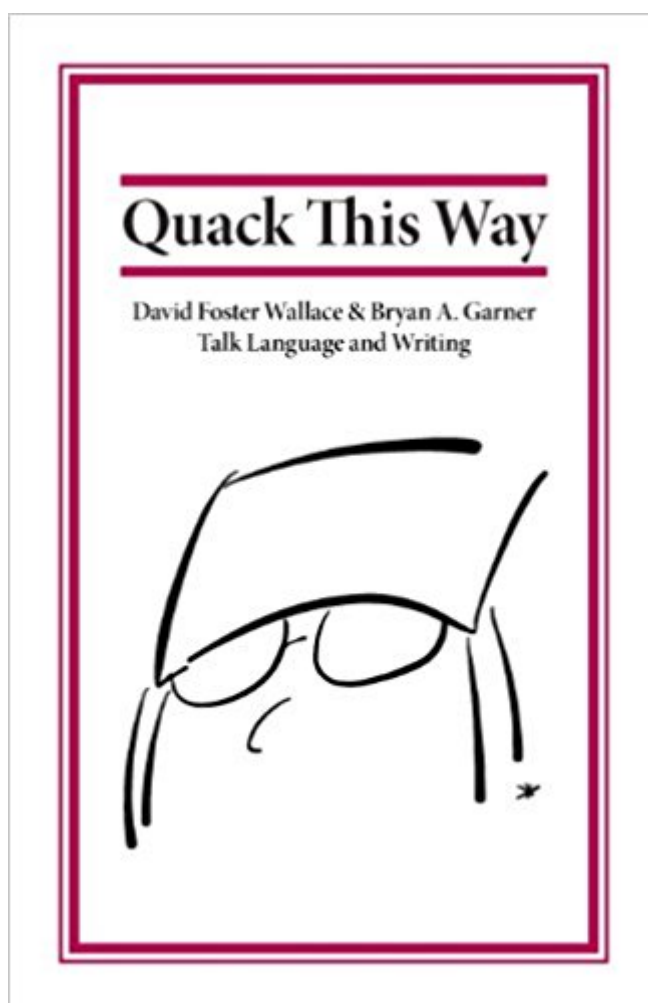


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# Quack This Way: David Foster Wallace & Bryan A. Garner Talk Language And Writing



## Synopsis

David Foster Wallace was at the center of late-20th-century American literature, Bryan A. Garner at that of legal scholarship and lexicography. It was language that drew them together. The wide-ranging interview reproduced here memorializes 67 minutes of their second and final evening together, in February 2006. It was DFW's last long interview, and the only one devoted exclusively to language and writing.

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## Customer Reviews

It was an accidental friendship if ever there was one. David Foster Wallace was at the center of late-20th-century American literature, Bryan A. Garner at that of legal scholarship and lexicography. It was language that drew them together, and it was DFW who reached out to BAG. It was DFW who penned "Authority and American Usage," the encomium to Garner's dictionary of American usage. The 95-page essay appeared first in *Harper's* in abridged form and in its full-length version in *Consider the Lobster*. It was an auspicious beginning for their friendship. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

This is a transcript of an interview between Bryan Garner and David Foster Wallace. The original interview lasted less than 90 minutes, and won't take you as long to read. But I've just completed my first read, and I've highlighted so many nuggets that I am certain I will want to go back and re-read this a few more times. The conversation between Garner and Wallace is riveting - revealing

as much about Wallace's thoughts on writing as it does his own peculiar personality. One of many gems I enjoyed: After commenting about how he used to laugh with his mother about the ridiculousness of the phrase "Save up to 50% and more!" in a local advertisement, Wallace notes that it is "possible that [the phrase] has been shown statistically to increase your ability to memorize the 50%. The point is not that this is okay. I think it's damaging to the language as a beautiful thing, and to interhuman communication, but I've stopped thinking that it's just idiots who weren't paying attention in eighth grade and don't know how to do this stuff." I am grateful that Garner has provided us with this wonderful interview. Complete with its heartfelt introduction, it is a great addition to Wallace's legacy. One can only hope Garner takes Wallace up on his suggestion to write Garner's Dictionary of Dialectal English Usage: "[A]dvertising English, bureaucratic English, corporate English, hipster English . . . because I will bet that just trying to figure out some of the codes and motives behind them would just be fascinating." If he does, there is no doubt about the book's dedication.

Quack This Way is an absolute delight! David Foster Wallace is one of my favorite authors, and what more can you say about Bryan Garner other than Usage Dictionary? Mr. Wallace goes deeply into the nuances of writing as well as the English language with Mr. Garner asking all the right questions. If you are a writer, this book is a must read. And even if you aren't, you'll end up learning so much about the English language that you'll wonder why this book isn't required reading in every school. I think there comes a point in every writer's career when they realize they either have to get serious about their work or move on to another occupation. If you've come to that point... if you are a serious author, you need serious books. Quack This Way is like Garner's Modern American Usage in that respect. Every serious author needs to own both these books, to study them, to soak up the information being offered.

You hear lots of advice on writing whenever you stick around universities as long as I have. But I find that this was a readable version of common writing wisdom. It's short enough to avoid too much BS, yet it's also insightful enough to recommend it to students and experts alike.

Interesting but not terrifically so, this is the story of a very limited relationship between the novelist David Foster Wallace and Bryan Garner, the author of the amazing "Garner's American Usage," one of the most valuable books (for me -- I'm a writer) I know of. They may have liked each other quite a bit, but in the two interviews that make up the book (Garner interviewing Wallace) they seem

much of the time to be talking past each other. On the other hand, this led me to "Garner's American Usage," the most valuable and readable book about American English I know of

The book arrived in good condition. As soon as I had a moment, I began perusing the first few pages, casually skimming the prose, as I am wont to do with new books. I couldn't stop reading once started, and finished the book in one sitting. It is a quick read, but what a gem! It's would be a great way to spend a Sunday morning with a pot of coffee.

This is a wonderful discussion between DFW and Bryan Garner about writing and especially about DFW's process. It's fascinating to read (and hear in your mind) how DFW thinks (not just what he thinks which we pretty much are aware of in the writings he has left us) but how he thinks. I would recommend this book, as well as Garner's Modern American Usage, to anyone interested in writing, or in DFW. It's a small book in size, but big in ideas.

Well written by excellent writers who share their own trials and tribulations with the art of expressing one's thoughts and ideas!

Thank you for a wonderful conversation between two of many spirits brimming with insight and Heart. We need more books like this and more humans like DFW ::

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