

“Turning Somersaults with a Hand Nailed to the Floor:” *Infinite Jest*’s Recursive
Presentation of Waste-Desire Cycles

by

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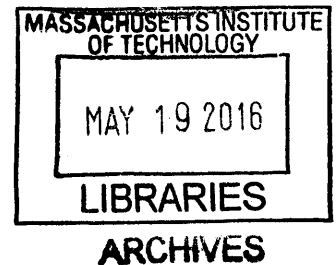
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1. “Waste Is Fuel for the Fusion”: Introduction to a Coproductive Cycle

In one scene of David Foster Wallace’s *Infinite Jest*, the character Mike Pemulis explains to another student, Idris Arslanian, the annular fusion energy production process that allows “approximate energy-independence” (64) for their nation.¹ Annular fission takes the poisonous leftovers of society and produces fuel. On prime-number days of the month, giant catapults fling “mind-staggering volumes of toxic material” (572) into the “Great Concavity,” a section of the former United States that was sold to Canada and then absorbed into the larger Organization of North American Nations (O.N.A.N., including Mexico, the United States and Canada). The annular fusion uses these toxins to produce uranium and plutonium; essentially, it creates useful fuel by “bombarding highly toxic radioactive particles with massive doses of stuff even more toxic” (572). The waste that the subsidized society produces is used as fuel for the mechanisms in society that produce waste. It circles, as the word ‘annular’ implies, intended to cycle between toxic wasteland and lush fecundity sustainably and perpetually.

Two concepts or phenomena are linked “coproductively” when they exist in a system of mutually constitutive causality. Katherine Hayles, in her essay “Virtual Ecologies, Entertainment and *Infinite Jest*” defines coproduction in contrast to a “hierarchical dichotomy in which the privileged term acts as ground or origin for the belated term” (Hayles 676). Coproduction is not hierarchical but cyclical. To explain, Hayles writes that confusion arises when coproduction is mistaken for hierarchy; there is no chicken and egg problem if you accept that the chicken and egg produce each other and do not need a starting point.

¹ All parenthetical citations are for *Infinite Jest* unless otherwise noted or implied.

1.1 The Waste-Desire Cycle

Although not always as clearly as annular fusion's use of "fuel for a process whose waste is fuel for the fusion" (572), waste and desire are two phenomena linked in a coproductive cycle shown in Figure 1.

First, I will describe one half of this cycle: the creation of waste from desire. I provide examples in societal and psychological theaters to demonstrate this process's universality.



Figure 1. *A Coproductive Cycle* Desire produces waste which produces desire

In capitalist societies, where peoples' livelihoods depend on creating, fueling and satisfying desires, waste occurs primarily in the production of material goods. In his anti-consumerist book *The Waste Makers*, Vance Packard imagines a Cornucopia City, where factories are "located on the edge of a cliff, and the ends of their assembly lines can be swung to the front or rear doors depending upon the public demand...When demand is slack...the output of refrigerators or other products will drop out of sight and go directly to their graveyard" (Packard 4). The ideal world of the American consumer, he implies, ends with the old product in the graveyard and requires production for production's sake. Capitalist desires demand "obsolescence creation," where waste is an unintended but natural export of any desire. In a similar vein, Slavoj Žižek once remarked: "Capitalism is all the time in crisis. This is precisely why it appears almost indestructible. Crisis is not its obstacle. It is what pushes it forwards towards permanent self-revolutionizing, extended self-reproduction, and always-new products. The other invisible side of it is waste, tremendous amount of waste" ("The Pervert's Guide to Ideology"). Packard and Žižek would recognize the huge catapulting waste that propels

the nation in *Infinite Jest*. O.N.A.N. and capitalism are founded in desire that necessarily produces waste.

On smaller scales, the individuals that make up societies are equipped with psyches that Gutav Fechner viewed as a “profoundly wasteful economy...structured around the disposal of...psychic waste” (Raitt 74). Sigmund Freud, who Raitt shows was strongly influenced by Fechner, compared psychotherapy to “the opening up of a cavity filled with pus, the scraping out...” (74). These two psychologists originally believed in a “principle of constancy” (75) that meant all brain activity was directed toward maintaining equilibrium. If equilibrium were contained, the machine would “run of itself” (Raitt 74, directly quoting Freud), achieving much longer and possibly eternal life spans by avoiding psychic waste entirely. If the equilibrium between desire and satisfaction were maintained and waste avoided, the human psyche would last forever. However, the second law of thermodynamics, formulated in 1852, mandates that heat is lost in any energy transfer. Perfect movement, desire without consequence, cannot occur. When Freud learned of this theory through Fechner, he had to adjust his theory of the psyche. The second law destroyed his idea of the psyche as a perpetual motion machine, so Freud reluctantly faced the idea that any ‘equilibrium-building’ action necessarily negated its own purpose. Any action, even those that eliminated psychic waste, produced waste. Freud faced a “paradox that pleasure and the maintenance of psychic health were implicated in the organism’s mortality” (Raitt 81), which doesn’t seem like a paradox if pleasure and mortality are linked coproductively. Like capitalist societies, individuals cannot pursue progress without producing waste. Any action at all produces waste.

The second half of the cycle illustrated in Figure 1 occurs when waste produces desire, either because the people affected by waste desire to rid themselves of the waste or because value can be

found in the waste produced. When waste produces action to remove itself, it is a production of desire. In *Underworld*, Don DeLillo suggests a hierarchy between garbage and civilization: “Civilization did not rise and flourish as...whispered philosophy under the stars, with garbage as a noisome offshoot...No, garbage rose first, inciting people to build a civilization in response, in self-defense” (DeLillo 287). From the sewer systems of Ur to the social values reorganized due to curbside recycling in late twentieth century United States (Hawkins ix), waste demands removal and thus action and thus desire, and perhaps eventually civilization grows from those demands. But waste can do more than create systems for its removal; it can also gain value on its own. People employed at dumps or recycling facilities find obvious value in discarded objects; Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* created a glaring light bulb display from discarded parts; companies fire people to demonstrate robustness; the floating plastic bag in *American Beauty* is an aesthetic object (Hawkins xi). Humans transform waste as often as possible because “loss, waste and the unproductive are anti-economic. They disturb the logic of ‘general positivity’ that defines an economy: the production of positive value, gains, or benefit. The negative exists in a state of constant vulnerability to recuperation” (Hawkins xii). The ‘not wanted’ only exists temporarily until a new definition can be applied to waste to give it value again; value and language intertwine. Waste is anything deprived of its original meaning like excrement is food deprived of nutrition. In changing the definition, value is both created and lost.

1.2 Brief Review of Critical Portrayals of Waste in *Infinite Jest*

Waste plays a large role in *Infinite Jest* (Appendixes A and B of this essay exist for the reader to peruse and skim so that they can see the diversity and abundance of references to waste in the novel). Literary critics Katherine Hayles and Heather Houser have both discussed waste in

Infinite Jest and describe the perversity, prevalence and hyperbole of this waste well. However, both presume that waste is useless and neglect the second part of the waste-desire cycle, where waste gains value. Instead, they ask on whom waste can be blamed and how it can be solved. They point to places in the novel where they believe Wallace gives a simple answer to the reader, “a way to set our ethical bearing” (Houser 139) to function without waste.

In her essay about recursivity and autonomy in *Infinite Jest*, Katherine Hayles calls the pervasive waste in the novel, “this widening circle of toxicity, this failure to contain damage within a prophylactically enclosed area...the dump. The point of the dump is precisely that it cannot be contained because the loops continuously circulate through its permeable boundaries” (Hayles 686). This circle includes A.F.R. mirror terrorism, the Entertainment, Avril and President Gentle’s obsession with cleanliness, Himself’s alienating attempts to connect with his son, the “Bottoms” of addiction, the end of Broadcast TV, the Inner Infants group, giant Infants, etc. Her thesis is that *Infinite Jest*’s characters cannot act with self-interested motivations (she references abjection, or ‘sending away from yourself,’ as the quintessentially self-interested act) in a recursive/inter-connected environment, because such action will always result in more waste and the spreading of the “dump.” The dump “always returns in recursive cycles...that inexorably tie together the sanctified and the polluted” (687).

Heather Houser, in her essay, “*Infinite Jest*’s Environmental Case for Disgust,” picks up on this theme of waste and characterizes the underlying problem as ‘human detachment,’ which is similar to Hayles’ vision of autonomy in that Houser defines detachment as fundamentally self-interested; it springs, as Houser notes quoting the novel, from “the womb of solipsism, anhedonia, death in life” (838).

Both essays categorize waste as something that must be escaped or from which one must be saved. Their cycle is lopsided, with an arrow from desire to waste but not from waste to desire. They both seek to solve the waste. Hayles' essay references discipline and "technologies of self" (Hayles 695). She cites Schtitt, Gately and Marathe as characters who overcome their solipsism and given themselves to something larger by "rebuilding subjectivity" (Hayles 693) and surrendering their will. She believes the book advocates "a daily struggle to be 'disgustingly humble, kind, helpful, tactful...truthful' (357)" (Hayles 694). For Houser, the answer to waste is disgust. She advocates a "control through excess" (Houser 130) similar to an addict's last binge to trigger disgust, and the use of the affective power of disgust to discourage detached behavior.

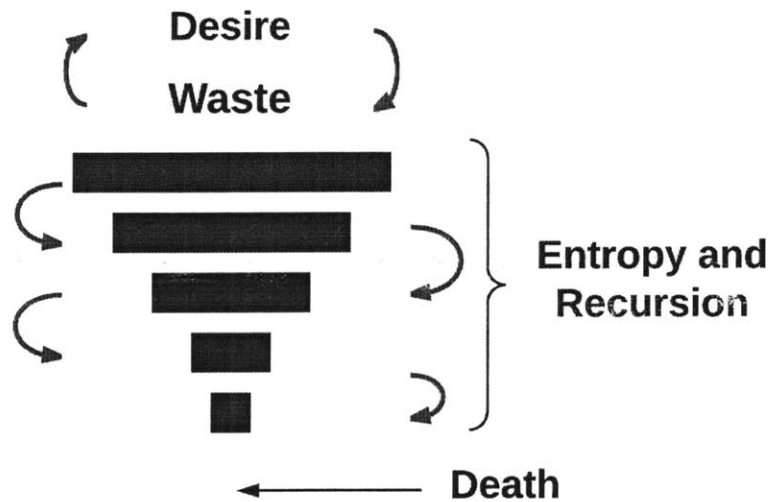
In contrast to these two critics, I believe waste often acts in cycles with desire in *Infinite Jest* to positive, valuable effect. In some cases, the "returning of waste" that Hayles calls "the underground seepages and labyrinthine pathways through which the abjected always returns" (Hayles 687), is valuable. Cycles, especially cycles that occur in similar ways but with different stakes and at different scales, act as often as positive forces as they do negative. Like Žižek's description of crisis as a motor behind capitalist progress, waste has diverse value and significance in this novel, complicated more because it definitionally occurs cyclically with desire.

This essay will, in part, re-characterize the creeping dump as an inevitable consequence of the waste-desire cycle, as opposed to Hayles' characterization, which blames characters for not surrendering their will or Houser's characterization, which blames apathy and lack of disgust. Both of these scapegoats and the solutions that accompany them are no less short-sighted and idealistic than Freud's desire for a perpetual motion mind that uses psychotherapy to end waste. Instead, this essay will embrace the waste as inevitable and pick up from the desire-to-dump and describe the dump-to-desire, the waste valuation and definition that Wallace performs in the text.

1.3 Recursivity and Entropy in Waste-Desire Cycles

In this essay, I aim to discuss the value of waste and the ways it produces desire, and to expand that to describe the ways in which *Infinite Jest* portrays a cycle slowly and inescapably winding down toward an end.

When what-was-once-waste achieves value, it is never the same value that produced it (even in ‘closed’ systems like the O.N.A.N. Concavity); entropy does not return the cycle to the original point. It is built into the thermodynamic laws of the universe that movement produces waste and built into our culture that waste produces value. Thus, the cycle illustration in Figure 1 needs to be completed with a downward spiral toward death, as shown in Figure 2.



In *Infinite Jest*, the existence and decay of the waste-desire cycle feature heavily in plot, in theme and in structure. The annular fission cycle that began this essay, where the capitalist desires of O.N.A.N. produce and then benefit from the Great Concavity’s toxic fuel, exemplifies this cycle and its end—the O.N.A.N. political system built on this cycle is falling apart and is in its last subsidized year. *Infinite Jest* does not, as Hayles and Houser suggest, point to a way to end the

desire-to-waste cycle. It describes the cycle and then it ends the society, characters, words and novel built upon those cycles. It raises the stakes of reading by suggesting mortality in every choice.

I believe that in *Infinite Jest*, this entropic decay is portrayed by the novel's recursive structures and themes. Hayles introduces the term recursivity to describe both *Infinite Jest* and coproductivity: "In whatever context coproduction appears, recursivity is central to its dynamics" (Hayles 677). Recursion is the process of repeating items in a self-similar way. In a recursive element or text, a repeating pattern displays at every scale, like a fractal. For example, in the recursive piece *I Am Sitting in a Room*, Alvin Lucier played an audio narration into a tape recorder and then taped the tape recorder playing the result. This process is repeated, and over time the message distorts as resonances and frequencies conflict with each other, leaving an ultimately unintelligible message that the listener still understands because she heard the first playback of the narration. Jackson Pollock's *Autumn Rhythm* is another fractal/recursive piece, in which any zoomed-in rectangle of the painting exhibits similar patterns to the whole. Waste-desire cycles, and indeed any coproductive cycles, exhibit feedback loops that mimic audio narration or fractal paintings—they are cyclic, recursive structures. "Each part of the [system is] reflected in every other part" (482) in a coproductive cycle. Thus, as Hayles states, recursivity both propels and describes this dynamic process.

