Wake-up artists: maximalist voice in the nonfiction of James Agee, Lester Bangs, and David Foster Wallace

Abstract
This report examines maximalist voice in the nonfiction work of James Agee, Lester Bangs, and David Foster Wallace. The term maximalist voice is meant to capture a set of authorial strategies for depicting a vast, complex American reality with an equally complex literary style, one that is simultaneously didactic, chaotic, and intimate. In particular, this report examines Agee’s Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, Bangs’s Psychotic Reactions and Carburator Dung, and Wallace’s Consider the Lobster. In using “voice” as an analytic lens, this report highlight those qualities of the three author’s nonfiction writing that draw upon the particular conventions of oral communication. It concludes by arguing for increased use of voice as a way to analyze literary writing.
David Foster Wallace wanted to know who had thought bringing him to Kenyon College to deliver its commencement address was a good idea. Meredith Farmer, an English and philosophy double major in the class of 2005, nervously claimed responsibility. "Go fuck yourself," Wallace told her. "Fuck you." Wallace asked Farmer how old she thought he was. At 43, he felt too young to speak at a graduation. His father would give a better address, he said. Farmer had only slept a few hours the night before her graduation.