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Bolaño Quintero, Jesús

Jesús Bolaño Quintero

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marriaga@us.es

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Resumen: David Foster Wallace's "E Unibus Pluram" is an account of the prevalence of destructive irony at the end of the twentieth century. Trying to break free from the solipsism brought about by postmodern relativism, Wallace embraced sincerity as the cornerstone of the zeitgeist of the new millennium. This article offers an analysis of two salient sources of influence that could be considered as inspiration for Wallace's alternative to postmodern irony: American transcendentalism and Ludwig Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations. It does so with the intention of furthering the understanding of the cultural significance of the work of the author for the generation of writers that followed in his wake, and to demonstrate how the recovery of Romantic ideals may be the key to map out the nature of the paradigm shift to post-postmodernism.

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Abstract

David Foster Wallace's "E Unibus Pluram" is an account of the prevalence of destructive irony at the end of the twentieth century. Trying to break free from the solipsism brought about by postmodern relativism, Wallace embraced sincerity as the cornerstone of the zeitgeist of the new millennium. This article offers an analysis of two salient sources of influence that could be considered

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Keywords: David Foster Wallace, postmodernism, post-postmodernism, New Sincerity.

In order to understand the passing of postmodernism in American fiction, it is important to analyse the fundamental figure of David Foster Wallace. His influential work, especially his novel Infinite Jest (1996), is essential to understand the transformation that occurs in a large spectrum of the subsequent American literature. Wallace grew up in a postmodern America where "the 'tyranny' of irony was almost unsurpassable" (Timmer 2010: 101). To escape this tyranny, it would be necessary to recover an honesty that Wallace himself calls "Too sincere. Backward, quaint, naïve, anachronistic" (Wallace 1993: 193). For him, the writers to end the reign of irony would have to be candid rebels who adopt frankness as the fundamental principle of their ethos: "much of what he (almost unbelievingly) envisioned about the next rebels has, to a certain extent, really come about: the softness, a certain sentimentality, sincerity, and the backing away from ironic watching" (Timmer 2010: 101-102). It is a figure similar to the one that Jerry Saltz alludes to in "Sincerity and Irony Hug It Out" (2010). Saltz noted the new attitude of some artists, free from shame and fear: "I'm noticing a new approach to artmaking in recent museum and gallery shows . . . They grasp that they can be ironic and sincere at the same time, and they are making art from this compound-complex state of mind—what Emerson called 'alienated majesty'" (Saltz 2010) The rejection of irony and the incorporation of honesty in an innocent and sentimental way are the basis of this New Sincerity movement.1

One of the first authors to tread successfully the path opened by Wallace was Dave Eggers. He made use of the bravery advocated by Wallace. When speaking about the values that the new generation of rebels must have, Timmer points out that: "all these ingredients are clearly part of the aesthetic of Eggers's work most obviously" (2010: 102). In his novels, Eggers experiments with the connection between individuals started by Wallace in Infinite Jest. Eggers uses the word "lattice" to name that connection in his first novel, A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius (2000). The protagonist of that book, Dave, who is his alter ego, defines the concept of lattice in a passage of the book as a network of people who think the same way and who take care of each other:

The lattice that we are either part of or apart from. The lattice is the connective tissue. The lattice is everyone else, the lattice is my people, collective youth, people like me, hearts ripe, brains aglow. The lattice is everyone I have ever known, mostly those my age or thereabouts . . . I see us as a vast matrix, an army, a whole, each one of us responsible to one another, because no one else is. I mean, every person that walks through the door to help with Might becomes part of our lattice . . . all these people, the people who come to us or we come to, the subscribers, our friends, their friends, their friends (sic), who knows who knows who, a human ocean moving as one. (Eggers 2000: 184-185)

He compares the concept to a snowshoe racket: it helps distribute the weight of the person wearing them and its lattice makes it not sink: "[y]ou wear snowshoes when the snow is deep and porous. The latticework within the snowshoe's oval distributes the wearer's weight over a wider area, in order to keep him or her falling through the snow. So people, the connections between people, the people you know, and that know you, and know your situation and your story and your troubles or whatnot" (Eggers 2000: 185). Feeling the lost connection again brings the literary work closer to the transcendental notion of unity that Emerson expressed in his essay "The Over-Soul" (1841) with his famous symbolism of "part and particle."