Like the waste-desire cycle, recursive structures theoretically last infinitely but perform on smaller scales each time until they are infinitesimally small and meaningless. Hayles equates this recursivity to interconnection; all systems are connected in a recursive system, she says, thus any small autonomous change in one part will lead to a spread of the "dump" throughout all systems. I agree that the undeniably recursive obsessions in this novel speak to interconnection—indeed, they

bring the three main subplots together. However, I also believe that recursion is particularly important in this novel because of this progressive minimization and waste; it acts like entropy because the stakes of each cycle grow smaller.

1.4 A Guide for this Essay

In this essay, I describe *Infinite Jest*'s characters, its plot, its theme, its structure, its diction, its motifs. I aim in all discussions to prove that the “cyclone” depicted in Figure 2—i.e. the decay of the cycle between waste and desire—pervades all aspects of this novel and that the novel contains recursive choices that aid that depiction.

Like Houser and Hayles, I cannot resist offering a redemptive “solution” to the problem posed by this cyclone: I believe that the cycle’s description in a literary work and its application to characters and the novel’s reader triumph over the meaninglessness of the death at the bottom cyclone. The words describe the cycle and inherent hopelessness, yes, but they do not deny human capacity for individual, emotional transcendence against inevitability. Below, Houser describes Wallace’s view on the purpose of literature:

“The contemporary condition is hopelessly shitty, insipid, materialistic, emotionally retarded, sadomasochistic and stupid” (McCaffery 131). In stark terms, David Foster Wallace assesses the bleak condition that he is handed and determines that, in the face of it, the contemporary novelist must cultivate readers’ “capacity for joy, charity, genuine connections” (132) by “author[ing] things that both restructure worlds and make living people feel stuff” (quoted in Max 48) (Houser 188).

If the waste-desire cycle is the “hopelessly shitty” hand the characters and reader of *Infinite Jest* has been dealt, the genuine connection and empathy built between these characters and between reader and characters is the way *Infinite Jest* provides meaning to that cycle.

The next section of this essay will describe waste-desire cycles exhibited across this novel, where waste produces value as well as value/desire producing waste. This will prove that these cycles exist and are the focus of every theater in a diverse plot.

In the third and fourth sections, I discuss thematic and then formal/structural elements of the novel that support the notion of waste as valuable. Since current literary consensus (albeit from only two critics) posits that waste in *Infinite Jest* is both avoidable and malignant, I thought it was important to categorize the ways in which *Infinite Jest* suggests waste is inevitable and valuable. In this section, much of the value derived from waste is human connection and empathy building, but other functions (e.g. structural, descriptive) will be introduced. The fourth section focuses on the recursion mentioned above, and how recursion in the novel links to the depicted waste-desire cycles as an entropic, cyclic and wasteful force.

The fifth section is a discussion of the largest recursive loop of the novel, the reading of the novel itself, and the equal parts frustration and value the reader can derive from it.

In the concluding section, I will do a closer textual investigation of two scenes to demonstrate on a smaller scale the points of the third and fourth sections. This close reading focuses what might be an abstract discussion about *Infinite Jest's* waste and value and decaying cycle on tangible textual details. Since recursive structures represent the whole in their parts and *Infinite Jest* is a recursive structure, I thought it an important exercise to see the whole in a part (or two, since there are two scenes described). There I will conclude with a discussion of this essay's titular image, a man turning somersaults with his hand nailed to the floor.

Infinite Jest describes cycles of value to waste and waste to value in order first to explain them through description, but also to show that the cycles cannot continue forever, that they result eventually in stasis and death. Each loop of any waste-desire cycle exhausts the energy of the system and leads to a decay of overall value, but the despair, aloofness and anhedonia that such a conclusion might lead to can be alleviated through narrative storytelling and the creation of empathy.

2. “The Business of Sending From Yourself”: Waste and Desire Cycles in the Plot of *Infinite Jest*

Buried in the 168th endnote, Coach Schtitt of Enfield Academy’s political leanings are described. The stalwart right-leaner agrees fully with the political directions of the generally disliked President Gentle (founder of the “Clean U.S. Party” and responsible for the United States’ Great Concavity). Indeed, Wallace writes, “the Coach was swept away with the athleto-Wagnerian implications of Gentle’s proposals for waste, this business of sending from yourself what you hope will not return” (1031).

Much of *Infinite Jest* focuses on this concept and the question of whether or not and to what extent the motion of sending away from yourself something that cannot be returned can be successful. The dynamic of sending away and coming back, a process easily expressed by a tennis match, is a recursive pattern that appears in each ‘theater’ of *Infinite Jest*’s plot: the titular Entertainment that threatens Americans, the political O.N.A.N. debacles, the tennis students of Enfield and the drug addicts of Ennet. Each is caught in a crisis cycle between waste and desire with no clear exit.

James Incandenza produced *Infinite Jest* the Entertainment (as opposed to the novel) as his ultimate work, meant to convince his youngest son to communicate. “No horror...could equal watching your own offspring open his mouth and have nothing come out...The wraith...spent the whole sober last ninety days of his animate life working tirelessly to contrive a medium via which he and the muted son could simply converse” (838). Ironically, the Entertainment renders all its viewers speechless and quickly dead, as the extreme pleasure they experience in passive viewing absorbs and subsumes all other desire. This is the purified, quickened addiction cycle, and its object is a film starring Joelle van Dyne. In the opening scene of *The Entertainment*, Joelle circles

around a revolving door, recognizing the viewer (from the viewer's perspective) behind her and circling back to catch his/her attention. In the second scene, she plays a "maternal instantiation of the archetypal figure Death" (836) who explains to the wobble-lensed natal camera "that Death is always female, and...that the woman who kills you is always your next life's mother" (788). She then utters "twenty minutes of permutations of 'I'm sorry'" (939). The plot of the Entertainment goes beyond a distillation of the "trite, hackneyed, numbing television shows" Wallace criticizes in his essay on TV and U.S. fiction ("E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction" 165): it is the end game, the place where there is no "quantifiable difference between need and just strong desire" (121). Desire produces waste produces desire produces waste, as viewers of The Entertainment literally soil themselves ("the room smelled very bad indeed" (87)) and waste their lives watching a piece of entertainment that completely validates all their desires.

Ironically, this film cartridge threatens the stability and existence of the United States, which has created and joined O.N.A.N. in order to satisfy its desires to see waste safely removed. As Hayles points out, the acronym O.N.A.N. for the countries grouped under the U.S.'s Experialist reign "slyly points toward onanism, the sin of Onan in ejaculating his seed upon the ground" (Hayles 685). Onanism reflects both the act of "sending away" waste that should not be returned and the sterility and lifelessness of decaying waste-desire cycles. The American president Johnny Gentle is "the kind with the paralyzing fear of free-floating contamination, the either-wear-a-surgical-microfiltration-mask-or-make-the-people-around-you-wear-surgical-caps-and-masks-and-touch-doorknobs-only-with-a-boiled-hankie...kind" (624), part of the Clean United States Party, on the C.U.S.P. of, but never successful in, ridding the country entirely of waste. Under his leadership rises the novel's most actualized and least symbolic waste-desire cycle: the Great Concavity, described in the introduction. Into the Great Concavity goes the toxic waste of the United States'

capitalist fervor. Through annular fission, a process that James Incandenza (note his presence in all the novel's major subplots) helped create, this waste is turned into energy that feeds back into the fervor. There are casualties along the way that produce their own cycles (the Entertainment, for example, would not have been a plot element or problem if a group of radical Québécois, the sect A.F.R., had not decided to use it as a tool of rebellion against O.N.A.N.), and much of the "science fiction" elements critics refer to when speaking of *Infinite Jest* come from this subsection. The giant infants, feral hamsters, "TOMATOES I COULDN'T LIFT EVEN IF I COULD HACK THROUGH THEIR VINES WITH A MACHETE TO EVEN REACH THEM" (406), reflect the huge appetites required to power a cycle of this magnitude. To celebrate the creation of O.N.A.N., a day that brought the Great Concavity into being, the state sponsors the Interdependence Day holiday; another reminder of the interdependent, cyclic process involved in these mechanics.

Mario Incandenza, living at the Enfield Tennis Academy (E.T.A.) begun by his father James clarifies O.N.A.N. politics for the reader in his Interdependence Day puppet show. Mike Pemulis, another E.T.A. resident, gives the novel's primary description (described in the opening of this essay) of the annular fission cycle. The students at E.T.A. play the game in which one literally sends away from oneself what one hopes will not return: tennis. Most of them are in the top one hundred players in their age bracket in the country (some very competitive students, like John Wayne and Hal Incandenza, are top ten in the world for their circuit), and their main obstacles to success are psychological. "These kids," says prorector DeLint, "the best of them are here to learn to see...they're here to get lost in something bigger than them" (660), so their sport becomes a way to rid themselves of personal failures. "Talent's unconscious exercise becomes a way to escape yourself, a long waking dream of pure play..." (173) explains Hal. Like the perpetual motion mind as Freud originally conceived it, the players' minds must carefully handle all psychic

waste in order to succeed on the court, up to the point at which they become defined by the absence of whatever it is they have sacrificed to prioritize tennis. Students desire the “Show” of professional tennis playing but burn out psychologically before they reach it or cannot concentrate because of overwhelming anxieties, or turn to “Substances” to maintain and ensure performance, or threaten suicide if they lose a single match. No players seem happy; the careful psychic handling leads to wasteful, sometimes disastrous consequences. Many students spend free hours playing the nihilistic Eschaton, in which they become nuclear powers laying waste to other world powers; this game erupts in violence in the middle of the book (with far-reaching consequences, including the expulsion of Pemulis), confirming the uneasy disquiet lurking beneath strained student conversations. The tennis academy is a relatively normal setting compared to the other subplots, but it allows Wallace to explore the psychological perturbations Freud described, according to which students attempt to produce equilibrium but out of thermodynamic necessity produce waste.

Finally, down the hill from Enfield, Ennet House addicts get wasted and waste away in their addictive spirals. AA and NA testimonials of addicts reaching their “Bottom” depict the descent of these spirals. This concept of Bottoms pervades the novel: as Hayles observes, “the main narrative (leaving aside the endnotes) is book-ended by the account of two Bottoms,” Hal’s and Don Gately’s (Hayles 695). A bottom is literally where waste comes from (that is not a merely trivial observation in a book by an author who loves wordplay that uses the word *shit* over 200 times and includes scenes of Don Gately cleaning human excrement off walls and using a bedpan). Drug addicts have an obvious waste-desire cycle to their Bottoms, but much of this book chronicles what kind of ‘shit’ happens when they try to come out of those bottoms. The chaos of a halfway house, rendered in part through transcripts of Don Gately’s tenure as live-in Staffer, is a chaos created by people confronting what they once flung from themselves now that they’ve accepted they cannot

evade it entirely. It is the same cycle in reverse, and there is a redemptive arc that reaches a climax when Don Gately suffers through his gunshot wound treatment without any opiates and confronts his Bottom in the last scene of the book.

Each of these four main theaters of plot—the Entertainment, O.N.A.N., Enfield and Ennet—examines a cycle of waste and desire through a lens unique to its characters and construction. There are no unifying conclusions, no definite meaning to justify these cycles, but the pervasiveness of the theme suggests inevitability. The reader seldom sees the beginning of the cycle, except when the circumstances of a character's birth (often involving trauma or abuse) act as an origin story. Generally, the characters (as far as each subplot contains independent agents) are struggling toward their definition or idea of virtue but are caught in fatalistic cycles in which their desire for virtue produces only waste. Johnny Gentle cannot clean America without poisoning Quebec and unleashing terror and existential dread upon his country, Joelle van Dyne cannot comfort viewers and Himself cannot get Hal to communicate without endangering a nation and ultimately ruining Hal's ability to speak. Hal cannot quit his substance ("Abandon All Hope" (1063)) without ruining his tennis ability; Gately cannot protect his tenants without exposing himself to violence that makes him confront his worst memories.

3. “Quite Frankly We’ve Had Enough Shit Out of You”: Inevitable and Valuable Waste in *Infinite Jest*’s Themes

As established by Hayles, Houser and this essay, the registers and circumstances of plot-based waste in *Infinite Jest* are varied. The novel does not waste time with waste as only a metaphorical or ideological concept. Rubbish and human waste are the building blocks of the Year of the Depend Adult Undergarment/ Boston/Cambridge/*Infinite Jest* world. The word “dumpster” appears in the novel more than seventy times, often when characters like Bruce Green, Randy Lenz or Joelle van Dyne walk through the streets of Cambridge. A woman with “scaggly old bowels” (683) squats in front of Matty Pemulis. Gately sprays human waste off the walls every morning at his job (434), thinking sometimes of the snot that plugged the nose of his first and accidental murder victim, Monsieur DuPlessis (59). The first smell that indicates death-by-Entertainment is the soiling of the medical attaché (a specialist in human digestion). This smell is similar to the “the sharp decayed-lemon odor of stress-diarrhea” (239) that Joelle Van Dyne reflects on right before she attempts suicide. When Pemulis procures the DMZ, he tells Hal “the turd emergeth” (171). Since it is difficult, in a single paragraph, to prove the pervasiveness of waste of an 1100 page novel, this essay’s two appendices can be further read to understand how often literal human waste is evoked. It becomes a unifying human feature.

Right before Hal lies down in one of the final chapters dedicated to him (“The Ceiling was Breathing”), succumbing to anhedonia and depressive withdrawal, he imagines “another, dimmer room, filled with the rising mass of the excrement I’d produce, the room’s double-locked steel door gradually bowing outward with the mounting pressure” (849). He then lies down and doesn’t stand up for the remainder of the novel. This excrement room bears no small existential resemblance to

the Great Convexity of Waste that bows outward from the pressure of the waste launched into it. Over a lifetime, the waste created during your lifetime comes back to you.

