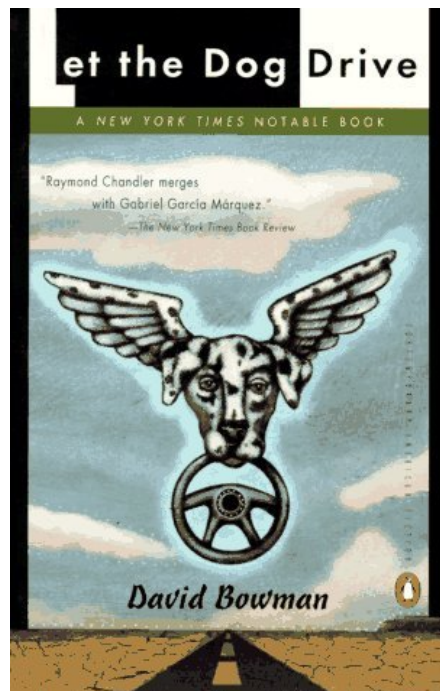




Let the Dog Drive

David Bowman

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It's 1976. Bud Salem, 18-years-old, is fleeing his mother's TV church and meets a woman pitching oranges in the Mojave. She's Sylvia Cushman, a 45 year-old housewife, who loves driving alone through the desert. They traverse through western motels and Apache gas stations where Sylvia gives long lectures about Emily Dickinson and drags Bud up into the mesas to search for petroglyphs. After continuing adventures in Detroit, New York, and Amherst, the travelers part... In many ways Let the Dog Drive is an askew detective novel - when a character dies under strange circumstances in Texas, Bud goes to the Panhandle to uncover what happened. His strange narration does contain pleasures of the genre: a shootout inside an aquarium; a faked death; another shootout on a chicken farm in Texas . . . But Let the Dog Drive is also a freewheeling merging of many other genres and concerns - Hollywood, hardboiled novels of the 1930's, Emily Dickinson's white dress, hallucinatory cacti, the Book of Luke... And dogs. Sylvia is married to an auto engineer in Detroit, and this man studies auto accidents by letting dogs drive the cars. Literally. The drivers are often Dalmatians . .

Let the Dog Drive Details

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From Reader Review Let the Dog Drive for online ebook

David says

Very odd, but compelling for the first half of the book relating the non-traditional relationship of a middle aged mother and a teenage hitch hiker. But as soon as one of the characters dies midway, the novel devolves into noire fiction replete with non-sequiters, unexplained coincidences and attempts to squeeze meaning via metaphor out of a nonsensical plot.

bookczuk says

I picked up this book for two reasons: the title, and because it made the *New York Times Notable Book* list. Besides, I always like a good love story, even May December (or maybe May-September) ones. It had moments of interest, and some of those chuckle out loud ones But my overall impression was that it was a little forced -- the author was trying too hard to be clever or offbeat. It just didn't work for me. That's not to say the writing wasn't good, just seemed a tad forced.

I think this is a "first book" of this author. I may keep an eye out for his later writings to see how he has developed his craft and talents.

Jennifer says

I picked this up randomly for free and wow! Amazing literature and story. One of my favorite books, it's stuck with me. So many literary references and puzzles mixed with a quirky and deeply moving story of two peoples lives.

Greg D'Avis says

For about 120 pages or so, I thought this was going to become an all-time favorite. Funny, hallucinatory, fast-paced, and vivid -- and Sylvia is one of the most memorable characters I've read recently. Then it goes off the rails, collapses under the weight of its own cleverness and tries to do way too much.

Karen says

I bought this book in 2002 because it won a prize for best first novel in 1992. It then sat on my bookshelf for another 11 years so in a way it probably isn't surprising that this seemed like an item from a literary fiction time capsule. It had many cultural references that made me think "oh, I haven't thought of that in years" and "few people born after 1960 would recognize that reference". It was a weird return to the 1990s perspective of being 18 in 1976 told in a mash-up of the great story-telling forces of the time: detective fiction, Hollywood, evangelical preachers and drug-fueled writers. For me, this book is locked into a specific time. Perhaps it's greater purpose was served in its creation. The key character chides the narrator several times to "write what you know". The author suffered a terrible brain injury after completing the manuscript,

completely losing his memory, including the memory of this work. It was by re-reading and by editing 'Let the Dog Drive' that he gradually regained his memory and his self.

Tracy says

Sigh. I think the only reason I finished this book is because although I didn't really like it, I was never bored! There were a few parts (maybe the equivalent of 5-10 pages) where I thought the author used some cool symbolism or made really intelligent points or had a really interesting and intellectual twist, but most of the time I kept asking myself why I was still reading it. I think the answer was that I was curious to know the point. To each his own I guess...

Marco Kaye says

Had to put this one down. Pun unfortunately intended. Had some flashes of linguistic brilliance, but I could not give one crap about its characters or where it was going.

Steve says

A very weird (often just for the sake of being so), post-modern, semi-detective story, novel within a novel. Mostly of value for its often humorous images and metaphors rather than for its plot, which meanders far too much to be worth following.

Sarah Smith says

Thank goodness for goodreads ... Now I know others have read this book and been left feeling something like I was ... confused, angry, sad. While I desperately wanted to talk to someone about it, I didn't want to share the disturbing imagery or the rather fantastic writing style in which he described those images. I can't quite say what this book was about. I can say that my life would not be less if I had not read it. It was disjointed and seemingly random in a ridiculously absurd way. Ultimately, the story makes me feel like ... the dog who wasn't there ... wasn't there at all.

Mary Kinietz says

Writer was born in Racine, Wisconsin which explains almost everything about this strange book.

Paul Secor says

A clever book - don't know whether it was meant to be so. There just wasn't anything there I could connect with.

Daniel Dolan says

So odd and fun. Great visuals. Lots of turns, some dark, always funny.

Anna says

This book was many things: dark, disjointed, graphic, and disturbing. But it was also very tender at times and had an extremely colorful cast of characters. I burned through this book in less than 24 hours. It left me feeling uneasy and sad, but I loved the style and pace of the book.

Channing says

This book has perhaps the strangest last couple of chapters of any book I've ever read. It starts out so normal--boy meets Emily Dickinson-obsessed woman twice his age throwing oranges while hitchhiking through the California desert--but after getting a bit bogged down in the middle, it just gets really weird. So weird that the narrator warns readers at the start of the penultimate chapter that they are about to descend into "the black stomach" of the book...

David Bowman is one seriously kick-ass writer, though. I first found out about him when I read "This Must Be The Place", his biography of Talking Heads, probably one of the best "rock biographies" ever written. The man has an amazing talent for turning incandescent, sardonic phrases page after page without ever coming off like a serious wanker.

I'm definitely going to read his other book, "Bunny Modern", but I think I need to take a short break first and clear my head.

Linda says

Well. I really don't know what to say about this book. It's surreal, freaky, and I can't even decide if I even liked it. I will leave it unrated. Well-written but has unresolved plot elements, and definitely too weird for my tastes.