The Supreme Critic on the errors of the past and the present, and the only prophet of that which must be, is that great nature in which we rest as the earth lies in the soft arms of the atmosphere; that Unity, that Over-Soul, within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other; . . . We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE. (Emerson [1841] 2000: 237)

It is also linked to the famous notion of the self as pertaining to the universe in its entirety, declared by Walt Whitman at the beginning of "Song of Myself" (1855), which substitutes the word particle for atom:

I celebrate myself,

And what I assume you shall assume,

For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you. ([1855] 1998: 1-3)

We are going to use Eggers's idea of lattice to see how it relates to the Romantic idea of "spirit," which is the seed of the concept of nationalism as we know it today. By doing this, we hope to shed some light on the place Wallace occupies in the post-postmodern paradigm. This notion of "spirit" perfectly describes the moment and the direction of the turn in the intended paradigm shift of the twenty-first century, since the idea originated from a fanatical xenophobia that occurred in the German territories in the early nineteenth century. In that context, this hate, especially towards the French—which was explicable due to the hegemony of the Napoleonic armies in the territory after the victories in Austria and Prussia—, was caused by the risk of losing the identity. Isaiah Berlin points out that Johann Gottlieb Fichte highlighted the importance of a kind of transcendental self, derived from Kantian philosophy. Against this, he opposes an empirical self of which we are aware when the world affects us:

When you asked yourself what reason you had for supposing that the World existed, what reason you had . . . what reason you had for supposing that solipsism was not true, and that everything was not a figment of your imagination . . . the answer was that you could not doubt that some kind of clash or collision occurred between you and what you wanted, between you and what you wished to be, between you and the stuff upon which you wished to impose your personality and which, pro tanto, resisted. (Berlin [1999] 2013: 108-109)

According to Fichte, one cannot exist without the other. The world, as science describes it, "is an artificial construction in relation to this absolutely primary, irreducible, fundamental datum, not even of experience, but of being" (Berlin [1999] 2013: 109). In Romanticism, then, this implies that the only thing that has authentic relevance is that idea of self. This has political implications, since,

if that idea of self is identified with that of a community, a certain religion, a class or a State pursuing a collective will, the individual is reduced to a constituent part "of a much bigger, much more impressive, much more historically persistent personality" (Berlin [1999] 2013: 109).

If we apply all the previously mentioned to Eggers's concept of lattice, being part of this network makes the individuals be part of something larger than themselves. Thus, solipsism is neutralized. Being an ingredient of a greater will, expressed in a grand narrative, brings affiliated members into contact. By losing that superstructure, the individual loses the will that gives meaning to the march. Although, according to Hegel, the behaviour of this march, related to the Romantic concept of "zeitgeist"—and even to the paradigm, somewhat tangentially—, is revealed by representative people who are a simple instrument necessary to satisfy the purpose of the Geist, of the spirit. Allen W. Wood explains it in Hegel's Ethical Thought (1990): "[f]or Hegel the course of history is set by the needs of spirit and the growth of its self-knowledge. The individuals who facilitate the satisfaction of these needs are simply the necessary instruments of spirit's purpose" (1995: 279).

Berlin draws our attention to the figure of the Scottish idealist Thomas Carlyle, for whom the hero—figure that likens Hegel's concept of representative man—was the engine of the story. Through his "great man theory," developed in his collection of lectures On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History (1841), Carlyle explained that it was thanks to these men with superior innate qualities—wisdom, courage, intelligence—that history advanced. For Carlyle, these men were associated with the figure of the Romantic hero.

Emerson published his collection of essays Representative Men: Seven Lectures in 1850, nine years after the publication of Carlyle's On Heroes. Emerson's work developed an idea very similar to that of Carlyle. However, there was an essential difference. Emerson's theory was democratic and egalitarian. This harmonizes with the ideology on which the new American nation was based, that is, the natural law: all men are created equal. In that new country, nature was the primeval source from which everything else emanated. The possibilities that the nature of America offered to the enlightened human being were limitless. The same document that legitimized the United States as an independent country and not subject to others, the Declaration of Independence (1776), the foundation of the other great legitimating document, the Constitution of the United States of America (1787), was based on those ideas. This can be seen in the very first paragraph of the document:

When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. (Declaration of Independence)

The text that gives legitimacy to the independence from Great Britain does so by using as its foundation stone an idea that comes from the same nation from which they separated. This ideological dependence, which was brewing since the beginning of the history of the United States, would have great importance in the development of the culture of the country. The new nation would carry that

burden for a long time, and the fight to get rid of it would become one of its most outstanding hallmarks. Emerson, who also desired a true American personality independent from the old continent, made nature the central theme of all his work and, by using natural law in his thinking, he laid the foundations for one of the most important notions in American culture. For Emerson, representative men were not special Romantic heroes, born with special characteristics, in view of the fact that all men were created equal. However, these men were special because they observed nature in a special way that allowed them to extract those singular characteristics from it. That is, every man carried a potential hero within himself, which contrasted with the hero of Carlyle—and Hegel—, who was born predestined. America distanced itself from the inheritance of Great Britain and began to develop its own personality.