Human digestion neatly symbolizes the process of creating waste from desire. E.T.A., the place upon the hill with bowel-like underground tunnels, meant to transform young children into sleek and strong pro-athletes and scholars, has lots of digestive associations. The original motto, when Himself created the school, reminded the students, “They Can Kill You, But the Legalities of Eating You Are Quite a Bit Dicier” (994). At one point Johnette F. of Ennet looks at Hal’s E.T.A. sweatshirt and reads the word “ATE” (786). Scenes with E.T.A. students often occur at the dinner table. Generally, the “medicalized environmental consciousness” (Houser 126) of Wallace’s novel implies that the processing of youth into adult responsibility, particularly at E.T.A., involves an obsession with ingestion. The medicalized terms and corporeal imagery surrounding the school suggest that the intense training program at E.T.A. consumes its students’ desires, and that without constant ingestion of food and tennis doctrine, the students would fail to have purpose. When Hal quits marijuana and Pemulis urges him to pick up a different Substance, Hal asks rhetorically, ““Some vital part of my like personhood would die without something to ingest. This is your view”” (1065). Pemulis agrees, and speaks of those who have gone cold turkey who are “dead. Like machines; you could almost see the keys in their backs. You looked into their maps and something was gone. Something was all over, inside...Their joie de vivre” (1065). In contrast, the thousands-of-calories-per-day fuel it takes to maintain an E.T.A. athlete relies on the digestion that surrounds them, both the school’s process over them and the Substances they consume for themselves.

The medicalized diction and digestion-obsession occur at E.T.A. specifically, but death, a larger form of waste, haunts *Infinite Jest* specter-like and constant across all subplots. Death,

previously identified as the end result of the waste-desire cycle, unites characters in its strangeness and frequency. Randy Lenz's mother sued after an embarrassing bus incident and then eats herself to death. Himself's great uncle was electrocuted by a field series generator (493). Marathe's father died by answering a telephone call. Monsieur DuPlessis dies because Don Gately cannot speak French and accidentally suffocates him. Joelle van Dyne's mother committed suicide with a kitchen sink food disposal. Don Gately's father killed a kitten in a similar fashion. A woman who carries her artificial heart in her purse dies when Poor Tony steals her purse. An addict's child is stillborn due to cocaine addiction; the corpse is carried around for weeks. Marlo Bain's parents die when a news helicopter containing Lateral Alice Moore, who will never walk straight again, crashes into their car on the highway. Steeply's father falls ill with, essentially, a M.A.S.H. addiction.

The gruesome end of the patriarch Himself and the ends of those who die in front of the Entertainment are important plot vehicles. However, a large majority of the novel's deaths are anecdotally related and often humorous in their medically specific language or ridiculous circumstance. Like the radio show Madame Psychosis puts on where she lists the many possible disfigurements of a human body, *Infinite Jest* presents an imaginative and profuse catalogue of the ways a human can be severed from consciousness. These anecdotal deaths are still essential—they create a backstory for many characters in Ennet and Enfield. The deaths allows for humor and human interest in dense and knotted prose. Because many of the dead are parental, death orphans characters and provides them with foundational struggles.

Another unifying 'waste state' like death in the novel is the paralysis prompted by competing desires. Characters under this paralysis find themselves like Ken Erdedy in the novel's second scene:

...at this precise time his telephone and his intercom to the front door's buzzer both sounded at the same time...and he moved first toward the telephone console, then over toward his intercom module, then convulsively back toward the sounding phone, and then tried somehow to move toward both at once, finally, so that he stood splay-legged, arms wildly out as if something's been flung, splayed, entombed between the two sounds, without a thought in his head (34).

This type of bind is humorously covered in a quiz from the teacher Mary Esther Thode's class, "The Personal Is the Political Is the Psychopathological: The Politics of Contemporary Psychopathological Double-Binds," in which she asks students what they would do as a compulsive kleptomaniac who's equally compulsively agoraphobic. Either both goals are equally desirable and cannot be reconciled, or the goal cannot ever be reconciled and the desire would end. For example, the prorectors don't want the tennis players in Enfield to get to the Show, because they know the psychological pressures will flatten them. Regardless, they train each student with the ultimate goal of sending them to the "Show." Similarly, the Moms (Avril Incandenza) does not want family peace, because she will not have the self-sustaining crises of her sons to mend. Don Gately requires the chaos of house stewardship and 4AM bathroom cleaning to stay sober.

When individuals try to escape double binds like these, competing desires can destroy them—the match between self and desires ends in the destruction of self, a complete abjection. The most obvious, early and gruesome image is James Incandenza's exploded head in a microwave. "Himself," instrumental in the annulation of O.N.A.N. politics, creator of the Entertainment and of Enfield, and visitor of Ennet, commits suicide for reasons never quite

explained. His wife's infidelity is implied; depression is brought up as a legitimate reason for seeking self "de-mapping;" but never do we explicitly learn why Himself commits suicide; the reader is left in the dark like his sons.

Instances of self-destruction like this change the tone of the often-humorous death and double-bind descriptions described above. Threats of self-harm treated as hyperbolic (at least in tone) are again and again actualized as permanent threat—Eric Clipperton is funny until he splatters his skull in a small room in front of Mario. This escalation of tone occurs in each of the novel's theaters of plot. Johnny Gentle's plans are laughable in puppet and multiple-hyphen descriptor form, but devastating in the sunken skull of Marathe's wife. The complaints Ennet residents bring to Gately seem insignificant in their pettiness and attempts at control until Lenz starts killing dogs. Tennis players' locker room squabbles lack stakes until Eric Clipperton kills himself, and until inescapable "Substance" troubles are revealed in the students. Waste and desire kill, eventually—no one should mistake *Infinite Jest* for a simply comedic book.

Often, even the most terrible moments in the novel are relayed by media, a wasted layer of structure which builds layers into and between the subplots of the novel. Katherine Hayles views the media intervention as a distancing, alienating feature that shows how waste permeates the universe of the novel:

Just as waste is continuously recycled through the Great Concavity/Convexity, so information is recycled through a variety of media before it arrives on the page for the reader to consume, thus suggesting an analogy between the underground passages through which toxic contamination moves into the surrounding environment and the toxic dynamics percolating through the media (Hayles 686).

The media layer typically occurs between O.N.A.N. and E.T.A. plots; often students of the tennis academy explain parts of the international situation through their schoolwork. We first learn of the A.F.R. in an endnote depiction of student James Struck plagiarizing a report for prorector Poutrincourt's "Separatism and Return: Québécois History from Frontenac Through the Age of Interdependence" class (309). Hal, in the same class, has a conversation with his brother Orin about the A.F.R.'s motivation and tools (Orin interested in this topic because of his feelings for his interviewer, the disguised Hugh Steeply). Mario's puppet show provides almost every single detail the reader gets about the current administration; Hal's seventh-grade report explains television cable company and film cartridge politics.

Is media wasted or reused? There is no reason that the recycling of information from one plot to another needs to be analogous only to "the underground passages through which toxic contamination moves." If the inter-plot media-mediated information is like the waste recycled into the Concavity, it may instead be like the uranium and plutonium that come out of the Concavity—productive. It provides fodder for school reports, artistic endeavor, and fraternal bonding. The information helps a reader find answers and its mediated packaging aids digestion: it's easier to accept the why and how of Québécois separatists throwing themselves in front of trains when a bumbling, procrastinating Struck acts as interpreter of these events and a snarky narrator comments on his attempts.

The novel's focus on physical waste, digestion, death, self-paralysis and alienating media fills the "dump" that Hayles discusses in its negative implication for characters, but by injecting narrative value, positive change and comedic relief for the reader, it secures itself as a valuable, spurs more action within the novel and could not be avoided by mere attitude change.

4. “One of the Structural Ways That It's Supposed to Kind of Come Together”: Value of Waste from *Infinite Jest's* Recursive and Formal Elements

David Foster Wallace's explicit decision to make his text a recursive one, *Infinite Jest's* grammar choices, hyperbole and maximalism, and the lack of narrative preference for plot-changing details all support the theme of waste as a source of value.

In an interview, David Foster Wallace described the recursive pattern upon which he based his novel:

[*Infinite Jest* is] 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 in '94, and it went through some I think “mercy cuts,” so it's probably kind of a lopsided Sierpinski Gasket now. But it's interesting, that's one of the structural ways that it's supposed to kind of come together (“An Interview with David Foster Wallace”).

A Sierpinski gasket is an equilateral triangle divided recursively into smaller equilateral triangles (take a filled triangle and cut out an upside down triangle in the middle; you are left with three filled triangles and one empty upside down triangle. Repeat the process on the three filled triangles; repeat on the three triangles that are created from each of them, etc.). For *Infinite*

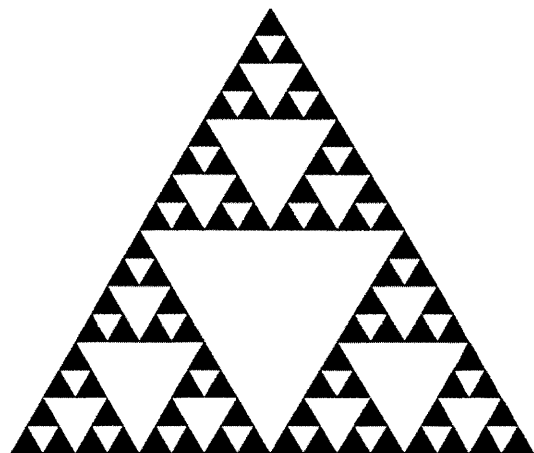


Figure 3. A *Sierpinski Gasket*. The gasket is constructed by splitting an equilateral triangle into four equal parts and removing the middle triangle. That process repeats for each newly created triangle, infinitely.

Jest, one can imagine that the three original remaining equilateral triangles are the three main subplots: O.N.A.N., Enfield Tennis Academy, and Ennet Halfway House.

I can find no scholarly articles that trace *Infinite Jest*'s Sierpinski Gasket as a mathematical or geometric or algorithmic reality. The gasket probably does not exist as a mathematically or algorithmically constructed item; possessing only the author's assertion, it would be difficult to construct a gasket because one wouldn't know which constraints the author used to measure the fractal, repeating sides of a progressively smaller equilateral triangle. Number of words? Paragraphs? Narrative partitions? Lines of dialogue? To chase a lopsided gasket would be greater folly. Further, David Foster Wallace said multiple times shortly after publishing *Infinite Jest* that it was difficult because "I've never had to hold that much information in my head at any one time" (Lipsky 240), which seems to support the idea that the gasket was more of a guiding structure and thematic principle than Oulipian mathematical algorithm. What critics and commenters have done instead is to use the Sierpinski Gasket as a vehicle for thematic explanation, which makes more sense than mathematical justification because the Gasket is a professed but not easily demonstrated authorial intention.

One key feature of this structure is emptiness: the one cut-out, unfilled upside-down triangle created at each recursive step. The 25% of empty space in each subset triangle reflects a motif of emptiness and isolation. Hal, at one point, seems compared in both mathematical intensity and inner emptiness to the gasket with which Wallace structured his novel: "Hal himself hasn't had a bona fide intensity-of-interior-life-type emotion since he was tiny; he finds terms like joie and value to be like so many variables in rarified equations, and he can manipulate them well enough to satisfy everyone but himself that he's in there, inside his own hull, as a human being...when in fact inside Hal there's pretty much nothing at all, he knows" (Max 160). Similarly, the introductory

chapter that brings all three plotlines together. Hal and John Wayne (Enfield) stand with Don Gately (Ennet) at Hal's father's grave, looking for the Entertainment cartridge buried in his skull so they can keep it from the A.F.R. (O.N.A.N.). Of course, they find nothing; in Swartz's analysis, Orin Incandenza has obtained this copy months earlier and has spurred large amounts of the novel's plot by sending it to victims. But at the moment when the three plots unite "on screen" (if only in anecdote, this is still more 'screen-time' than Orin's skull and postal adventures receive), there is only emptiness. A gaping middle triangle, James Incandenza's head unites the three parts of the novel but denies resolution to them all.

Another key feature of the Sierpinski structure is waste. A Sierpinski gasket is made of nothing more than one equilateral triangle and two instructions: cut and repeat. One gains no increasing insight on this structure by following down the levels, so each repeated level is wasteful. Additionally, the emptiness inherent to the structure is wasted space. However, like the novel based on the gasket, this inner waste is redeemable. Because of its simplicity, one can comprehend the whole structure in a single instance of it. Like "a World in a Grain of Sand" (Blake), the entirety of the gasket is comprehended in a single triangle. Further, while some space is empty, the shapes surrounding the emptiness resolve the emptiness into its own shape: an upside-down triangle unique among the other upright triangles. Waste and repetition (or waste by repetition) are the keys of any recursive structure, and are present in the novel's structure in three ways: grammar, maximalism, and non-preference of plot.

All these aspects of the novel have been observed before by literary critics, but usually with the assumption that Wallace intended to alienate and disorient the reader with these devices. Indeed Wallace had distaste for easy narrative resolution that led him to insist on avoiding it:

TV-type art's biggest hook is that it's figured out ways to "reward" passive spectatorship. A certain amount of the form-conscious stuff I write is trying—with whatever success—to do the opposite. It's supposed to be uneasy. For instance, using a lot of flash-cuts between scenes so that some of the narrative arrangement has got to be done by the reader, or interrupting flow with digressions and interpolations that the reader has to do the work of connecting to each other and to the narrative. It's nothing terribly sophisticated, and there has to be an accessible payoff for the reader if I don't want the reader to throw the book at the wall. But if it works right, the reader has to fight... ("An Interview with David Foster Wallace")

In their description of these alienating devices, scholars disagree about how much *Infinite Jest* is meant to alienate the reader. In her final endnote, Houser suggests that the "coexistence of humor and disgust" in the novel makes the humor "dissipate over time under pressure of its context...[E]ngaged readers reflect on how horrific content had previously seemed so funny and potentially reorient their response" (Houser 140). So many reviewers and critics found the novel hilarious that Wallace professed disquiet at critics' reading of a comedy when he had meant to write a tragedy, lending credence to Houser's claim. Frank Cioffi discusses *Infinite Jest* as an Entertainment-like novel that compels the reader forward like an addict (Cioffi 168). Hayles suggests that Wallace's awareness of the possibility of addictive entertainment led to the novel's "unusual structure" and its lack of "climax, resolution and denouement" (Hayles 695).

