Title of talk
The Examiner "turns a page": §25 of David Foster Wallace's *The Pale King*

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/Abstract: max 300 words/

David Foster Wallace once emphasized that "fiction's about what it is to be a fucking *human being*."[1] This conviction becomes most palpable in §25, one of the "more opaque sections"[2] of Wallace's *The Pale King*. In both form and content, the paragraph reveals a masterly condensation of the human in a dehumanized bureaucracy. While the phrase "X turns a page" is repeated about 100 times, representing the power of monotony and alienation, the reader also finds variation, rhythmic disruption and flashes of poetic insight that reveal the unassailability of human creativity and thus of human life. In addition, by experiencing formal elements that echo the narrative's meaning, the reader is almost put into the protagonists' position: she is obliged perplexedly to "turn pages" and work through a mass of seemingly incomprehensible linguistic data to look for the relevant information buried in there. "Sometimes what's important is dull. Sometimes it's work,"[3] Wallace tells us elsewhere - his §25 not only narrates, it also demonstrates this insight.

/ Literary extract: max 500 words/

Wallace, David Foster, *The Pale King* (New York a.o.p.: Little, Brown and Company), 211, pp. 312-15).

§25

(First 500 words)

'Irrelevant' Chris Fogle turns a page. Howard Cardwell turns a page. Ken Wax turns a page. Matt Redgate turns a page. 'Groovy' Bruce Channing attaches a form to a file. Ann Williams turns a page. Anand Singh turns two pages at once by mistake and turns one back which makes a slightly different sound. David Cusk turns a page. Sandra Pounder turns a page. Robert Atkins turns two separate pages of two separate files at the same time. Ken Wax turns a page. Lane Dean Jr. turns a page. Olive Borden turns a page. Chris Acquistipace turns a page. David Cusk turns a page. Rosellen Brown turns a page. Matt Redgate turns a page. R. Jarvis Brown turns a page. Ann Williams sniffs slightly and turns a page. Meredith Rand does something to a cuticle. 'Irrelevant' Chris Fogle turns a page. Ken Wax turns a page. Howard Cardwell turns a page. Kenneth 'Type of Thing' Hindle detaches a Memo 402-C(1) from a file. 'Second-Knuckle' Bob McKenzie looks up briefly while turning a page. David Cusk turns a page. A yawn proceeds across one Chalk's row by unconscious influence. Ryne Hobratschk turns a page. Latrice Theakston turns a page. Rotes Group Room 2 hushed and brightly lit,

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[1] den Dulk, Allard. "Boredom, Irony, and Anxiety: Wallace and the Kierkegaardian View of the Self." *David Foster Wallace and "The Long Thing."* Ed. Marshall Boswell. New York a. o. p.: Bloomsbury, 2014. 43-60. 43.
[2] Wouters, Conley. "'What Am I, a Machine?': Humans, Information, and Matters of Record in David Foster Wallace's *The Pale King*." *Studies in the Novel* 44.4 (2012): 447-63, esp. 461.
[3] Wallace, David Foster. *The Pale King*. New York: Little, Brown and Co, 2011. 138.

half a football field in length. Howard Cardwell shifts slightly in his chair and turns a page. Lane Dean Jr. traces his jaw's outline with his ring finger. Ed Shackleford turns a page. Elpidia Carter turns a page. Ken Wax attaches a Memo 20 to a file. Anand Singh turns a page. Jay Landauer and Ann Williams turn a page almost precisely in sync although they are in different rows and cannot see each other. Boris Kratz bobs with a slight Hassidic motion as he crosschecks a page with a column of figures. Ken Wax turns a page. Harriet Candelaria turns a page. Matt Redgate turns a page. Ambient room temperature 80° F. Sandra Pounder makes a minute adjustment to a file so that the page she is looking at is at a slightly different angle to her. 'Irrelevant' Chris Fogle turns a page. David Cusk turns a page. Each Tingle's two-tiered hemisphere of boxes. 'Groovy' Bruce Channing turns a page. Ken Wax turns a page. Six wigglers per Chalk, four Chalks per Team, six Teams per group. Latrice Theakston turns a page. Olive Borden turns a page. Plus administration and support. Bob Mc-Kenzie turns a page. Anand Singh turns a page and then almost instantly turns another page. Ken Wax turns a page. Chris 'The Maestro' Acquistipace turns a page. David Cusk turns a page. Harriet Candelaria turns a page. Boris Kratz turns a page. Robert Atkins turns two separate pages. Anand Singh turns a page. R. Jarvis Brown uncrosses his legs and turns a page. Latrice Theakston turns a page. The slow squeak of the cart boy's cart at the back of the room. Ken Wax places a file on top of the stack in the Cart-Out box to his upper right …