In Eggers's foreword to Infinite Jest's tenth anniversary edition (2006), after tirelessly repeating that the book is a truly brilliant literary feat, difficult to read and virtually impossible to write, he describes Wallace as a normal person who is capable to do something extraordinary:

He is from the Midwest—east-central Illinois, to be specific, which is an intensely normal part of the country (not far, in fact, from a city, no joke, named Normal). So he is normal, and regular, and ordinary, and this is his extraordinary, and irregular, and not-normal achievement, a thing that will outlast him and you and me, but will help future people understand us—how we felt, how we lived, what we gave to each other and why. (2006: xvi)

This is how Eggers's lattice is related to transcendentalism through Romantic philosophy, and it is for all of the above that he emphasizes that Wallace is a normal person: because he is one of those representative American democratic Emersonian people.

Like the democratic Whitman, Wallace is just like everyone else—and Eggers is too. One could even say that there is a kind of correspondence between the figures of Wallace and Emerson, and Eggers and Thoreau. If Emerson was the proponent of all transcendental thinking, and Thoreau the one who carried it out in his life, in the same way, Wallace shaped a new sincerity and the idea of the candid rebel, and Eggers puts it into practice not only through his literary work, but also—in a Thoreauvian manner—through his philanthropic projects.2

Paul Giles affirms that Wallace "emerges out of an intellectual heritage invested in quite traditional Americanist values, as adumbrated by Foerster: Transcendentalism, community spirit, self-reliance, and so on" (2012: 4). He indicates that "[t]he ethical impulses that help to drive Wallace's narrative are themselves indebted to American intellectual traditions of Transcendentalism and Pragmatism" (2012: 19). Giles highlights the shared points he had with Emerson and Thoreau: "he also has in common with Emerson and Thoreau an ambivalence toward the ontological reality of other people" (2012: 9). Zuzanna Ladyga notes that the figure of the walking imago of "E Unibus Pluram" "comes from no other than Ralph Waldo Emerson and his essay 'Manners'" (2011: 240). Curiously, when Timmer develops in her influential book the question of identity in the author's works analysing three of his texts, at no time does she speak about transcendentalism, even though she applies many of the principles of Emersonian thought to her study.

On the other hand, Timmer exposes the conflict between the cultural phase of the end of the century and the construction of identity that is evident in the friction resulting from applying an excess of feelings to postmodern narrative practices. The point is that, although postmodern conventions are not suited to the formation of an identity, escaping these is not easy, since "one feels 'locked' in postmodern narrative practices that are supposedly open, in-coherent, and allow, even urge, deviations from narrative conventions. Simply put: when deviation from the norm becomes the norm, then what do you do?" (Timmer 2010: 103). Timmer tells us that the narrator of "Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way" uses his own postmodern metafictional techniques to criticize that same narrative style (2010: 104), and it is, certainly, easy to see if we read the following passage from the book:

[i]f this were a piece of metafiction, which it's NOT, the exact number of typeset lines between this reference and the prenominate referent would very probably be mentioned, which would be a princely pain in the ass, not to mention cocky . . . but in metafiction it would, nay needs be mentioned, a required postmodern convention aimed at drawing the poor old reader's emotional attention to the fact that the narrative bought and paid for . . . is not in fact a barely-there window onto a different and truly diverting world, but rather in fact an 'artifact,' an object . . . composed of . . . conventions, and is thus in a 'deep' sense just an opaque forgery of a transfiguring window, not a real window, a gag, and thus in a deep (but intentional, now) sense artificial, which is to say fabricated, false, a fiction . . . this self-conscious explicitness and deconstructed disclosure supposedly making said metafiction 'realer' than a piece of pre-postmodern 'Realism' that depends on certain antiquated techniques. (qtd. in Timmer 2010: 103-104)

In "Westward," one of the characters, Mark, wonders if postmodern narrative games are "just 'fun' for fun's sake, and devoid of any humanness?" (Timmer 2010: 106). Mark tries to write a story with a great human component and, therefore, he wants to separate himself from metafiction, because postmodern games lead to solipsism. Timmer draws attention to the fact that, in Wallace's story, it is precisely that feeling of solipsism what holds us together. In this way, Wallace transcends metafiction to re-humanize the subject. For this, he proposes "[t]he use of metafictional narrative conventions as misdirected vehicle, as a 'possibility of transport' . . . that could perhaps convey something more 'true': a 'pathetically unself-conscious sentimentality'" (Wallace 2012: 108; emphasis in original).