But even if all words in *Infinite Jest* succeed in alienating the reader, if they succeed in building to larger thematic resonances, they are valuable. Most of the 'difficult' parts of the novel don't alienate the reader so much as challenge them. As can be seen in the four parts of structure

(grammar, maximalism, non-preference of plot) that support waste as value in *Infinite Jest*, these “wasteful” structures of alienation or difficulty are valuable in that they help convey meaning both within and because of their waste. Seemingly extraneous, repetitive or unnecessary choices reveal valuable content that satisfies authorial desire.

The wasteful, alienating grammatical choices of *Infinite Jest* have been well-documented. Max describes a “paradoxical approach that would come to dominate Wallace’s later fiction: a passionate need for encounter telegraphed by sentences that seem ostentatiously to prohibit it, as if only by passing through all the stages of bureaucratic deformation can we touch each other as human beings” (Max, 78). *Infinite Jest*’s scenes are often described in the passive voice or with long strings of conjunctions or prepositions. “But and so and but so” or “in over from behind like” are the longest chain of conjunctions and prepositions respectively (Compton). “The novel condemns detachment as a limit on inter-subjective relations using distancing grammatical forms...that alienate the feeler from the emotions felt” (Houser 120). While every “and but so” that Wallace was famous for gives an array of meaning to the clause following, it extends the time of reading and distances plot comprehension slightly. These extra words position the ideas they link at more awkward angles from each other. Sometimes ‘wasted’ words mimic Québécois Canadian construction, like “The front door squeaks loudly of the hinge” (482), but non-Québécois characters’ actions are also described with grammatical excess. When Lucien Antitoui, who does not speak French, is about to be murdered by wheelchair A.F.R. assassins, he realizes that a figure outside is a second person in a wheelchair when he “sees that what it is is it’s a different figure” (484) instead of “sees it’s a different figure.” The wasted words and labored construction distance and perhaps confuse the reader, just as the character Lucien seems belabored and confused. Other awkward constructions shift emphasis to the hidden character: the puppet Johnny Gentle’s is: “...

throwing his surgical gloves into the miniature Inaugural crowd as souvenirs is Mario's own touch" (384).

Grammar is one of a series of "maximalist" choices in *Infinite Jest*. The "maximalist novel," as defined by Stefano Ercolino, is characterized by ten distinct features including, "length, encyclopedic mode...diegetic exuberance...[and] hybrid realism" (Ercolino 269). In Ercolino's book defining maximalism, *Infinite Jest* was one of seven novels featured. Indeed, "excess appears to be the impetus for *Infinite Jest*" (Houser 131). Like the United States' portrayed adoption of Experialism and Interdependence, this novel exports words to the reader like waste into Canada. There are over 550,000 words in the novel, and it is not uncommon for more than five hundred words to pass without a paragraph break. If the average reader takes three minutes to digest a single page of *Infinite Jest*, the entire book will take well over forty hours to read, and Wallace sheepishly suggested he had "written a book where the expectation is that it should be read twice" (Lipsky 92). The author thus expects two full workweeks for a reader to sift through and digest the content. The digestion can often be challenging, in *Infinite Jest* as in other maximalist texts. What one critic writes of Don DeLillo's *Underworld* applies equally to Wallace's novel, "As pages turn and stuff keeps piling up, readers are left to sort through the historical and cultural debris...in the hope of finding patterns where there seems to be nothing but noise. To create art from garbage is the alchemy of the word" (Taylor 195-196). As in the Great Concavity, the digestion and sorting comes in cycles of lushness (when a reader can connect different scenes and enjoy character development) and wasteland (when the text is boring or seems irrelevant or convoluted).

Aside from the physical maximalism of the text, *Infinite Jest* uses encyclopedic, often hyperbolic language. Québécois citizens irradiated by flung U.S. toxins aren't merely maimed, they are like Marathe's wife with "neither muscles nor nerves," "more than standard accepted amounts

of eyes and cavities,” and “cerebro-and-spinal fluids which dribbled all times from her distending oral cavity” (779). Houser points out that these words cannot possibly describe a human being still alive (Houser 137). P.G.O.A.T. is not pretty, she is the “Prettiest Girl of All Time” (239), so beautiful that almost literally no males have talked to her and she is a virgin when she meets Orin. Houser discusses the careful line Wallace walks between mimesis and the “hybrid realism” of hyperbole: “Measuring mimesis and hyperbolic invention performs another balancing act: between overstimulation and being “divorced from all stimulus” (*Infinite Jest* 142)” (Houser 137). Wallace’s choice to bombard the reader with words, facts, figures and fantastic sights threatens to either alienate (waste) or addict (desire) the reader.

This maximalism in diction and grammar relates to the recursive structure of *Infinite Jest*. Recursion requires lots of space. In computer programs, it is often the reason behind a ‘stack overflow’ error: a computer doesn’t have enough memory to process any more information because it has gone too deep into a recursive spiral to resolve back upward. Sierpinski triangles cannot be drawn quickly; each triangle must be drilled down into smaller triangles until the medium the triangle is rendered on cannot show any additional detail. This requires excess steps, just as the excess words in *Infinite Jest* require extra and sometimes excess reader processing power.

One of the key elements of a recursive phenomenon is the ability to ‘read’ larger structures on a smaller scale. In any single non-empty triangle of a Sierpinski Gasket, one can see the entire Sierpinski Gasket. *Infinite Jest* reveals its recursive structure by displaying components that spiral in on themselves. “Big things—*Infinite Jest*, a novel you keep having to reread to understand—find their counterpart in smaller things: “Infinite Jest V” the video cartridge, which itself plays in an endless loop...[Pemulis] has an answering machine message that is like one of those

infinite...regressions: ‘this is Mike Pemulis’s answering machine’s answering machine’ (Max 183). Drug addicts in withdrawal have “symptoms which themselves developed systems” (301). DMZ, the drug responsible for Hal’s communication breakdown, “is synthesized from a derivative of fitviavi, an obscure mold that grows only on other molds” (170). Hal “[has] a father whose own father lost what was there” (173). These are recursive elements throughout *Infinite Jest* that draw attention to the novel itself, a piece of entertainment about an Entertainment.

Because the smaller-scale elements dominate in an encyclopedic, exuberant novel, *Infinite Jest* requires close and repeated reading in order for most larger plot points to resolve. In the novel, little weight is given to plot-changing details; the excess subplot details obscure themselves. Hal’s thoughts about the game later that day obscure the scene of his father’s exhumation in the opening scene. To understand that Orin mails Entertainment cartridges to his father’s past enemies, the reader has to remember that Hal says, “What are you doing going to the post office? You hate snail-mail” (244); and remember that the first cartridge seen in the book, delivered to the medical attaché, “is postmarked suburban Phoenix area in Arizona U.S.A. and the return-address box has only the term ‘HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!’” (36); and remember that Himself died on April 1, the same day (years after) that the medical attaché receives this package; and that the medical attaché had “prior possible involvement with the widow of the *auteur*...” (91); and that Marathe and thus the A.F.R. had no part in this scheme (92). The clues are there, the lines do indeed converge, but the details are widespread and woven into a quick-moving, episodic story.

Despite the difficulty in resolution, resolution is intended. After he spoke of the “converging [plot]lines” that are supposed to come together for the reader, Wallace makes clear that, “If no such convergence or projection occurred to you, then the book’s failed for you” (“An Interview with David Foster Wallace”). While postmodern fiction is known for often denying the

reader's desire for resolution (e.g. the unsolved mystery of W.A.S.T.E. in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*), Wallace leaves enough contextual clues to allow one to solve some important elements of the novel.

There remain many "red herring" details, details that either unite unrelated scenes unexpectedly or details that build but fail (at least for this reader) to arrive at meaningful conclusions. For example, "Struck says something that's lost in the roar of a high-pressure toilet" (105) and "...who could not love that special and leonine roar of a public toilet?" (15) are the last sentences in two sections of text, scenes of waste at both descriptive and structural levels but otherwise unlinked. On page 581, we learn that "Bruce Green compulsively avoids any product or service with 'N' in its name" due to his mother's sudden and accidental death. More than three hundred pages later, Hal says to Pemulis, "I'm trying to cut down on patronizing places with 'N' in their name" (908). Marathe and Gately ponder the shape of the Big Dipper more than one hundred pages apart (508 and 619). Marathe is "was one of the rare types who did not examine the hankie after he blew" (426), while Himself the wraith, "...opens and examines the used hankie just like an alive person can never help but do..." (837). These details don't lead the reader anywhere, just produce vague memories and echoes of scenes past, a "madeleine" line in a dense novel. There are other small subplots that can be discerned easily but don't lead anywhere, like the knowledge that Steeply watched the disastrous Eschaton game or that Poor Tony stole a woman's artificial heart. The reader is left feeling like Hal in this exchange with Pemulis:

How come everywhere I turn this fall now everybody's suddenly mentioning Québec in all kinds of radically different contexts? Orin's calling with some protracted obsession about anti-O.N.A.N. Québécois.'

‘... Tavis up and announces Québec are the lambs in this year’s fundraiser. Your Mum’s from Québec.’

‘And then this term of all terms I take Poutrincourt’s insurgency class, which is basically a Québecathon.’

‘Oh I definitely I’d suspect some kind of conspiracy or trap. It’s obvious everything’s pointing toward getting you in a cell belting out Mermanalia. Inc, I think your hinges are starting to squeak (1063-1064).

This exchange is particularly suggestive of reader struggle because Pemulis uses the word ‘squeak’ to describe Hal’s paranoia, a “herring” word that appears over one hundred times in the novel in tantalizingly frequent but non-uniform contexts.

“Red herring” details are wasteful in that they strain reader bandwidth, but they also unify plot lines in tone and setting; they create the O.N.A.N./Year of the Depend Adult Undergarment world by characterizing its population. Like the different triangles in a Sierpinski Gasket, the scenes in this episodic novel share an origin and common structure; minute details are a way to underline that shared origin and keep the reader engaged with the text.

On a level in between red herring details and resolved plots, there are stories and pieces of narration told between the 160 characters that repeat in similar patterns. For example, a trio of diverse characters act on suicide threats: “Himself” James Incandenza, President Johnny Gentle and tennis player Eric Clipperton. All, at some point, have at least a metaphorical and sometimes an actual Glock up to their temple because they need to coerce someone to submit to their desires. Marlon Bain describes Himself as “... a parent who is so neurasthenic and depressive that any opposition to his parental will plunges him into the sort of psychotic depression where he ... just

sits there in bed cleaning his revolver, so that the child would be terrified of opposing his will and plunging him into a depression and maybe causing him to suicide” (1050). Similarly, Johnny Gentle, President of the United States, is “WILLING TO ELIMINATE OWN MAP OUT OF SHEER PIQUE IF CANADA NIXES RECONFIGURATIVE TRANSFER” (407) after he suggests the Great Concavity. Eric Clipperton, tennis player who cannot bear to lose a match, “...made clear his intention to blow his brains out publicly...if he should lose, ever, even once” (408). These structural similarities in conflict mean further unity between the stories. Since Himself and Eric Clipperton eventually “eliminate their own maps,” the reader can guess that perhaps Johnny Gentle will too. Perhaps Johnny Gentle will not literally kill himself, but his aggressive, Experialist policies may cause the nation he runs to self-destruct: the rampant terrorism activity and the fighter plane flying overhead in the opening scene and the end of subsidized time after Year of Glad support this prediction). When these stories in particular are presented in the novel, Gentle’s and Clipperton’s are recursively linked: Mario’s Interdependence Day portrayal of Gentle’s cringing demand for Canada to buy the Concavity reminds watching tennis players of Clipperton’s suicide. In the diegetic world, these repeated scenes also give voice to those characters usually not given prevalence in realistic fiction. It would make sense that Wallace, a maximalist author committed to documenting the tiniest detail, hates silencing the “figurants,” or film extras, in a scene as much as Himself does. Himself the wraith speaks of “the dramatic pathos of a figurant...how completely trapped and engaged he is in his mute peripheral status” (834). Wallace seems to defend himself the author and not just Himself the character when he writes of the critics who found the figurant effect to be “self-conscious and irritating, that they could never hear the really meaningful central narrative conversations for all the unfiltered babble of the peripheral crowd, which they assumed the babble(/babel) was some self-conscious viewer-hostile

heavy-art directorial pose, instead of radical realism” (836). Portraying similar characters of varying levels of plot importance in the same way is Wallace’s “radical realism” in recursion. By sending these characters through the same tragedies, Wallace unites the subplots and establishes the humanity of the many characters in *Infinite Jest*, building empathy for all.

In similar way, the diction of characters in different sections unite them despite different circumstances. Characters and narrators cross all plots, except perhaps the non-English-native Québécois, seem to know what *demap* or X’d or Unit or Bob Hope mean. Many speak with erudite cleverness, transcending narrator unity as if all the characters are working from the same dictionary. Uncommon words and concepts appear often and across many character scenes: post-prandial (8 mentions), maxillofacial (5), Fourier transforms (7). These words appear like the wraith inserting words into Gately’s head. “Other terms and words Gately knows he doesn’t know from a divot in the sod now come crashing through his head with the same ghastly intrusive force...ACCIACCATURA and ALEMBIC...” (832). Shops and companies around Boston like Ryle’s Jazz Club, Bread & Circus grocers or the Antitoi shops are mentioned in passing by Ennet and Enfield residents alike, further creating the diegetic world.

