Adams's notion of the proper definition of republic as "a government of law not of men."

Be that as it may, Ryerson offers us a stunningly detailed account, occasionally with a line by line analysis, of what Adams had in mind when developing his republican thought. And Adams truly developed it for some time, throughout the War of Independence, during his long period as a U.S. diplomat in the European courts, as the author of the Massachusetts state constitution, as a stern Federalist regarding the 1787 Constitution, as the Vice-President and as the second President of the United States, and eventually as a retired statesman. He continued corresponding on politics and philosophy with his friends and opponents till his death on the fiftieth anniversary of the United States, the same day Jefferson passed away.

In sum, Ryerson offers us an admirably detailed, clearly argued, and fully credible account of the developments of Adams's political thought and action throughout his life, although allotting only a few remarks to Adams's term as President (1797-1801). Ryerson is faithful to his subject in an even deeper sense, namely in approaching Adams's republicanism just as Adams did himself, with history first and theory only as a close second.

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Adam S. Miller, *The Gospel According to David Foster Wallace: Boredom and Addiction in and Age of Distraction*. London: Bloomsbury, 2016. 136 pages. ISBN: 978-1-4742-3697-3.

David Foster Wallace studies is a rapidly expanding field. To the numerous important volumes devoted to Wallace which have enriched the scholarly conversation both on his fictional and non-fictional work and to a formidably vivacious wallace-list (wallace-l@waste.org), some recent newcomers must be added: the newly founded International David Foster Wallace Society (www.dfwsociety.org), whose declared mission is "to promote and sustain the long-term independent study of David Foster Wallace's writing," the pre-announced launch of *The Journal of David Foster Wallace Studies* (peer reviewed), and, of course, the annual DFW Conference taking place in Normal, which is now organizing its 4th meeting at Illinois State University (June 8-10, 2017). In 2016 alone Bloomsbury published three volumes on Wallace (Clare Hayes-Brady's *The Unspeakable Failures of David Foster Wallace* and David Hering's *David Foster Wallace. Fiction and Form*), indirectly acknowledging the twentieth anniversary of the publication of Wallace's masterpiece, *Infinite Jest* and the lively debate surrounding his work along different critical slants.

Adam S. Miller's slim book presents itself as the least academic of the three with a very scant bibliography and a linguistic register that aims at being conversational. On the surface level, these features may be taken to be a clear indication that Wallace has progressively become a writer for everyone. And yet the surface of this book should not deceive, as *The Gospel According to David Foster Wallace* strives to illuminate the pulsating center of Wallace's endeavor as a writer engaged in coming to terms with the essence of our contemporary lives. Significantly belonging to the series *New Directions in Religion and Literature,* Miller's book addresses Wallace's take on our all too human impulse to worship and its inevitable failure. In the prefatory pages, Miller presents clearly this ineludible loop: we are intrinsically built to worship, we choose our idols and we end up being disappointed by the idols we have chosen. The transcendence we managed to get a glimpse of disappears and leaves us back where we started, if not in a worse position, given we have now experienced a searing, frustrating disappointment. Miller acknowledges that the typical form this problem has taken is Manichean: either this loop has been taken to mean that worship and consequently religion are pointless or that the only successful worship concerns (and cannot but concern) the one true God. *The Gospel According to David Foster Wallace* enters into this debate and proposes a third way that aims at solving it by undoing sterile non-sequiturs. Through thirty short chapters, Miller presents and articulates the contours of this third way, which views in failure and disappointment ingredients pertaining to the essence of religion: "this failure of transcendence [is] a feature (not a bug) of religion itself."

Quote after relevant quote excerpted mainly from *Infinite Jest*, the posthumous *The Pale King* and the essays "This is Water" and "E Unibus Pluram," this book successfully demonstrates that this third way is the Gospel according to David Foster Wallace – the Good News he has to offer to his readers, the key tenets of his "redemptive" proposal. The argumentative logic is incremental: the various sections that span obvious topics such as "Heads," "Maps," "Addiction," "Irony," "Distraction," "Masks," "Boredom," and "Epiphany," as well as less obvious ones such as "Contortions," "Deskwork," "Sewage," "Silence," and "Size," gradually compose a uni-

fied, mosaic-like, whole. The short chapters work evocatively, opening up windows on the key terms chosen – snapshots on the ways in which David Foster Wallace kept returning to our basically distorted ways of connecting to ourselves and to the world and hinting at solutions away from "apocalyptic completion" and into the depth of our embodied, ordinary, local lives.

