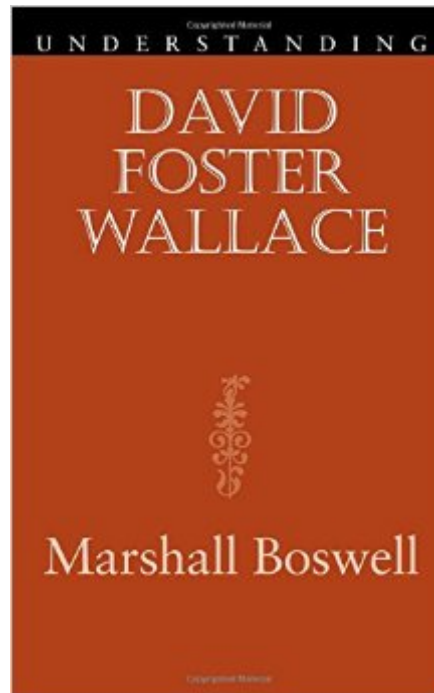


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Understanding David Foster Wallace (Understanding Contemporary American Literature)



Synopsis

Understanding David Foster Wallace guides readers through thoughtful examinations of Wallace's novels *The Broom of the System* and *Infinite Jest* and first two short story collections, *Girl with Curious Hair* and *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*. In his readings of these works, Marshall Boswell affirms that Wallace (1962-2008), in his fiction, compels our attention for the singular excellence of his work and his groundbreaking effort to chart a fruitful and affirmative new direction for literary fiction. In addition to providing self-contained readings of each text, Boswell places Wallace within a trajectory of literary innovation that begins with James Joyce and continues through John Barth and Thomas Pynchon. Boswell contends that in charting a new course for literary practice, Wallace did not seek merely to overturn postmodernism or simply to return to modernism. Instead he moved resolutely forward with his fiction hoisting the baggage of modernism and postmodernism heavily, but respectfully, on its back.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Though priced for flush university libraries rather than for skint individuals, this is an intelligent critique of DFW's work to date. Following an introduction, there are separate chapters on each of the 4 fiction books (the essays are discussed only in passing), illuminating the philosophical and aesthetic concerns of each book in a clear style with minimal academic jargon. Even longtime Wallace fans will find the book enlightening, and first-time readers couldn't hope for a better introduction to one of the most important American writers of our time. Highly recommended.

I just recently read "The Broom of the System", and found Boswell's book to be a very clear and cogent description of Wallace's style and meaning. He very understandably explicates the metafictional foundations and philosophical background of Wallace's approach to literature, and he made a lot of sense to me, grounding the work in the modernist and postmodernist literary traditions. I am about to read the chapter on "Infinite Jest", which I read a few years back, and I'm sure it will be very insightful. I learned a great deal from Boswell, not only about Wallace, but about reading, writing literature, and thinking in general. Thanks!

While reading this book, I had dreams that I was trying to teach high school kids the difference between Modernism and Post Modernism, but I kept getting interrupted by various administrators and other teachers. Then, class was over before I'd had a chance to explain anything. Hmm.

Zzzzz

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