Little information is contained in repetition of facts, anecdotes and words, but a larger whole (the novel’s world) is revealed. Wallace’s text has a recursive and fractal construction, thus larger plot-advancing scenes do not have preference or status over other scenes: there are no figurants, one can see the whole in any part. If a reader misses details in one section, those same details will reappear and be reinforced in another. Any of a scene’s larger elements can be read within its details. Although a perfect fractal Sierpinski it is not, this novel depends on recursion within its excessive detail. Waste exists in recursion’s repetition and there is decay inherent to the

ever-smaller scales at which the novel's action exists, but this does not deny the action, characterization and world-building that “make living people feel stuff” (Houser 188).

5. "I'm in here": The Recursive Loop of *Infinite Jest's* Reader

The largest waste-desire loop in *Infinite Jest* occurs when a reader first re-reads the opening scene of the novel. I discuss it here because it exemplifies recursion in a waste-desire cycle between two competing desires: the author's and the reader's and because this process creates, even in its frustration, redemption from the cycle through narrative.

When this opening scene is read the first time, the reader believes Hal speaks about his relationship with the University of Arizona's admissions board when he says, "I cannot make myself understood" and then again "I cannot make myself understood, now" (10). The board hears a "strangled series of bleats...something only marginally mammalian" (15), but the reader has privileged access to Hal's internal narrative and first-person perspective, a point of view that *Infinite Jest* will pick up again but mostly abandon for the rest of the novel. In the first reading of the first scene, the reader is united with Hal against the board of heads and bodies, against his uncomprehending interviewers. There is some ambiguity in what Hal talks about (from the "influence of Kierkegaard on Camus" to the cryptic "Call it something I ate"), but the overall sense of his message is clear. Like Hal himself, the reader knows because "I read" (12).

The reader continues to read with the expectation that the end of the novel will yield resolution, or at least an explanation of Hal's state in the opening scene. *Infinite Jest's* first four scenes with Hal take place at a range of times: Hal at age seventeen in Arizona (1), Hal at five in Waltham (10), Hal at eleven in his father's office (27), and Hal in his room at age sixteen, answering a phone call from Orin (32). This chronological leaping, during which Hal is able to articulate to others in all scenes except the first (but chronologically-last), reinforces expectations

that at least part of the novel will be dedicated to answering the question an orderly asks Hal at the end of the first scene: “yo then man what’s *your* story?” (17).

When the reader comes to the end of the book, she reaches the image of Don Gately lying on a beach after a long description of his long-past “Bottom.” This lengthy description to end the novel fails to resolve any of the three intriguing plots (O.N.A.N., Incandenza or Ennet). Any reader who has reached this place after 980 pages of text and 98 pages of endnotes will have a newfound appreciation of David Foster Wallace’s remark:

I admit to a potentially irritating penchant for anti-climax...[I]f a book...ends without a satisfactory resolution for the character, then it’s not only unfair but deeply inappropriate to expect the book itself to give the reader the sort of satisfaction-at-end the character is denied (Max 70).

Someday, though, if the reader reads Hal’s opening again, she may realize that she missed a line of the novel that resolves large swaths of plot:

I think of John N. R. Wayne, who would have won this year’s WhataBurger, standing watch in a mask as Donald Gately and I dig up my father’s head. There’s very little doubt that Wayne would have won (*Infinite Jest* 10).

This detail doesn’t resolve the crisis of Hal’s ability to communicate that the reader observes at the beginning of the novel, but it speaks to a moment in which three distinct plots are united in a climax that the reader never “sees” except in this retelling and one other, from Don Gately, both

amounting to little more than an impromptu anecdote. This authorial move buries a plot-revealing detail deep in the first scene, where a reader encountering the text for the first time is unlikely to understand it. A detail about Hal's father's umbrella and a detail about Venus Williams' attendance at the next day's final match bookend this detail about opening his father's grave. Only when the reader rounds back to the beginning does she realize that, just like the admissions board, she could not understand Hal's words.

Many other plot-resolving details are hidden within *Infinite Jest*, as discussed in Section 4, but it's unique to have an ending piece of plot so hidden within the beginning: the grave detail does not foreshadow future action, it glances back at a past the reader will never see in a context that the reader will probably not understand the first time. As the author said in an online interview, "there is an ending as far as I'm concerned. Certain kinds of parallel lines are supposed to start converging in such a way that an "end" can be projected by the reader somewhere beyond the right frame" ("Live Online with David Foster Wallace"). Aaron Swartz's piece, "What Happens at the End of *Infinite Jest*?" undertakes to answer the question "What happens throughout *Infinite Jest*?" There is a case to be made that Hal's breakdown is either from marijuana withdrawal or torture by the A.F.R., but I agree with Swartz that textual evidence suggests that as a ghost, Hal's father caused Hal's communication failure (for what is a book whose title alludes to *Hamlet* without a father as ghost?) when Himself put a drug called DMZ on Hal's toothbrush. The following is excerpted from Swartz's piece, and the citations within reference *Infinite Jest* page numbers:

Hal never leaves his toothbrush unattended (870), but that's no problem for a wraith. He places the DMZ on Hal's brush and Hal brushes his teeth (860) and immediately begins

experiencing symptoms: Ortho thinks Hal's crying when Hal thinks he's speaking in a neutral tone (862).

Regardless of how exactly Hal becomes communicatively crippled, the detail about John Wayne and Don Gately in the opening makes any returning reader uneasy about what else they may have missed in a novel of over 550,000 words. Ostensibly, the reader read that graveyard detail the first time through; but because it lies nestled within other irrelevant, un-contextualized details, those words lacked meaning.

Reading, in a sense, becomes wasted effort:

The reader who has recursively returned to the scene has not understood Hal the first time around, and [her] looping makes the scene present again. Hal explains his inhuman sounds with the cryptic "Call it something I ate"...the digestive past refers to the reader's digestion of the book which, in a recursive reading, has been discarded as waste for its incomprehensible ending (Wayne 51).

The reader has made a loop, perhaps the largest recursive loop in a novel "that has been run through the recursive feedback loops of an intelligent agent program and then strung out along the page" (Hayles 684). The words the reader reads again are indeed the same (as any recursive loop requires), but derive different meaning because they're now viewed at a different scale of understanding.

The reader, any reader, reads to understand. "). David Foster Wallace does not want his reader to be comfortable. There is an echo of the readers' desire in Hal's opening speech. "I read," Hal

says. “I study and read. I bet I’ve read everything you’ve read” (12). His string of sixteen “I” statements is met with horror by the admissions board that echoes a similar horror of David Foster Wallace’s. When writing, Wallace said, “...you’re... trying to antagonize the reader’s intuition that she is a self, that she is alone and going to die alone. You’re trying somehow both to deny and affirm that the writer is over here with his agenda while the reader’s over there with her agenda, distinct” (“An Interview with David Foster Wallace”). In this opening scene, David Wallace has subverted the reader’s desire to understand and complicated easy narrative pleasure. The result is a “waste” of 980 pages and 388 endnotes that the reader has digested but not derived sustenance from. The reader’s desire to understand has been drawn out, manipulated and teased, and only by returning and putting more interpretive work in can she satisfy that desire.

Infinite Jest is thus clearly opposed to the kinds of easy narrative resolution furnished most obviously by TV and popular fiction. Wallace’s essay “E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction” emphasizes his aversion to passive narrative pleasure. He describes in the essay the various levels of voyeurism and irony involved in the creation and casual absorption of television, and suggests that this mode of passive consumption has corrupted his era’s fiction. Wallace wrote “E Unibus Pluram” while writing *Infinite Jest*, and obvious in it are thematic connections between the Entertainment in *Infinite Jest* and this slack-jawed audience Wallace conjures. He suggests there is an existential problem with “infinite jest,” because hard work and authentically interpersonal communication are required to achieve complete pictures of reality. In the introductory moment with Gately, Wallace creates work for the reader in a fairly obvious way. He is, as one Amazon reviewer observed, playing a “jest...on the readers of this seemingly infinite book” (Franklin). But this jest satisfies the reader in that it answers questions, and it also points the

way to other places in the novel Wallace will deny reader desires for linear, easily comprehended plot.

Essentially, Wallace frustrates the reader's desire to answer questions and her inability to find the answers. For all the "converging lines" in the novel, not all the questions are answered. Did Avril and Orin Incandenza have a sexual relationship? Why are both Hal Incandenza and Ken Erdedy afraid of words with the letter 'N' in their names? Does Joelle van Dyne wear a veil because she was horribly disfigured by acid, or because her immaculate beauty debilitates her? Why precisely was Year of Glad the last subsidized year? There are 'wasted' plotlines in that they come to no resolution, but these are also vehicles to propel the reader forward to the end of the book and then back to the beginning again.

Within this cycle of waste and desire, something productive appears. You, the reader, have read what Don DeLillo called "a dead serious frolic of addicted humanity" (Cohen 23), what Dave Eggers referred to as "a spaceship...very shiny, [with] no discernible flaws" (5). There is no shortage of modern literary elites ready to wax poetic about why reading *Infinite Jest* was not a waste of time. More poignantly, given the introduction, you have answered large swaths of the question posed to Hal by the hospital orderly. You have Hal's story—Hal, who has lost the ability to communicate, has communicated. "I am here," says Hal (5), and 'here,' this novel, allows him to speak in a way his father, DMZ, marijuana, tennis and friends do not. The opening scene is the author watching the reader watching Hal and all involved experience some of that work and interpersonal connection that Wallace aims for. From the "waste" of plot lines emerge not just Hal, but Don Gately, Matthew Pemulis, Mario Incandenza, Randy Lenz, Rémy Marathe and at least 160 other distinct characters (Feene). If, as Wallace said, the purpose of literature is to "give [the reader] imaginative access to other selves" ("An Interview with David Foster Wallace"), perhaps it

is less important for the reader to know that Hal opened his father's skull and found nothing than that his chest "bumps like a dryer with shoes in it" (5), or how Hal's voice and diction characterize him in this introduction. While a reader may be uneasy when she re-encounters the skull detail, she will also be touched when she re-reads the "what's *your* story" on the next page and realize that it was not an actual orderly asking, but came from Hal's imagination. Hal and David Foster Wallace alike request that their stories be heard, and the reader finds satisfaction in fulfilling the role of auditor and interpreter.

The novel becomes Hal's redemption: he cannot speak, but he remains in the pages able to communicate. This novel and the cycle the reader must complete through it are redemptive without suspending the waste-desire cycle. Instead, the novel and reading cycle describe the more abstract waste-desire cycle. This recursive opening to the novel laid away plot details to emphasize Hal's emotions and introduce the reader to his confusion; the surrounding, seemingly extraneous, repetitive or unnecessary choices reveal valuable content that satisfy authorial and then reader desire.

6. “With a Hand Nailed to the Floor”: Antittoi Brothers and Himself’s Childhood Doorknob

This essay has discussed how recursive structures definitionally reveal their whole in their parts and how *Infinite Jest* is recursive in aspects of its original authorial conception, structure and themes. As a demonstration of this aspect of recursion in *Infinite Jest*, the following section will closely examine two neighboring scenes and extrapolate how the scenes demonstrate the slowly decaying waste-desire cycle central to the entire novel. This cycle and its effects have been depicted in Figure 2 of the introduction and sought in the thematic and formal aspects of *Infinite Jest* in the third and fourth sections of this essay. In the fifth section, I discussed how the beginning and ending scenes act as a further manifestation of this cycle and now I will choose two scenes which occur almost exactly in the middle of the novel. These two scenes—the A.F.R. murder of the Antittoi brothers led by Rémy Marathe and the flashback to Himself’s father’s meltdown over the squeak in his mattress—have examples of the decaying waste-desire cycle in descriptive, structural and symbolic ways and their examination will show how *Infinite Jest* provides empathy for the characters and reader trapped in the cycle.

A three hundred and forty-eight word sentence that begins with “Gately” (479) and ends with Lucien’s jeans brings the reader into the Antittoi Entertainment shop. This transition occurs within a maximalist sentence that also emphasizes how waste-ridden the streets of Boston and Cambridge are. Gately drives on a street that is “shitty with litter and holes. Indifferent drainage” (479), and passes by a shop advertising “COMPLETE DESTRUCTION OF CONFIDENTIAL RECORDS” (479). In a cinematic bridge between the two sections, subplots and character sets, Gately’s car stirs up a tornado of trash that sends one “thick flattened M.F. cup, caught by a sudden gust” (480), spinning to hit the door of the Antittoi shop. The reader is given privileged access to

Lucien Antittoi's thoughts and the murder scene proceeds from there. The plastic cup's flight that Lucien takes as a knock on the door demonstrates another obvious transition where a piece of waste is proven to be of value to the plot, and it also shows that different sections of the novel are united by the accumulated trash on the streets.

The inside of the shop is not dirty—Lucien Antittoi is very concerned about the amount of trash outside, as he and his brother run a shop that “resembles a junk yard for anal retentives” (484)—but waste is inescapable. The scene opens with him compulsively sweeping and worried about letting in the street dust when he opens the door. As Hayles says, coproductive cycles demand recursivity and can be exhibited best recursively; appropriately, the Antittoi brothers' room is filled with mirrors so that “each part of the room is reflected in every other part” (482). The items in the shop contain further examples of waste-desire cycle: the Québécois brothers (who belong to a non-A.F.R. terrorist group) collect cartridges they gather from the dumpsters (482) to sell. They belong to a non-A.F.R. terrorist group, but are “borderline incompetent” (480), so their plans to “attack the fiber of New New England Youth” are proven to be “wastes of time” (481). They do, eventually, successfully sell DMZ to Pemulis, but in this scene Lucien reveals that the DMZ was procured in a Jack-in-the-Beanstalk-type trade between Bertraund Antittoi and “Sixties Bob,” where Bob got garbage (literally a “kitchen-can waste bag filled with crusty old mossy boot-and-leg Read-Only cartridges” (483)) in return for the DMZ. In the scene, there is a sense of stasis, almost an absence of desire. Lucien “could and does stand [in front of the window] for hours, complexly backlit, transparently reflected...” (482) and “his mind is usually as clean and transparent as anything in the shop” (483). His brother, who is apparently the cleverer of the two, only appears to the reader as a corpse, dead with a railroad spike through his eye. The brothers have created a house of garbage mirrors that inwardly reflects and stands still. This scene occurs

almost exactly in the middle of the book and features the only death of a character that is narrated in the novel; it reflects the heroic but bleak struggle against entropic dust and waste that even the most static of characters face.