The result is a redressing of the accusation of nihilism that circulates against Wallace. The Afterword addresses specifically that accusation, represented most notably by Hubert Dreyfus and Sean Dorrance Kelly in the chapter devoted to DFW in their book *All Things Shining: Reading the Western Classics to Find Meaning in a Secular Age*. The Afterword is the most academic part of Miller's book as it deconstructs detail after detail Dreyfus and Kelly's take on worshipping and transcendence in Wallace's overall writerly project. And yet what these final pages articulate is the synopsis of what the thirty sections had been building all along: "Wallace *is* an amazingly receptive writer. He did have a strong sense for sacred moments [...]. And he did resonate, sometimes painfully, with the most varied and incompatible phenomena that animate our contemporary world. But he didn't manage this despite being a nihilist. He managed it because he wasn't one."

What might be considered too light an approach to such an important topic – the relationship between immanence and transcendence, between our ordinary down-to-earth reality and the other-worldly realm of religion – turns out to mirror – cleverly – the "moment of inversion at the heart of worship" that reads transcendence and immanence as the two sides of the same coin. Miller succeeds in presenting philosophically complex matters in a simple way: here simplification is not synonymous with banality but with essentiality – an approach that might pave the way for non-experts (both in religion and in David Foster Wallace) to want to continue reading.

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Margaret Atwood, *The Burgess Shale. The Canadian Writing Landscape of the 1960s*. CLC Kreisel Lecture Series. Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 2017. 88 pages. ISBN: 978-1-77212-301-2.

Margaret Atwood's lecture is the tenth in the CLC Kreisel lecture series, which aims to foster better understanding of our complex world through the imaginative and transformative powers of literature. As Atwood is one of

the founders of Canadian literature in its present form, it is fitting that she should be given the honour of giving the tenth lecture in the series.

Atwood describes her lecture as "reminiscence, or rambling talk, or mixed bag of shards collected from the ruins of time"(3). This poetic beginning sets the tone for the entire lecture, which is filled with rich insights into the development of Canadian literature, its context and Atwood's own role as an icon. *The Canadian Writing Landscape of the 1960s* is about the past: the past of Canadian literature, the past of Atwood herself, and the past of Canadian readers of Canadian literature. Atwood begins by addressing the nature of writing, which depends to a significant extent "on what is being written at any given time"(7). She argues that "today's poets flower on a subsoil of their dead predecessors. We inherit more than we know" (10).

Why focus on the 1960s, one might ask? The "spaces" so necessary for writers were created in the 1960s, argues Atwood. These "spaces" included unions and private grant programmes and prizes, book tours and book festivals. Atwood remembers that at the very beginning of her writing career, there were still no grants from the Canada Council for the Arts and none that enabled writers to travel, give readings or meet other writers. Neither were there creative writing programmes in universities or high schools. She compares writers' situation at the time to that of a blank page that "cries out to be scribbled on. It fosters improvisation and invention, and the Canadian writers of the 1960s did a lot of improvising and inventing, because they had to"(20).

Atwood bases her lecture on the metaphor of the Burgess Shale, a geological formation in the Canadian Rocky Mountains that contains fossils of many strange and early life forms. She states:

> I have named my re-visitation of the Canadian writing landscape of the 1960s after it, perhaps whimsically: that period is already fossilized, in a manner of speaking, and it does contain many strange and weird life forms, different from but not unrelated to forms we see today (11).

Atwood explains that Canadian writers in the '60s wanted to be experimental, quirky, and non-commercial. Writing was not a career but a vocation. There were, she argues, three phases through which writing and culture in general passed during the 1960s-1970s: 1961 was the era of the small and the obscure; between 1966 and 1967, writing became more public through