



A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again: Essays and Arguments

By David Foster Wallace

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In this exuberantly praised book - a collection of seven pieces on subjects ranging from television to tennis, from the Illinois State Fair to the films of David Lynch, from postmodern literary theory to the supposed fun of traveling aboard a Caribbean luxury cruiseliner - David Foster Wallace brings to nonfiction the same curiosity, hilarity, and exhilarating verbal facility that has delighted readers of his fiction, including the bestselling *Infinite Jest*.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

David Foster Wallace made quite a splash in 1996 with his massive novel, *Infinite Jest*. Now he's back with a collection of essays entitled *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again*. In addition to a razor-sharp writing style, Wallace has a mercurial mind that lights on many subjects. His seven essays travel from a state fair in Illinois to a cruise ship in the Caribbean, explore how television affects literature and what makes film auteur David Lynch tick, and deconstruct deconstructionism and find the intersection between tornadoes and tennis.

These eclectic interests are enhanced by an eye (and nose) for detail: "I have seen sucrose beaches and water a very bright blue. I have seen an all-red leisure suit with flared lapels. I have smelled what suntan lotion smells like spread over 21,000 pounds of hot flesh . . ." It's evident that Wallace revels in both the life of the mind and the peculiarities of his fellows; in *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again* he celebrates both.

From Publishers Weekly

Like the tennis champs who fascinate him, novelist Wallace (*Infinite Jest*; *The Broom of the System*) makes what he does look effortless and yet inspired. His instinct for the colloquial puts his masters Pynchon and DeLillo to shame, and the humane sobriety that he brings to his subjects-fictional or factual-should serve as a model to anyone writing cultural comment, whether it takes the form of stories or of essays like these. Readers of Wallace's fiction will take special interest in this collection: critics have already mined "Derivative Sport in Tornado Alley" (Wallace's memoir of his tennis-playing days) for the biographical sources of *Infinite Jest*. The witty, insightful essays on David Lynch and TV are a reminder of how thoroughly Wallace has internalized the writing-and thinking-habits of Stanley Cavell, the plain-language philosopher at Harvard, Wallace's alma mater. The reportage (on the Illinois State Fair, the Canadian Open and a Caribbean Cruise) is perhaps best described as post-gonzo: funny, slight and self-conscious without Norman Mailer's or Hunter Thompson's braggadocio. Only in the more academic essays, on Dostoyevski and the scholar H.L. Hix, does Wallace's gee-whiz modesty get in the way of his arguments. Still, even these have their moments: at the end of the Dostoyevski essay, Wallace blurts out that he wants "passionately serious ideological contemporary fiction [that is] also ingenious and radiantly transcendent fiction." From most writers, that would be hot air; from one as honest, subtle and ambitious as Wallace, it has the sound of a promise.

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From Library Journal

This collection of eight diverse articles, following on the heels of Foster's immense, popular novel, *Infinite Jest* (LJ 1/96), opens with "Derivative Sport in Tornado Alley," an autobiographical sketch that skillfully interweaves mathematics and tennis with the vicissitudes of Midwestern meteorology. A brilliant analysis of television's role in popular culture, a look at the Illinois State Fair, a review of filmmaker David Lynch, and a report on Wallace's week-long adventure on a luxury cruise are among the pieces that follow. Wallace's style is highly personal?some might say eccentric?but his writing is always intelligent, witty, and engaging.

Libraries serving discriminating readers will want this book in their collections..?William Gargan, Brooklyn Coll. Lib., CUNY

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Users Review

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