The most important piece of garbage in the Antitoi shop reveals itself after a two-endnote build up (the reader is directed to first one endnote [205] and then the endnote of a second endnote [301 *sub*] to find this information). The Antitoi brothers almost certainly possessed the Master (copyable) copy of the Entertainment cartridge. However, if they did, Lucien has thrown it away because he did not realize its value and did not have the correct player. If Lucien really did throw away the Entertainment copy, he stands as the only character in the novel able to willingly (but accidentally) rid himself of the pure desire represented in the Entertainment.

Over the scene, evidence gathers to foreshadow Lucien's demise. Lucien's broom, upon which he will eventually be impaled, weaves in and out of the narration, its backstory and tip sharpening. The word 'squeak,' originally mentioned in relation to the door's hinges, appears in this scene with increasing frequency and sometimes as its own sentence. An endnote informs the reader that Lucien does not know that "To hear the squeak' is itself the very darkest of contemporary Canada's euphemisms for sudden and violent de-mapping" (1034). Monsieur DuPlessis, whose death at the beginning of the book is due to the combination of Gately's gag, a bad head cold, and poor command of English, is repeatedly mentioned. The narrator, from Lucien's perspective in free indirect speech, remarks of DuPlessis' death that "only ONAN would be stupid enough to believe command would be stupid enough" (481), but the reader understands that DuPlessis' death's was an accident and that Lucien is the one who is "stupid." The reader knows that Lucien is in danger, has more information to decode the squeaks and the consistently emphasized sharpness of the broom handle.

After the A.F.R. infiltrates, dust and waste quickly enters the well-kempt shop. On the more obvious side of waste, “Lucien’s sphincter had failed them all” (487) and when the broom that kills him is forced through his body, it “forms an obscene erectile bulge in the back of his red sopped johns” (488) like excrement. In his last moments, Lucien shoots the gun and the shot “goes high and shatters an angled full-length planar door-mirror, spraying anodized glass and replacing the reflection of a blanket-lapped A.F.R....with a jagged stelliform hole, with glittered shards and glass-dust in the air all over the place and the unperturbable squeaks—‘squeak squeak squeak squeak,’ it is awful” (485). Lucien shoots into the recursive portrayal of his shop (into the mirror) to “cover” his passage into the next room, but instead he only creates confusing particulates and feeds into the A.F.R. desire to corner him. Marathe looks on implacably, his smiley-face mask a symbol of the A.F.R.’s desire to turn the United States into a slate wiped clean with pure pleasure, at whatever cost necessary. The cost, in this scene, is Lucien choking and stuck on a new spine, the broom he’s been sharpening since he was sixteen years old.

Wallace wrote a whole book in which a broom is the eponymous hero, and the point he makes with it in that novel can be transferred onto *Infinite Jest*. In *The Broom of the System*, the protagonist’s grandmother has studied with Wittgenstein, and relates an allegory Wittgenstein told her about the meaning of words: A person is asked whether the bristles or handle of the broom are most useful. When the person says, “bristles” (because that is what sweeps), the asker poses questions about scenarios in which the broom’s handle is more obviously useful: “What if you needed to break a window?” or “What if you needed to make a spoon?” The grandmother ends this anecdote by chanting, “Meaning as use. Meaning as use” (*The Broom of the System* 150).

In the Antitoi scene, no one can communicate verbally, but all understand that a broom’s handle’s function is transformed from a sweeping tool to a weapon. The broom’s value is multi-

faceted, as is the language the characters attempt. Marathe's threatening A.F.R. words "mean nothing" to Lucien (487), who does not speak French, but Marathe doesn't know that so believes Lucien says "No" because Lucien does not want to give up the Master cartridge of the Entertainment. "The vigor with which Lucien shakes his head at the leader's meaningless sounds can't help but be misinterpreted, probably" (488). "What will follow will be inutile" (487), Marathe tells Lucien in a language he doesn't understand. Marathe then shoves the broom into Lucien "in strokes that accompany each syllable in the wearily repeated 'In-U-Tile'" (488).

The Wittgenstein question of how wasted use can dictate meaning echoes in this scene, the meaning and position of many objects change depending on how they are used. The broom with useful bristles has become the broom with useful handle, the "business end" has shifted place. Lucien dies and his soul catapults across the Concavity. Marathe becomes queasy and less intent on murder. In all these transformations, words have "lost meaning," or perhaps been given new meaning. We view waste as that which has lost value (because it has lost its original definition), and desire as longing for value. Many transformations of desire into waste and waste into value occur in this scene: the Antittoi shop is invaded, Lucien and Bertraund's lives are lost, A.F.R.'s attempt to secure the Master Copy of The Entertainment is thwarted. All this occurs in the recursive environment of the Antittoi's mirrored shop, actions reflecting back on other actions.

This scene contains awful violence and seems aimed at provoking disgust—in readers, certainly, but also in Marathe, whom we later learn, "must fight the nausea of the stomach" and "vomited out into the alley" (753). Heather Houser refers to the powerful effect of disgust on behavior and emotion; she speaks of how Ken Erdedy attempted to break his addiction to pot by binging on an absurd amount in the second scene of the novel. Excess is a "peculiar form of

control” for Erdedy (Houser 132), and in a similar sense we see that this murder is perhaps the tipping point that leads Marathe to lose “the type of belly” (753) for this kind of work.

This transformation of meaning transforms Lucien too. After a “natal gargle” (488), Lucien is catapulted “over fans and the Convexity” (489) while he experiences visions of his mother’s face above his crib. In a burst of spiritual language describing the “lake after lake lit up by the near-Arctic sun” (488), Lucien finds himself “newly whole, clean and unimpeded, and is free” (488-9). All language points to light and clarity, like the “river Ste.-Anna a ribbon of light, unspeakably pure” (488), and it is a swift and obvious departure in tone and emphasis from the brutal murder described in the same 733-word paragraph. Throughout, Lucien is imagining his mother in exactly the same position (standing over a crib) as Joelle van Dyne stands in the lethal Entertainment. The crib-watching mother explains that the woman who kills you in one life is your mother in the text, creating a cycle between life and death. As Lucien imagines his mother directly after his infant-like sounds at death, a “nearly maternal alarmed call-to-arms” is heard in “all the world’s well-known tongues” (489-490).

The imagery and language of mother and child re-emphasize that the Entertainment works in all languages: all children are fatally seduced by the idea of their dangers transformed by semantics and illusion into protectors. Lucien hears his mother’s voice at death just as the viewers of the Entertainment are transfixed and killed by the portrayal of the maternal Joelle van Dyne. Lucien is waste in this scene, “catapulted” over the Convexity; yet this catapulting is a great triumph and relief for Lucien instead of a “dump” or toxic. The disgust that the murder elicits is resolved completely when Lucien dies. Is this the end of the waste-desire cycle? Or is this merely a snapshot of the peak of value-satisfaction (“desire”) that will soon cycle back into nadir? I would side with the latter; this resolution seems not so much to indicate the end of the waste-desire cycle

as it marks a momentary suspension of this cycle. The next scene in the novel shows Steeply and Marathe discussing the Entertainment. Marathe says he would not view it and thinks of the accidental death of his father. Lucien may be flying, but he is still dead, and the Entertainment (which might, as his flight suggests, bring redemption and clarity instead of pain) still kills people while they sit in their own filth. Clearly Lucien's flight represents the communication- and definition-dependent value of waste that changes along with the different stages of the waste-desire cycle.

The next scene, after the short interlude between Marathe and Steeply, hints at its connection to the Antittoi murder scene. The murder scene uses the word 'squeak' twenty-seven times, so the reader has been prepped to read meaning beyond the obvious in Himself's father's announcement: "Goddamn bed squeaks" (492). The scene centers around the father trying to move a mattress away from a bed frame so the frame can be fixed and its squeaking stopped. It is not a straight narration or retelling, it is an excerpt from "Ch. 16, 'The Awakening of My Interest in Annular Systems,' in *The Chill of Inspiration: Spontaneous Reminiscences by Seventeen Pioneers of DT-Cycle Lithiumized Annular Fission*" (1034). This lens of media distances the action and suggests the detachment of an academic article. Himself's contribution in the volume narrates an entire scene between his father and him, and the only relevant (to annular fission) moment occurs when Himself exits that scene and goes to his room, where he knocks his bedroom's closet's doorknob to the floor and reflects on the patterns of its roll.

The beginning exchange between father and son does not act merely as comic relief, but cycles, in "annular" fashion, between the doorknob imagery and the Lucien scene that precedes it. Besides squeaks, the Antittoi and doorknob scenes share dust. In the doorknob scene, Himself's father is nauseated by how much dust he finds under his bed frame; in the Antittoi scene, dust

enters the shop from the outside street and covers everything after Lucien fires a shot. Dust, a ready symbol of waste and decay, creeps into clean spaces in both scenes and accumulates rather than dissipates in the ensuing action. The dust may represent the Freudian entropy that collects around actions and leads people closer to death (both scenes are witness to an upward scale of urgency and a downward scale of comfort on the part of their characters as action progresses), or the stimulant for action. Like in the Antittoi scene, expelled human waste marks the discovery of this entropic dust; the father vomits all over the dust patch and then collapses into the vomit.

On larger thematic levels, this interchange between Himself and his father parallels a relationship that will be repeated between Himself and his own son, Hal. Himself will later (as a wraith) confess to Gately that he was wounded by how closely his relationship with his son mirrored his father's relationship with Himself—this gap in their communication inspires Himself to disguise himself as an interrogative conversationalist in life and eventually to produce the Entertainment. In this scene, as in other scenes with Himself's father, the father projects verbal authority while betraying physical weakness. Himself can handily help the father with the mattress, while the father struggles and eventually faints into his own vomit. Hal is similarly lectured-at in his only in-novel conversation with Himself. Fundamental communicative disconnections separate the members of the Incandenza family, but most disastrously between father and son, since Hal will inherit many anxieties from his paternal line. Like Himself, Hal is addicted to Substances and fundamentally lonely in the novel. In the scene with the squeaking mattress, Hal is never mentioned explicitly, but two scenes later we see Hal in the waiting room of his mother's office, noticing all the blue in the room (many items in Himself's father's bedroom are also noted as blue) and hearing "Michael Pemulis...bobbing in his chair, which produced a kind of rapid rodential squeaking that gave Hal Incandenza the howling fantods" (509). In this scene, only a few dozen

pages separated from the scene depicting the Antittoi murder, the reader hears again a “red herring” in Hal’s squeak that echoes fainter than the bed squeak in Himself’s scene, as if tiny echoes of danger and connection echo from father to son. Hal is literally haunted throughout the novel by his father the Wraith, and will eventually be drugged. In the meantime, Hal:

...was both com- and repelled by the fact that the contemporary-anti-O.N.A.N.-insurgence stuff provoked in him a queasy feeling, not the glittery disorientation of nightmares or on-court panic but a soggy, more furtively nauseous kind of sense, as if someone had been reading mail of Hal’s that he thought he’d thrown away (311).

Hal feels the connection with his father implied by the proximity of these two scenes, the similarities in their character, and the fact that Himself is only ever depicted in dialogue with his father or with Hal. Hal is logical, observant and one of the two most closely followed characters in the novel; he comes closest to noticing the mimesis-defying connections and circularity of his constructed diegetic world and breaking the fourth wall.

The scene between Himself, a mattress and a doorknob echoes the Wittgensteinian conclusions from the broom in the Antittoi murder scene, where use equates to meaning. A meaning/use transformation occurs when Himself jumps into his bed (trying to get it to squeak as his parents’ bed had) and knocks over a lamp which knocks the doorknob off the door. The doorknob’s use, and thus meaning has changed, “...its detachment negates its original communicative function—allowing entry between rooms—and instead siphons off all contact” (Wayne 1). Objects in both scenes, the broom and doorknob, are deprived of their original use (and thus their original meaning, as the grandmother in *Broom* will remind us). They are rendered

“inutile” and at the same time surpass their original meaning and application. The motion of the doorknob inspires the annular energy production process that itself creates the Gentle regime, O.N.A.N. and most of the novel’s plot. Himself turns on his bed and watches as “a circle was rolling around what was itself the circumference of a circle, the cycloid’s standard parametric equations were no longer apposite, those equations’ trigonometric expressions here becoming themselves first-order differential equations” (502). Like DMZ, the Entertainment and drug addiction, the doorknob’s path is recursive in its description and like the Sierpinski triangle, mathematic in its aspiration. “It occurred to me that the movement of the amputated knob perfectly schematized what it would look like for someone to try to turn somersaults with one hand nailed to the floor” (502–503), Himself thinks, an analogy Pemulis will use again when describing annular fission to Idris Arslanian (570).

The image of someone turning somersaults with one hand nailed to the floor can describe many aspects of the novel *Infinite Jest*. There’s *infinite* resonance, in that one can imagine an awkward, flopping somersault pair tracing an infinity sign on the floor the same way Orin traces “idle little sideways 8’s on...post-coital flanks” (310). In all the simultaneously recursive and wasteful formal strategies Wallace employs in *Infinite Jest*, infinity lurks. This book is large in its words, exponentially large in the interconnections between those words, but only infinite by symbolism. The flopping somersaulter drawing infinity unlocks a way to produce “infinite” energy from the plot of *Infinite Jest*. The doorknob also rolls “around what was itself the circumference of a circle,” hinting at the recursive patterns in the novel that connects a circle where meaning is transformed and transferred between character, author and reader desires.