The task of regaining realism seems futile in an era in which the writer's identity is fragmented. Although there is a desire for sincerity, for humanism, for reality, relativism does not allow reaching the desired transcendence. Raoul Eshelman explains it as follows:

The main difference vis-à-vis postmodernism asserts itself in this case in the use of a holistic, discrete subject and sign. This is logically and practically incompatible with postmodernism's notion of subject and sign as unstable side effects of a constantly shifting textual context. At present, however, the use of classical devices of postmodernism to create closed signs and subjects is almost unavoidable: the new epoch is still dependent on the instruments of the old.

It seems impossible to achieve an identity associated with an idea of truth in a postmodern world. Wallace finds it is possible through an honesty free of postmodern irony. He tries to recover sincerity and single entendre, and balance this with the counterpoint of irony in the pre-modernist—in this case, Romantic—sense of the word.

When Wallace faces the impossibility of escaping postmodernity, Tom Wolfe's explanation, expressed in his seminal manifesto "Stalking the Billion-footed Beast" (1989) comes to mind: reality itself does not allow us to write realistic narrative in the way that Balzac or Zola did. Doing so is impossible because reality itself is fragmented. Therefore, realism cannot be achieved through the recovery of realism in such a way (Wolfe 1989: 46). After recounting a real event that surpasses any fragmented postmodern fiction, Wolfe says:

By the mid-1960s the conviction was not merely that the realistic novel was no longer possible but that American life itself no longer deserved the term real. American life was chaotic, fragmented, random, discontinuous; in a word, absurd. Writers in the university creative writing programs had long, phenomenological discussions in which they decided that the act of writing words on a page was the real thing and the so-called real world of America was the fiction, requiring the suspension of disbelief. The so-called real world became a favorite phrase. (1989: 49)

In this atmosphere, Wallace's characters seek to end their solipsism by searching for a transcendent connection between them. This brings him even closer to Whitman's democratic poetry, Thoreau's intuitive action, and Emerson's idealistic philosophy in which individuals are united through nature. In order to transcend language games, Wallace suggests trying to understand through silent intuition, without words. Starting from Ludwig Wittgenstein, Wallace is suggesting a 180-degree turn in the perception of reality. For Wittgenstein what cannot be said cannot be known—and it is better not to speak about it, since it does not lead to any certainty—. Conversely, Wallace suggests that what can be said leads to confusion and, finally to not knowing anything, or not being sure, even of existence. Therefore, the ideal would be to know through silent perception. This brings him closer to transcendental philosophy. In "Self-Reliance" (1841), Emerson states: "[a]nd now at last the highest truth on this subject remains unsaid; probably cannot be said; for all that we say is the far-off remembering of the intuition" ([1841] 1998: 1135). Intuition is the purest way to get to the truth; language would be a distortion of it. In "The Over-soul," Emerson talks about silence and language, and how everything is related in a superior structure to which absolutely all nature belongs: "the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE" ([1841] 2000: 237). Only through direct observation, not mediated by language, can that knowledge be reached, which is innate in all individuals and refers. Emerson points to something similar to Wittgenstein's language games: "[o]nly by the vision of that Wisdom can the horoscope of the ages be read, and by falling back on our better thoughts, by yielding to the spirit of prophecy which is innate in every man, we can know what it saith: Every man's words who speaks from that life must sound vain to those who do not dwell in the same thought on their own part" ([1841] 2000: 237). Consequently, by getting rid of language, we get rid of its games and, this way, we get rid of

