort of narrative meditation on suffering, depression and other nightmares of consciousness. While it is tempting to approach this text through biographical lenses, *Oblivion*, Adamczewski maintains, is more than a contemporary jeremiad of the author who repeatedly fell victim to doubt and depression throughout his life. Shaped by Wallace’s interest in philosophy and language games, the collection probes the existential depths of our contemporary condition by drawing our attention to the complexities of inner experience as mediated by language and the plurality of meanings. In the penultimate chapter of the volume Mark Tardi, in turn, examines some rich and fascinating relationships between mathematics and literature in his reading of Wallace’s essay “Rhetoric and the Math Melodrama” (2000) and the book *Everything and More: A Compact History of Infinity* (2003). Wallace’s writing persistently reminds us that mathematics is not necessarily a logical science that excels in formal accuracy and precision but can be a source of aesthetic experience. Tardi shows how Wallace renders abstract theorem and concepts into compelling and emotionally laden elements of narrative that help readers to appreciate the beauty of prime numbers, infinity and other concepts. The volume concludes with an essay on *The Pale King* (2011), which Jarosław Hetman reads as a conceptual sequel to *Infinite Jest*. If the latter novel, whose narrative structure was inspired by the concept of Sierpiński’s fractal triangle,

injects a sense of unpredictable dynamism into its unfolding, *The Pale King* seeks to top it in its effort to imitate the dynamic structure of tornado-like vortices as it (somewhat paradoxically) delves into prosodic everydayness, complacent solipsism, and consumer capitalism. The final result is overwhelming: *The Pale King* sucks in style conventions, techniques, narrative voices and perspectives to diagnose “routine, repetition, tedium, monotony, ephemeracy, inconsequence, abstraction, disorder, boredom, angst, ennui” (501) as true and fearsome enemies of our lives. And yet as Hetman notes, the novel’s resonance is ultimately upbeat in its persistent reminder that the key to modern life is the ability “to find the other side of the rote, the picayune, the meaningless, the repetitive, the pointlessly complex. To be, in a word, unborable” (905). This imperative appears to apply also to Wallace’s *oeuvre* itself, which, as the essays collected in the volume show, remains relevant and poignant today and is far from being “borable.”

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**Łukasz Muniowski. *Narrating the NBA: Cultural Representations of Leading Players after the Michael Jordan Era*. Lexington Books, 2021, 207 pages.**

In *Narrating the NBA*, Łukasz Muniowski looks into the lives of, as the title informs us, leading NBA players after the Jordan era. The players in question are Shaquille O’Neal, Alonzo Mourning, Vin Baker, Allen Iverson, Antoine Walker, Steve Nash, Tim Duncan, and Kobe Bryant. The title of the book itself is highly informative, as it indicates that an attempt has been made to present these eight players as more than “just athletes,” but as cultural phenomena. Moreover, the title highlights Michael Jordan