This somersault image suggest horrific and ridiculous pain and suffering tied to a strange compulsion: the person turning somersaults is alone, acting without outside coercion. The

depressed Ennet and Enfield residents, the self-destructive cable companies, the characters who are driven to paralysis or self-destruction by self-imposed constructs like the need to win tennis tournaments or the need to simultaneously answer the phone and answer the door (described in section 3) and the even more plentiful characters who die in anecdote: all were trying to flip somersaults with some constraint that meant their hand was nailed to the floor. Here is Mary Esther Thode's "Psychopathological Double-Bind" symbolized by crucifixion-like nails attaching the hands to the floor.

The doorknob will not keep spinning forever. We see, in the dust-cleaning scramble of Himself's father and Lucien, the *inutile* denial of the fact that everything ends. Waste and desire can spur each other on coproductively, but each spin of the cycle, each flip of the somersaulter, leaves less energy for the next one. Annular fission is not perfectly contained; it lets both political waste (terrorism/propaganda) and actual waste seep out. Like Freud, who "committed himself to a vision of a world and a psyche structured by the need to produce waste: structured, in other words, by its own death" (Hawkins 81) *Infinite Jest's* commits itself to characters whose stories end. At the end of the novel, Hal's story has been told and there are no more words from him. A reader engaged in performance of "a near aerobic activity" (Cioffi 168) navigating many maximalist strategies of this novel is left disoriented, "flat on [their] back on the beach in the freezing sand, and it was raining out of a low sky, and the tide was way out" (980). Like everything, like the unpictured doorknob stationary on the bedroom floor, the novel ends. As a reader, the only chance for redemptive fulfillment is to begin again.

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Appendix A: Human Waste Details

Appendix A: Human Waste Details		This appendix is a collection of ways human waste is described in <i>Infinite Jest</i> . It is organized chronologically and meant to be skimmed. It exists to remind the reader of the tone and quality of David Foster Wallace's prose and to provide a list long enough to show the diverse and maximalist coverage of human waste in the novel.
Subplot	Description	Quotation
Incandenza	Hal imagines the proectors waiting in the lobby	"I can picture deLint and White sitting with their elbows on their knees in the defecatory posture of all athletes at rest, deLint staring at his huge thumbs, while C.T. in the reception area paces in a tight ellipse" (13)
Incandenza	Hal in opening scene in public bathroom, being restrained by Arizona's admission/athletic board and staring up at the ceiling	"And who could not love that special and leonine roar of a public toilet?" (19)
Incandenza	How Hal gets secretly high	"...activate just one of the big exhaust fans and get secretly high and exhale palely through its blades into the vent, so that any possible odor is blown through an outtake duct and expelled through a grille'd hole on the west side of the West Courts, a threaded hole, with a flange, where brisk white-suited ATHSCME guys will attach some of the Lung's arterial pneumatic tubing at some point soon when Schtitt et al. on Staff decide the real weather has moved past enduring for outdoor tennis. During winter months, when any expelled odor would get ducted up into the Lung and hang there conspicuous, Hal mostly goes into a remote "into the Lung and hang there conspicuous, Hal mostly goes into a remote subdormitory lavatory and climbs onto a toilet in a stall and exhales into the grille of one of the little exhaust fans in the ceiling..." (58)
Gately	Gately's revenge on the ADA	"About a month later, an envelope arrived in the A.D.A.'s home's exquisite wrought-iron mailbox. In the envelope were a standard American Dental Association glossy brochure on the importance of daily oral hygiene—available at like any dentist's office anywhere—and two high-pixel Polaroid snapshots, one of big Don Gately and one of his associate, each in a Halloween mask denoting a clown's great good professional cheer, each with his pants down and bent over and each with the enhanced-focus handle of one of the couple's toothbrushes protruding from his bottom" (61)
Incandenza	Troeltsch sick in bed	"Clotted Kleenex litter the floor around his bed's wastebasket. The bedside table is littered with both OTC and prescription expectorants and pertussives and analgesics and Vitamin-C megaspansules and one bottle of Benadryl and one of Seldane" (65)
Gately	Kate Gompert's suicide watch hospital stay	"the sour odor of medical waste awaiting collection with also that perpetual slight ammoniac tang of urine, and there was the double bing of the elevator and the always faraway sound of the intercom paging some M.D." (74)
Gately	How Kate Gompert gets secretly high	"And then after a while I'm smoking joints at work, at breaks, going in the bathroom and standing on the toilet and blowing it out the window, there's this tiny window up high with the glass frosted and all filthy and cobwebby, and I hate having my face up next to it, but if I clean it off I'm afraid Mrs. Diggs or somebody will be able to tell somebody's been doing something up around the window, standing there in high heels on the rim of the toilet, brushing my teeth all the time" (82)
ONAN	Effects of the Entertainment	"were watching the recursive loop the medical attaché had rigged on the TP's viewer the night before, sitting and standing there very still and attentive, looking not one bit distressed or in any way displeased, even though the room smelled very bad indeed" (92)
Marathe-Steeply	Marathe and Steeply insult exchange	"Go shit in your chapeau," Steeply wheezed, bringing up his legs to survey the hosiery's damage" (93) "Marathe came alert. 'Take off your wig and be shitting inside it, Hugh Steeply B.S.S. And the ignorance of you appalls me'" (110)
Incandenza	Wayne farting	"John Wayne, as do most Canadians, lifts one leg slightly to fart, like the fart was some kind of task, standing at his locker, waiting for his feet to get dry enough to put on socks" (101)
Incandenza	Hal considers the "defecatory posture"	"There'd be clear evidence that T. Schacht's still in one of the toilet stalls off the showers even if Hal couldn't see the tip of one of Schacht's enormous purple shower thongs under the door of the stall right by where the shower-area entryway cuts into his line of sight. Something humble, placid even, about inert feet under stall doors. The defecatory posture is an accepting posture, it occurs to him. Head down, elbows on knees, the fingers laced together between the knees. Some hunched timeless millennial type of waiting, almost religious" (108)
Incandenza	Little Buddies asking Struck about what to do about questionable farts on the tennis court	"But then you've denied yourself an urgent fart, and you're running around trying to compete with a terrible hot nasty uncomfortable fart riding around the court inside you." (122)

Gately	C dies after taking heroin laced with Drano that Dr. Wo gave him as punishment for some kind of theft	"blood and bloody materil is coming out Cs' mouth and Cs' nose and its' allover the feathers its' a sure sign of Drano, blood is and Cs' eyes get beesly and bulge and hes' cryng blood into the feathers in his mouth and trying to hold onto my glove but Cs' arms are going allover and one eye it like allofa sudden pops outof his map, like with a Pop you make with fingers in your mouth with all this blood and materil and a blue string at the back of the eye and the eye falls over the side of Cs' map and hangs there looking at the fag Poor Tony. And C turned lightblue and bit thru the snakes' head and died for keeps and shit his pants instantly" (140)
Gately	Resident complaining to Pat about something in the toilet	"I'm up there trying to do my Chore. I've got the men's upstairs bathroom. There's something... Pat there's something in the toilet up there. That won't flush. The thing. It won't go away. It keeps reappearing. Flush after flush. I'm only here for instructions. Possibly also protective equipment" (183)
Gately	JvD in tub, getting ready to commit suicide	"Joelle can smell, through her veil and own stale exhalations, the little room's complicated spice of sandalwood rubble in a little violet-ribboned pomander and deodorant soap and the sharp decayed-lemon odor of stress-diarrhea" (239)
Incandenza	Orin's greeting to Hal	"Mr. Incandenza, this is the Enfield Raw Sewage Commission, and quite frankly we've had enough shit out of you" (247)
Gately	Poor Tony as a diarrhea hourglass	"Time spread him and entered him roughly and had its way and left him again in the form of endless gushing liquid shit that he could not flush enough to keep up with. He spent the longest morbid time trying to fathom whence all the shit came from when he was ingesting nothing at all but Codinex Plus. Then at some point he realized: time had become the shit itself: Poor Tony had become an hourglass: time moved through him now; he ceased to exist apart from its jagged-edged flow" (308)
Incandenza	Reaction to the Eschaton debacle	"LaMont Chu is throwing up into the Indian Ocean" (345)
Gately	Irish AA member describes his first solid dump	"Twas a sone so wonefamiliar at t'first ay tough ay'd droped me wallet in t'loo, do yo new. Ay tough ay'd droped me wallet in t'loo as Good is me wetness. So doan ay bend twixt m'knays and'ad a luke in t'dim o't'loo, and codn't belave me'yize. So gud pable ay do then ay drope to m'knays by t'loo an't'ad a rail luke. A loaver's luke, d'yo new. And friends t'were loavely past me pur poewers t'say. T'were a tard in t'loo. A rail tard. T'were farm an' teppered an' aiver so jaintly aitched. T'luked... conestroocted instaid've sprayed" (357)
Gately	Gately tells residents they can't get kicked out of the program	"But he says he'll clue them in on a truly great thing about AA: they can't kick you out. You're In if you say you're In. Nobody can get kicked out, not for any reason. Which means you can say anything in here. Talk about solid turds all you want. The molecular integrity of shit is small potatoes. Gately says he defies the new Ennet House residents to try and shock the smiles off these Boston AAs' faces" (358)
Gately	NA member decribes stillborn birth	"how she'd finally delivered of a stillborn infant right there alone on her side like a cow on the rug of her room, all the time throughout still compulsively loading up the glass pipe and smoking; and how the infant emerged all dry and hard like a constipated turdlet, with no protective moisture and no afterbirth-material following it out, and how the emerged infant was tiny and dry and all withered and the color of strong tea, and dead, and also had no face, had in utero developed no eyes or nostrils and just a little lipless hyphen of a mouth" (381)
ONAN	Gentle describing the waste-filled status quo	"the toxic effluvia choking our highways and littering our byways and grungeing up our sunsets and cruddying those harbors in which televised garbage-barges lay stacked up at anchor, clotted and impotent amid undulating clouds of potbellied gulls and those disgusting blue-bodied flies that live on shit (first U.S. President ever to say shit publicly, shuddering)" (388)
Gately	Gately's cleaning job	"Half the guys in the Shattuck are always incontinent. There's human waste in the showers on a daily fucking basis. Stavros lets him attach an industrial hose to a nozzle and spray the worst of the shit away from a distance before Gately has to go in there with his mop and brushes and solvents, and his mask" (440)
Gately	Roy T asking Ken Erdedy to hug him	"Now," Roy said, extracting his free hand and pointing to the vestry floor with a stabbing gesture, "now," he said, "you gone risk vulnerability and discomfort and hug my ass or do I gone fucking rip your head off and shit down your neck?" (514)
Gately	Lenz getting high during NA meeting on a toilet	"saunters casually into the Handicapped head with the lockable door and the big sort of crib built around the shitter itself for crippled lowering onto the toilet and does like maybe two, maybe three generous lines of Bing off the top of the toilet-tank and wipes the tank-top off both before and after with wet paper towels" (563)
Gately	Humiliation of Mrs. Lenz in bus toilet	"passengers were hurled violently from their seats while, meanwhile, back in the closet-sized rear potty, Mrs. Lenz, right in the process of going potty, was hurled from the toilet by the first swerve and proceeded to do some high-velocity and human-waste-flinging pinballing back and forth" (582)

Gately	Bruce Green at Hawaii Five-0 party with Mildred Bonk	"Green had gotten so uncomfortably fascinated and repelled and paralyzed by the Polynesian tunes that he'd set up a cabana-chair right by the kegs...downing one plastic cup after another of beer-foam until he got so blind drunk his sphincter had failed and he'd not only pissed but also actually shit his pants, for only the second time ever, and the first public time ever, and was mortified with complexly layered shame" (586)
Gately	Gately checks Bruce Green's urine after Green comes back late from his walk with Lenz looking pale and traumatized (b/c of dog killing)	"Gately hates to have a warm blue-lidded cup of somebody's goddamn urine in his fridgelette with his pears and Polar seltzer, etc. Green submits to Gately's cross-armed presence in the men's head as Green produces a urine so efficiently and with so little bullshit that Gately is able to take the lidded cup between gloved thumb and finger and get it downstairs and tagged and Logged and down in the fridgelette in time to not be late for getting the residents' cars moved" (609)
Gately	Gately struggling with gunshot wound	"His big present fear is throwing up in front of and maybe partly on Joelle v.D., whose calves he's noted" (618)
Gately	Woman who shits on the street	"a bag-lady-type older female in several clothing-layers lift her skirts and lower herself to the pavement and move her scaggy old bowels right there in full view of passersby and diners both, then gather all her plastic shopping bags together and walk stolidly out of view. The pile of bowel movement sat there on the pavement, steaming slightly" (684)
Gately	JvD listens in NA meeting to a hit-bottom-then-get-clean story	"And Shattuck Shelter—by coincidence—that usually had a waiting list every March until it got warm, they'd just kicked out some sorry-ass specimen for defecating in the shower, and they took him, the speaker" (715)
Gately	Kate Gompert struggling after concussion from Poor Tony	"Kate Gompert had the idea that supporting herself against the lightpost would keep her from throwing up. Concussion is really another word for a bruised brain" (716)
Gately	Gately's fever dream in hospital; kind of paralleling end image	"He broke through the crib's bars with his head and went to the front door and ran outside. The black clouds up the beach lowered and roiled, funnelling sand, and as Gately watched he saw a tornado's snout emerge from the clouds and slowly lower. It looked as if the clouds were either giving birth or taking a shit. Gately ran across the beach to the water to escape the tornado" (822)
Gately	Gately's step-father records his beer intake	"In a different little notebook, the M.P. noted the date and time of each Heineken he consumed. He was the sort of person who equated incredibly careful record-keeping with control. In other words he was by nature a turd-counter" (847)
Incandenza	Stice asking Hal if he believes in ghosts	"You believe in shit, Hal?" 'Shit?' 'I don't know. Little-kid shit. Telekiniption. Ghosts. Parabnormal shit.' 'Just going to get around behind you and yank and we'll pop you right off,' I said" (876)
Gately	Gately has to fill a bedpan for a v. attractive nurse while in the hospital	"Not to mention the time and pain involved in rolling onto his left side and exposing his ass and pulling his knees to his chest with one arm—'Hug those knees like they were your Sweetie, is what we say,' she said, putting a terribly soft cool hand on Gately's ass—without jostling the catheter or I.V.s, or the thick taped tube that went down his mouth to God knows where" (903)
Incandenza	Hal ponders the huge quantity of his future bodily processes	"The amount of hydrochloric acid and bilirubin and glucose and glycogen and gloconol produced and absorbed and produced in my body. And another, dimmer room, filled with the rising mass of the excrement I'd produce, the room's double-locked steel door gradually bowing outward with the mounting pressure.... I had to put my hand out against the wall and stand there hunched until the worst of it passed" (905)
Gately	Again the posture; ADA guy talks about wanting to forgive Gately for toothbrush incident	"The A.D.A. leaned forward, hat rotating between his calves, elbows on knees in the odd defecatory posture men used to try to communicate earnestness in their sharing" (968)
Incandenza	O asking Hal if anti-ONAN terrorism is misguided and pathetic	"There's the sound of Orin switching phone-hands. 'So then I'll ask you what she seemed like she rhetorically asked: are the Separatists' and fringe cells' pathetic little anti-O.N.A.N. campaigns and gestures down here basically just hopeless and pathetic?' "Does fish-shit drift slowly bottomward, O.? How could she see it as anything but, if she's as savvy as you say?" (1020)

Appendix B: Dumpster and Trash Detail

This appendix is a collection of ways dumpsters and trash are described in *Infinite Jest*. It is organized chronologically and meant to be skimmed. It exists to remind the reader of the tone and quality of David Foster Wallace's prose and to provide a list long enough to show the diverse and maximalist coverage of waste in the novel.