the incommensurability of postmodern truths. The action, carried out by means of intuition—since the truth is something innate—is the basis of knowledge. Hence, the last words of "Westward" are "[l]isten to the silence behind the engine's noise. Jesus, Sweets, listen. Hear it? It's a love song. For whom? You are loved" (2012: 373; emphasis in original). In relation to this, according to what Emerson says in Nature (1836), "[w]ords are finite organs of the infinite mind. They cannot cover the dimensions of what is in truth. They break, chop, and impoverish it. An action is the perfection and publication of thought. A right action seems to fill the eye, and to be related to all nature" ([1836] 1998: 1088). Nonetheless, even though the above would be ideal, the world in which Wallace lives does not allow him to put into practice that form of intuitive knowledge. The solution to this problem is, once more, transcendentalism: "[t]he way to approach truth is to practice what Emerson calls sincerity" (Kateb 2002: 105). Thus, when speaking of Wallace's short story "Octet," Timmer draws attention to the last part of the story in which the narrator realizes that he cannot escape metafiction. However, what he can do is be "not just sincere but almost naked. Worse than naked—more like unarmed" (Wallace 2009: 131), he can make use of a "completely naked helpless pathetic sincerity" (2009: 131). This total sincerity, expressed through the symbolism of nudity is the beginning of a new sensibility related to transcendentalism. For Emerson, the way to find truth is also sincerity. He saw, for example, Thoreau as the personification of it—"Thoreau was sincerity itself . . . A truth-speaker he, capable of the most deep and strict conversation" (Emerson [1862] 2000: 823). That same quality is one of the characteristics that also defines Whitman's poetry.

According to Adam Kelly, "David Foster Wallace affirmed and embodied sincerity as a crucial value in his life and work, perhaps even as that work's defining feature" (2010: 131). Kelly explains how Wallace not only drew attention to the pernicious abuse of irony; he also laid the foundations for a new sensibility in fiction. The experiments of modernism, he contends, had shifted the focus from sincerity to authenticity by changing attitudes regarding the essence of authors and their way of conceiving creative agency. Commenting on Lionel Trilling's book Sincerity and Authenticity, Kelly affirms:

the modernist idea of the artist as aloof genius, as persona rather than person, shattered the older, traditional view, perhaps best articulated in Wordsworth's understanding of poets as "men speaking to men." Citing various formulations, by Eliot, Joyce and Gide, Trilling suggests that the modernists aesthetic of impersonality means that "the criterion of sincerity, the calculation of the degree of congruence between feeling and avowal, is not pertinent to the judgement of their work." (2010: 132)

It follows that sincerity gives way to an authenticity stripped of "any demonstrable awareness of a public self" (2010: 133), which paves the way for the society of irony. Wallace "characterized his artistic project as a response to the contemporary prevalence of irony in American literature and culture" (2010: 133). The intellectualization of fundamental values in postmodernism collides with the profoundly committed representation of them in the previous era: "As a contrast to the modernist concern with authentic forms of representation, Dostoevsky is explicitly presented by Wallace as an ideological writer who possesses the required 'degrees of passion, conviction, and engagement with deep

moral issues that we—here, today—cannot or do not permit ourselves'" (Kelly 2010: 134).

Kelly agrees with Timmer when interpreting Wallace's position regarding the recovery of that sincerity: one cannot return to pre-ironic sensibility for the simple reason that the society of that time and its values are very different from those of the society of the era of television described in "E Unibus Pluram." Like Timmer, Kelly draws attention to Wallace's need to apprise that recovery with postmodern fiction.

Being self-consciousness one of the most important characteristics of postmodern fiction, the authors were more concerned with creating something that may sound sincere than with what really is:

If, according to Wallace, a writer must anticipate how his work will be received by readers in a complex culture, and thus about communicating what sounds true, rather than simply what is true, is he really being fully sincere? Is this 'a congruence of avowal and actual feeling,' or even an endorsement of 'single-entendre principles?' Is there not a schizophrenic and/or manipulative quality at work here that counteracts the good intentions of the artist as communicator of truth? (Kelly 2010: 135)

Wallace's solution for this conundrum was a new reading of Wittgenstein's philosophy. He was very knowledgeable about the works of the Austrian thinker, who gave him the basis for language-bound solipsism, which is so characteristic of his fiction. However, as he exposes in his interview with Larry McCaffery, Wittgenstein, in the second stage of his philosophy ends solipsism by declaring that language only exists as a relationship between individuals. He summarizes in a sentence the process the philosopher goes through from Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus to Philosophical Investigations: "The loss of the whole external world" (McCaffery 2012: 44). In his first work, Wittgenstein talks about the referentiality of language in its relationship with reality, which separates us from the outside world. The problem with this first system is that it leads to solipsism. However, in Philosophical Investigations, Wallace points out in the same interview, Wittgenstein changes his attitude towards language and develops a very different system: "Wittgenstein argues that for language even to be possible, it must always be a function of relationships between persons" (2012: 44). This ends solipsism, since this theory "makes language dependent on human community" (2012: 44).

