



Reading Style: A Life in Sentences

Jenny Davidson

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A professor, critic, and insatiable reader, Jenny Davidson investigates the passions that drive us to fall in love with certain sentences over others and the larger implications of our relationship with writing style. At once playful and serious, immersive and analytic, her memoir/critique shows how style elicits particular kinds of moral judgments and subjective preferences, which turn reading into a highly personal and political act.

Melding her experiences as reader and critic, Davidson opens new vistas onto works by Jane Austen, Henry James, Marcel Proust, and Thomas Pynchon; adds richer dimension to critiques of W. G. Sebald, Alan Hollinghurst, Thomas Bernhard, and Karl Ove Knausgaard; and allows for a sophisticated appreciation of popular fictions by Stephen King, Neil Gaiman, Lionel Shriver, George Pelecanos, and Helen DeWitt. She privileges diction, syntax, point of view, and structure over plot and character, identifying the intimate mechanics that draw us in to literature's sensual frameworks and move us to feel, identify, and relate. Davidson concludes with a reading list of her favorite titles so others can share in her literary adventures and get to know better the imprint of her own reading style.

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