Subplot	Description	Quotation
Gately	Ken Erdedy, beginning of the novel anticipating pot binge, hears dumpsters being emptied	"From the street outside came the sound of a dumpster being emptied into an E.W.D. land barge" (25)
ONAN	Medical attache considers throwing cartridge away	"The sole reason he does not throw the unlabelled cartridge in the wastecan or put it aside for his wife to preview for relevance is because there are such woefully slim entertainment-pickings on his wife's irritating Americanized tennis-league evening away from her place at home. The attaché will pop the cartridge in and scan just enough of its contents..." (41)
Incandenza	Orin throws cups and the roaches they contain straight into dumpsters	"Orin discards both the roach and the tumbler in separate sealed Ziplocs in the dumpster complex by the golf course up the street..." (46)
Incandenza	Orin getting rid of the roaches	"There's still material from that one time in the tile-grouting. It seems unremovable. Roach-innards. Sickening. Throwing the shoes away was preferable to looking at the sole to clean it. Now he keeps big glass tumblers in the bathroom and when he turns on the light and sees a roach he puts a glass down over it, trapping it" (49)
Incandenza	Hal on his pot secrecy	"Total utilization of available resources = lack of publicly detectable waste" (54)
Gately	Description of M. DuPlessis's house	"...flimsily tasteful French doors surrounded by dense and thorn-free deicious shrubbery and blocked off from the garage's halogen floods by a private E.W.D.-issue dumpster" (57)
Incandenza	Mario walks into a dumpster	"Mario...clips his shoulder on the green steel edge of a dumpster, pirouetting halfway to the cement before Schitt says this game the players are all at ETA to learn, this infinite system of decisions and angles and lines Mario's brothers worked so brutishly hard to master: junio athletics is but one facet of the real gem: life's endless war against the self you cannot live without" (85)
Incandenza	Mario's "FIRST AND ONLY EVEN REMOTELY ROMANTIC EXPERIENCE" description	"...scent of illegally burned leaves wafting up from East Newton mixed with the foody smells from the ventilator turbines out of the back of the dining hall. Two gulls were in place in the air over the dumpsters over by the rear parking lot" (125)
Incandenza	Orin tells Hal about exploding trash bags	"...Trash bags have been swelling up and spontaneously combusting out in the dumpsters. These sudden rains of coffee grounds and orange peels...Also I met somebody. Hallie, a possibly very special somebody." (141)
Gately and Incandenza	Mario and others retrieve urine bottles for Pemulis in the dumpsters behind ETA	"Tomorrow morning, E.T.A. custodial workers—Kenkle and Brandt, or Dave ('Fall Down Very') Harde, the well-loved old janitor laid off from Boston College for contracting narcolepsy, or thick-ankled Irish women from the semi-tenements down the hill across Comm. Ave., or else sullen and shifty-eyed residents from Ennet House, the half-way facility at the bottom of the hill's other side in the old VA Hospital complex, hard-looking and generally sullen types who come and do nine months of menial-type work for the 32 hours a week their treatment-contract requires—will empty scores of little empty plastic Visine bottles from subdorm wastebaskets into the dumpster -nest behind the E.T.A. Employee parking lot, from which dumpsters Pemulis will then get Mario Incandenza and some of the naïver of the original ephelic urine-donators themselves to remove, sterilize, and rebox the bottles..." (157)
Gately	Bruce Green describes his dealer's sexually abused chickens	"He said he had sex with the chickens. It was a trailer out past the dumpster-dock in the Spur, and he kept a couple chickens under it" (183)
Gately and Incandenza	Description of dumpsters as JvD walks to suicide party	"in every alley are green I.W.D. dumpsters and the smaller red I.W.D. dumpsters to take the overflow from the green dumpsters" "sodden litter...appears on the sidewalk and in the curb's seam, and now murky-colored people with sacks...sift through the litter; and the rustle and jut of limbs from dumpsters being sifted by people who all day do nothing but sift through I.W.D. dumpsters..." (224)

Gately and Incandenza	JvD listing the things she will no longer do after she dies	"No more throwing the Material away and then half an hour later rooting through the trash, no more all-fours scrutiny of the carpet in hopes of a piece of lint that looks enough like the Material to try to smoke" (226)
Gately	Poor Tony goes through Withdrawal at the bottom of a dumpster	"The empty Empire Displacement Co. dumpster he was hiding in was new and apple-green and the inside was bare dimpled iron, and it remained new and unutilized because persons declined to come near enough to utilize it" (304)
Incandenza	Strange car parks at ETA during Eschaton debacle; turns out to be Steeply's	"Though the persona of him changed, Steeply's car for all field assignments was this green sedan subsided by a painful ad for aspirin upon its side...the fanatically beloved car of M. Hugh Steeply." (112) "A mint green Ford sedan has passed through the gate's raised portcullis and is trying to parallel park between two dumpsters in the circular drive behind West House..." (330) "Troeltsch, who's looking for the first time at the idling sedan by West House's dumpsters and asking if anybody knew anybody who drove a Nunhagen-Aspirin-adverting Ford, is the only upperclass spectator who doesn't seem utterly and silently engrossed..." (344) "H. Steeply's green sedan with its neuralgiac full-front Nunhagen ad on the side sat in an Authorized Guest parking spot in the E.T.A. lot." (655)
Marathe-Steeply	Trash pickup described during Steeply-Marathe conversation	"The ponderous rectangles of moving light within Tuscon's nightly spread were 'Barges of Land' ministering to nests of dumpsters in the deep part of night...Some of the Barges of Land's waste would be vectored into the Sonora region of Mexico, but much would be shipped north for displacement-launch into the Convexity" (431)
Gately	Gately speeding with Pat M's Aventura past classic Boston markers	"Scenery starts to blur and distend at 70 kph. Comm. Ave splits into Enfield-Brighton-Allston from the downscale north edge of Brookline on the right. He passes the meat-colored facades of anonymous Brookline tenements, Father & Son Market, a dumpster-nest, Burger Kings, Blanchard's Liquors, an InterLace outlet, a land-berge alongside another dumpster-nest, corner bars and clubs--Play It Again Sam's, Harper's Ferry, Bunratty's Rathskeller, Father's First I and II--a CVS, two InterLace outlets right next to each other, the ELIIS THE RIM MAN sign, the Marty's Liquors that they rebuilt like ants the week after it burned down" (479)
Gately and ONAN	Gately's car's stirred up trash leads to transition to Antitoi establishment	"Gately now simply blows through Inman...the Aventura's ten-cylinder backwash raising an odd little tornado of discarded ad-leaflets and glassine bags and corporate-snack bags...which whirls in his exhaust, the tornado of waste does, moving behind him as the last pearly curve of the sun through baggy clouds is eaten by the countless Sancta Something and then whitewashed WASP churg roofs' finials father west, nearer Harvard, at 60 k but sustained in its whirl by the strong west breeze as the last of the sun goes and a blue-black shadow quietly fills the canyon of Prospect, whose streetlights don't work for the same municipal reasons the street is in such crummy repair; and one piece of the debris Gately's raised and set spinning behind him, a thick flattened M.F. cup, caught by a sudden gust as it falls, twirling, is caught at some aerodyne's angle and blown spinning all the way to the storefront of one 'Antitoi Enteratiment'...so that in a minute a burly bearded thoroughly Canadian figure...appears out of the dim light in the shop's back room and wipes its mouth on first one sleeve then the other and opens the front door with a loud hinge-squeak..." (483)
ONAN	Dumpster's behind Antitoi establishment described	"The front door squeaks loudly of the hinge and Lucien recloses it and drives the bolt home: squeak. The upper hinge squeaks no matter the oil, as the shop drives Lucien crazy by becoming again dusty each time the door is opened to the street's grit, and from the dust of the alley with so many dumpsters behind the back room which Bertraund refuses not to open the iron service door of, to spit" (486)

Gately	Lenz's walk, right before he kills his first rats	<p>"Low-rent dumpster-strewn residential streets and Projects' driveways that become alleys, gritty passages behind stores and dumpsters and warehouses and loading docks..."</p> <p>"Liberated housecats and hard-core strays ooze in and out of the shadows, rustle in dumpsters..."</p> <p>"Sometimes near drainage pipes he sees serious rats, or sometimes near cat-free dumpsters"</p> <p>"Up ahead there was a Stegosaurus-shape of a Svelte Co. dumpster as versus your lower slimmer E.W.D.-type dumpster" (544)</p>
Gately	Lenz's walk that ends in him killing Canadians' dog	"The night-noises of the metro night...the clunk and tinkle of stuff going into dumpsters and rustle of stuff in dumpsters settling and skirl of wind on the sharp edges of dumpsters and unmistakable clanks and tinkles of dumpster-divers and can-miners going after dumpsters' cans and bottles, the district Redemption Center [recycling] down in West Brighton and actually even boldly sharing a storefront with Liquor World liquor store, so the can-miners can do like one-stop redeeming and shopping" (559)
Gately	Dumpsters are frequent in Boston descriptions	"In a dumpster-lined easement between Faneuil St. and Brighton Ave" (564)
Gately	More dumpster description in Boston	"Their route down here is a Mondrian of alleys narrowed down to near-defiles from all the dumpsters... The alley's tight-packed dumpsters and knobless steel doors and the dull black of total grime... Dumpsters' garbage doesn't have just one smell, depending. The urban lume makes the urban night only semidark, as in licoricey..." (580)
Gately	Bruce observing Brighton homes and the prevalent garbage; right before Bruce looks up and sees Lenz skulking ahead of him	"the fenced front yards are the toy-and-beer-can-strewn type...overfull wastebaskets and untwisted trashbags are on the sagging porch because nobody's gotten around to taking them down to the E.W.D. dumpster at the corner and garbage from the overfull receptacles blows out into the yard and mixes with the leaves along the fences' base and some gets out into the street and is never picked up and eventually becomes part of the composition of the street..." (586)
ONAN	Observations about how this generation likes to witness things; before MIT student kidnapped	"Even local candidates, activists, advocates and grass-roots aides have returned full-circle to the public stump--the bunting-hung platform, the dumpster-lid, vehicles' roofs, awnings..." (623)
Gately	Lenz contemplating stealing after being kicked out of Ennet	"The Chinese women and then Lenz all passed a gray-faced woman squatting back between two dumpsters, her multiple skirts hiked up" (718)
Gately	Poor Tony thinks of using dumpster as refuge from "Creature" chasing him (whose purse he has)	"...calculated that if he could get a reasonable lead on the Creature...the dumpsters would keep It from seeing just which hopefully unlocked rear door P.T. sought basic human kindly refuge behind" (721)
Gately	Cartridges Clenette "promoted" from ETA dumpster now going to be viewed	"were getting ready to throw in the dumpster up at the swank tennis school up the hill she works at, and she promoted them and hauled them down to the House, and the residents all have a wild hair because Pat says Staff has to preview the cartridges for suitability and sex" (826)
Incandenza	ETA players getting ready for gala matches against Quebec Jr. team	"Michael Pemulis was nowhere to be seen since early this AM, at which time Anton Doucette said he'd seen Pemulis quote 'lurking' out by the West House dumpsters" (965)
Incandenza	Dumpster fire leads to Mario shaking hand of Loach	"Mario'd been set dashing out to get another roll of tokens from the nearest station, which because of a dumpster-fire near the entrance to the Arlington St. station turned out to be Park St..." (971)
Incandenza	Hal feels about anti-ONAN insurgence stuff the same way he'd feel "if someone had been reading mail of Hal's that he thought he'd thrown away" (314); then cuts to footnote 110, about Hal reading mail Mario collected from the trash	"...riffing through densely packed letters tri-folded and packed upright, a kind of Rolodex of different mementos and postal correspondence Mario's rescued from waste-baskets and recycling bins and dumpsters and quietly saved in shoeboxes...None of the letters are to or from Mario" (1021)
Gately and Incandenza	On lower income people taking things from garbage	"A phenomenon not unknown, viz. menial and shift-workers mining E.T.A.'s collected waste for cast-off value, and permitted by the administration and Mr. Harde, or rather just not actively discouraged, since, 'One man's trash...' and so on..." (1046)