



Conversations with David Foster Wallace (Literary Conversations Series)

Stephen J. Burn

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Across two decades of intense creativity, David Foster Wallace (1962-2008) crafted a remarkable body of work that ranged from unclassifiable essays, to a book about transfinite mathematics, to vertiginous fictions. Whether through essay volumes (*A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again*, *Consider the Lobster*), short story collections (*Girl with Curious Hair*, *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*, *Oblivion*), or his novels (*Infinite Jest*, *The Broom of the System*), the luminous qualities of Wallace's work recalibrated our measures of modern literary achievement. *Conversations with David Foster Wallace* gathers twenty-two interviews and profiles that trace the arc of Wallace's career, shedding light on his omnivorous talent.

Jonathan Franzen has argued that, for Wallace, an interview provided a formal enclosure in which the writer "could safely draw on his enormous native store of kindness and wisdom and expertise." Wallace's interviews create a wormhole in which an author's private theorizing about art spill into the public record. Wallace's best interviews are vital extra-literary documents, in which we catch him thinking aloud about his signature concerns--irony's magnetic hold on contemporary language, the pale last days of postmodernism, the delicate exchange that exists between reader and writer. At the same time, his acute focus moves across MFA programs, his negotiations with religious belief, the role of footnotes in his writing, and his multifaceted conception of his work's architecture. *Conversations with David Foster Wallace* includes a previously unpublished interview from 2005, and a version of Larry McCaffery's influential *Review of Contemporary Fiction* interview with Wallace that has been expanded with new material drawn from the original raw transcript.

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