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Dr. Hansen

WRI 1000

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The Wallace and the Candidate

Often times, the reexamination of a piece of writing can lead to the discovery of key concepts that went previously overlooked or the development of new ideas entirely. In my rereading of David Foster Wallace's essay "Up, Simba" my former interpretation of the essay has gone through a series of distinct revisions. The new sections "Substantially Further Behind the Scenes Than You're Apt to Want to Be" and "Who Even Cares Who Cares?" aid in my original statement that Wallace's main intention is to engage young voters in politics and address the misconception that all young Americans are apathetic and lazy. Also, it has become increasingly clear that Wallace is striving to illuminate McCain as the anticandidate of the election, highlighting that being profoundly different from his predecessors may win him the presidency. Lastly, it is important to note my change in perspective towards "Up, Simba" in that the bias Wallace writes in was most likely unintentional but should not go unnoticed. The perspective Wallace writes from serves as the means to relate to his audience to the bigger picture by asking readers to diverge from the norm of dismissing politics and encouraging us having a say as to what goes on in this country.

Moments throughout this essay strengthened the previous claim that McCain was vying for the youth vote. Considering that "the 1996 presidential election had the lowest Young Voter turnout in US history" (Wallace 160), McCain used his overwhelming online presence and

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hipster anticandidate status to persuade youth involvement. This theme is portrayed in Wallace's essay as well as a mean **to persuade the readers of *Rolling Stone* to drop their apathetic attitudes and invest time in following national politics.** A highlight of Wallace's journey on the Trail was

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McCain's visit to the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy. McCain uses this speech as not only an appeal to voters with shared ideals of right wing conservatism, but also as a way of appealing to the next generation of right wing conservatives. If McCain could succeed in gathering support behind his "100 percent conservative voting record on crime, punishment, firearms, and the war on drugs" (Wallace 172) while charming young minds, he could gain a foothold in the younger demographic and alter the perception of conservative voters. Wallace does not stop there in his attempt to illustrate the ways McCain was attracting the youth, and in turn attract the same population of readers to his essay, so he focuses McCain's past. "In school,

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McCain was a varsity jock and a hell-raiser whose talents for partying and getting laid are still spoken with in awe by former classmates" (Wallace 187). This goes to show that if the Senator's life is presently unrelatable then maybe his **former "cool guy" (Wallace 187) persona might be of interest.** As "Up, Sima" progresses, Wallace's intention of inviting young adults into the political conversation becomes convincingly clear.

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The major way that Wallace draws attention to McCain's call to young voters is through addressing his stance as an anticandidate, which is directly correlated to David Foster Wallace's stance as "NOT A POLITICAL JOURNALIST". By segregating themselves from others in their fields, both McCain and Wallace persuade people to engage in politics and to follow the lead of someone that stands apart from the pack. When Wallace mentions that the buses the McCain campaign uses are rented in each state they travel through, rather than bought outright, it shows that McCain allocates his money differently than other politicians. By not accepting "bundled" or

“soft” money either, McCain exemplifies a frugality in which many young Americans share, demonstrating an akin and essential similarity with the demographic. Later on in the essay Wallace toys with reverse psychology and prompts readers “So who wouldn’t yawn and turn away trade apathy and cynicism for the hurt of getting treated with contempt (Wallace 189) as he attempts to level with them about the common dislike of politics. In saying this, he preaches to the common behavior that young people will do exactly what they are told not to. If society latches onto the trend that following what’s happening in Washington is disinteresting, therefore eliminating the attention turned toward young voters, then maybe these same young minds will challenge that school of thought.

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Throughout this essay I was led to believe that this narrative was simply a conglomeration of facts, a stylized piece meant to inform readers of a popular magazine of the shortcomings of politics and how youth involvement could alter that. However, Wallace is no anomaly. Just as every writer has a specialized voice, their perspective comes with a particular bias. That being said, Wallace addresses McCain’s strengths more than his faults, his virtues over his vices, and his honest tendencies over those of his competition. Therefore McCain is portrayed as being exceptionally different than his predecessors even being “somewhat in the ballpark of a real human being” (Wallace 188). A “real human being” is exactly what America wants for a president, or what everyone wants to believe they want. Through interpreting Wallace’s essay, I have been trudging through what it means to write and enter into a conversation where the line between biased writing and unbiased writing becomes so blurred it ceases to exist. When indifference is held to the gold standard throughout the process of learning to write academically, it becomes second nature to retaliate on the writing of others and to deface it due to any trace of opinion. Wallace inadvertently advises readers of his essay to let personal

Commented [HT7]: What do you want readers to understand by this idea? Can you say more about the complexity of the idea of “a real human being”?

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background play a role in the formation of opinion and to appreciate the role bias plays in all aspects of writing and media.

This is a good draft. This paper makes some thoughtful observations about Wallace's stance as a writer as he reports on John McCain and McCain's campaign in "Up, Simba." The relationship between McCain as an "anticandidate" and Wallace as "NOT A POLITICAL JOURNALIST" offers a useful and important picture of how both attempt to spark some life and interest into politics by working outside the status quo. This paper argues that Wallace wants to inspire young voters to get politically active in the same way that McCain does, and yet I'm having a harder time reconciling Wallace's cynical tone with McCain's wish to inspire. Or, rather, I have questions about whether you see Wallace encouraging political enthusiasm or encouraging his readers to care, especially when he spends so much time explaining to them why they don't care and why politics are boring. Another way to think about this is to consider whether you see Wallace building toward a claim of policy (i.e., Readers should do X) or building toward a claim a value (i.e., Readers care about X), and then what weight he throws behind either of those claims. As you think about these questions, I'll encourage you to keep thinking deliberately about who your readers are, too. What will your they think about "Up, Simba" before reading this paper, and how do you want them to think differently about Wallace's essay after reading this?

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