His revered philosopher is the source of one of his greatest concerns: solipsism and relativism. When Wittgenstein ends the first of the problems in Philosophical Investigations, he gives rise to the second by creating the system of language games. There is no total system on which to rely in order to transcend. For this reason, the individual can only think that there are others who are in the same solipsistic situation, given that there is no way to establish an effective and superior causal relationship between reality and one of the language games in particular. Timmer refers to this when she analyses the character of Mark in Wallace's "Westward":

Mark's 'central delusion and contemporary flaw', we learn, is that he thinks 'he's the only person in the World who feels like the only person in the World. It's a solipsistic delusion'. He is afraid of being 'Alone. Trapped. Kept from yourself'. The great 'horror' is this aloneness (as it is in Infinite Jest) . . . What Mark does

not know is, simply, 'that other boys know this too', that this feeling of horror is not at all a unique feeling — that it is, furthermore this 'solipsism [which] binds us together' . . . paradoxically. (2010: 107)

Reality is fragmented and the individuals are locked inside themselves again. The only way to overcome this dilemma, from Wallace's point of view, was to expose the limitations of language by developing and perfecting it. An absolute command of language does not ensure an absolute command of reality. To demonstrate this, he immolated himself—as Dave Eggers does at the end of A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius—3as a modern Romantic hero and as a post-postmodern Emersonian representative person.

By developing a perfect use of language, Wallace exposed language's shortcomings. The excess of language made obvious the need for silence to reconnect. It is a matter of faith to try to understand reality without a mediating language. Kelly establishes a common thread between Wallace's involvement, through the philosophy of language, with sincerity and irony, and his debt to Stanley Cavell, through whom Wallace reaches Emerson:

Through Cavell, Wallace also engaged with Ralph Waldo Emerson's famous essay "Self-Reliance," and this engagement led to two Wallace short stories inspired by Emerson's idea of sincerity as "good posture." Reading these stories, I show how Cavell's positing of a specifically American way of handling language, filtered through Emerson, helped Wallace to address problems that dogged him and fascinated him for his entire career. (Kelly 2015: no page number)

Kelly argues that Wallace points to a dialogue between the reader and the author himself in which he hopes to end the solipsism:4

In a pithy formulation, Steven Connor has quipped that "[b]eing modernist always meant not quite realizing that you were so," whereas "[b]eing postmodernist always involved the awareness that you were so." Within these terms, I would suggest, being a "post-postmodernist" of Wallace's generation means never quite being sure whether you are one, whether you have really managed to escape narcissism, solipsism, irony and insincerity. (2010: 145)

Numerous authors pay attention to the relationship between the events of 9/11 and the change of attitude in the world of literature. Peter Boxall, for example, indicates the profusion of works whose plot revolves around the attack in post-event literature "which has become known as the '9/11 novel'" (2013: 126),5 and of novels that somehow touch the subject. A little later in the same book, Boxall mentions the article by Kelly that we have been using and he relates it to the attacks. He connects the feeling of seriousness and new sincerity with the crisis of the new millennium and with the need to change the referentiality of the novel from self-awareness to the committed description of reality. Although it is true that older postmodern authors like Paul Auster, Thomas Pynchon or T. C. Boyle wrote through the crisis into post-postmodernity, they continued to use postmodern resources, even when a change in reality was perceived. The new generation of authors that followed in Wallace's steps, on the other hand, changed their sensibility towards the reality of the crisis.

Wittegensteinian philosophy and transcendentalism were always at the heart of Wallace's writing and the reconciliation of these two ways of conceiving reality worked in balance in his work to, on the one hand, expose the problems presented by a reality described from a purely linguistic point of view—and associated with

the relativity of language games—and, on the other hand, giving solutions to these problems through an understanding of reality far from the logic of language and close to an Emersonian intuitive action. That does not mean that Wallace solved the problems of solipsism and existentialism of the late 20th century, but he certainly did identify its origin in his essay "E Unibus Pluram," an oppressive and institutionalized postmodern irony. This irony, omnipresent in the media at the end of the 20th century, was capable of destroying hypocrisy and creating hope, but it was unable to build anything in its place, thus leaving an existential void. His proposed solution to the problem, a writing of total honesty, would be the foundation stone of the New Sincerity movement.

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