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Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Infinite Jest* by David Foster Wallace

Review by: Egon Antitoui

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lanterns and go and burgle a neighbor's house. They'd get back at dawn, loaded, to find their own house had been robbed.

The government of this country was a criminal organization that stole from its subjects while the subjects defrauded the government. Things ran smoothly, and everybody seemed to be happy. Until an honest man came, who instead of going out to steal stayed home smoking and reading novels, which also made it impossible for others to rob his house. To accommodate them, he began to take evening walks. In less than a week his house had been emptied, and he found himself completely penniless. But because he still didn't steal, there were some thieves who at dawn returned to find their household intact. These began to get richer than the others, and quit stealing. But the others, who kept going to the honest man's house and finding it empty, became poorer. Soon enough, the rich began to pay the poor to steal for them. Thus began the process of the rich becoming richer and the poor poorer, even though all of them were still thieves. As for the one and only honest man, "...he died in very short order, of hunger."

It would be an enterprise in vanity for this reviewer to attempt a recapitulation of *Numbers in the Dark* by offering a few more examples, an enterprise like that of another Greek, a *Cynic*, who went about in the *agora* advertising a house for sale by showing, as a sample, a single stone from its masonry. Suffice it to say that this trunkful of posthumous gifts from Italo Calvino includes, in addition to "Henry Ford" (a television script never produced), two dialogues from his collection *Impossible interviews*, "Neanderthal Man" and "Montezuma." Read and rejoice.

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Stratis Haviaras

**Infinite Jest** by David Foster Wallace. Little, Brown, & Co., 1996. \$29.95 ISBN 0316920045 (paper).

Trying to review Wallace's grandly comic magnum opus in a space this small is like trying to cook a crocodile in a toaster. You put the tip of the tail in first and then the circuits blow. What to say? This is an enormously ambitious work by an enormously intelligent and funny author. Wallace runs his parallel plot at us with a Pynchonian nonchalance. One rail follows the slow resurrection via 12-steps of a tormented colossus named Don Gately, a onetime breaking-and-entering artist who has become a kind of warden at a recovery center. The other tracks the doings of the members of the supremely dysfunctional Incandenza family: Mom and Dad run a tennis academy (or do, until Dad, also a cult-figure filmmaker, suicides using a rigged microwave oven); son Hal comes of age as a top-seeded player living on site during his mother's reign. Hal plays super tennis, ponders the elaborate metaphysics of the game, nips off to smoke some reefer every chance he gets. The dangerous—the poisoned—third rail involves elaborate and violent subterfuges carried out by Quebecois separatists who are intent on finding "Infinite Jest," a legendary film by Incandenza Sr., which has the power to immobilize the will (and eventually kill) anyone who happens to watch it. Wallace has slaved mightily to bring the two major parallels to intersection, using both the Quebecois and a shadowy woman named Joelle van Dyne (who may have been involved with Hal's father, and who has, through recovery, made connection with Gately). Whether he succeeds in pulling the strands together or not is finally the reader's call. But the writing and the imagination (and the wonderful set-pieces) are enough to commend *Infinite Jest* to any serious reader's attention.

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Egon Antitoo