



Speedboat (NYRB Classics)

By Renata Adler

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Winner of the Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award.

When *Speedboat* burst on the scene in the late '70s it was like nothing readers had encountered before. It seemed to disregard the rules of the novel, but it wore its unconventionality with ease. Reading it was a pleasure of a new, unexpected kind. Above all, there was its voice, ambivalent, curious, wry, the voice of Jen Fain, a journalist negotiating the fraught landscape of contemporary urban America. Party guests, taxi drivers, brownstone dwellers, professors, journalists, presidents, and debutantes fill these dispatches from the world as Jen finds it.

A touchstone over the years for writers as different as David Foster Wallace and Elizabeth Hardwick, *Speedboat* returns to enthrall a new generation of readers.

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Speedboat (NYRB Classics) By Renata Adler Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Bookforum

Adler's novels concede the necessity of making fiction quicker, more terse, descriptively less elaborate than the traditional thing called a novel, not so much in deference to shrunken attention spans, but as the most plausible way of rendering the distracted, fragmentary quality of contemporary consciousness [...] They describe what it's like to be living now, during this span of time, in our particular country and our particular world. This is what the best novels have always done, and with any luck will continue to do. —Gary Indiana

Review

Renata Adler's first novel, 'Speedboat' ... is that kind of book. The kind you buy multiple copies of to push on friends, the kind you dog-ear and mark up until it could line a hamster cage. A talisman, a weapon, a touchstone. ... I don't press "The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge" or "Beyond Good and Evil" on people anymore. But that's the kind of book that kind of book is, burning in your thoughts, a grass fire, consuming the air. ... Right down to its final, just-right sentence, it's -- well, it will literally knock your socks off. Read it. - Michael Robbins, Chicago Tribune

Aftter years of being passed along to new readers like samizdat pamphlet. ... These are not works of realism--they have a dreamlike quality-- but they contain as much reality as a Balzac novel does. It's just that their reality is incantatory, sparse, periodically blazing. ... one of the more penetrating and oddly hypnotizing books I know; reading it is like being in a snowstorm. ...If all you get from "Speedboat" and "Pitch Dark" is a shudder of pleasure and self-recognition, you are probably not reading deeply enough. Welcome Back, Renata Adler. - MeghanO'Rourke, The New Yorker

I Was In Love and Then I wasn't, and sometime during the drifting gray interim I was told by a bookseller friend to read Renata Adler's 1976 debut, *Speedboat*, a novel that had long been out of print but was absolutely, he insisted, worth the trouble of the search. ... My friend was correct, as booksellers usually are; it was as though the novel had outstretched arms and I fell in - Anna Weiner, Paris Review

No Longer Gone: After 20 years, Renata Adler Is Back In Print ... Adler is--to tweak a line she used in a notoriously negative review of Pauline Kael's criticism--page by page, line by line, and without interruption, brilliant - Miranda Popkey, The New York Observer

Speedboat is dazzling ...line for line and sentence for sentence, it seems to me thrilling. ... observant, funny, urbane. ... What is it is a war novel. ... after all - a narrative like any other. It will or it won't "come out." The way it eventually does, in a chaos of spies and hostages, is satisfying, even if it isn't optimistic. ... - Matthew Spektor, *The Believer*.

"Ms. Adler's writing has turned out to be prescient and quietly influential, and her debut novel cast a long shadow on what I consider to be the strongest works of fiction published this year. *Speedboat* does not prescribe to any novelistic convention—namely, plot (linear or not, it does not have one to speak of)—and yet it distills the novel to its most basic necessities. It is a series of disjointed paragraphs, each a kind of novel in itself, in which every sentence has the urgency of a mortal wound." —Michael Miller, *The New York Observer*

“...Renata Adler’s ahead-of-its-time novel *Speedboat* has gone from cult favorite to undisputed classic.”

—*The Fiction Advocate*

“This novel is a semi-plotless investigation of contemporary life, both actual and intellectual, in which every sentence gleams and winks and lifts boulders. It is vital and dazzling and will never, never go out of style.”

—*Flavorwire*

“Written before the ubiquity of writing workshops and the polished sameness that hovers over most of the polite novels published these days, these two books are triumphs now. They are evidence of what happens when messy life meets clean white page in exquisite prose and should be lingered over, not digested in gulps just to get to THE END.” —*A.V. Club*

“Told by Jen Fain, a journalist, *Speedboat* is a fragmentary and frequently hilarious novel about what it was to be an urban American in the 1970s. Here we have a narrator whose “I” looks out, not in. Fain describes her friends and work so keenly that at times she is almost effaced from her own narrative. In the space opened up by this near absence, Adler achieves a prose that, despite the odd bum note, sounds disaffected and despondent and charismatic all at once. ‘There doesn’t seem to be a spirit of the times,’ says Fain. But in Adler we sense the very crystallisation of one.” —*The Irish Times*

“She is one of the most brilliant—that is, vivid, intense, astute, and penetrating—essayists in contemporary letters, and most contrarian: much of what you think she will passionately undo. And she is a novelist whose voice, even decades after her books were written, seems new and original, and, if you are a writer, one you wish were your own.” —Michael Wolff, *The Guardian*

“I think *Speedboat* will find a new generation of dazzled readers.” —Katie Roiphe, *Slate*

“*Speedboat* is as vital a document of the last half of the American century as *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* and *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Right down to its final, just-right sentence, it’s—well, it will literally knock your socks off.” —Michael Robbins, *Chicago Tribune*

“*Speedboat* captivates by its jagged and frenetic changes of pitch and tone and voice. Adler confides, reflects, tells a story, aphorizes, undercuts the aphorism, then undercuts that. Ideas, experiences, and emotions are inseparable. I don’t know what she’ll say next. She tantalizes by being simultaneously daring and elusive.” —David Shields, *Reality Hunger*

“Nobody writes better prose than Renata Adler.” —John Leonard, *Vanity Fair*

“A brilliant series of glimpses into the special oddities and new terrors of contemporary life—abrupt, painful, and altogether splendid.” —Donald Barthelme

“When *Speedboat* burst on the scene in the late ‘70s it was like nothing readers had encountered before. It seemed to disregard the rules of the novel, but it wore its unconventionality with ease. Reading it was a pleasure of a new, unexpected kind. Above all, there was its voice, ambivalent, curious, wry.... A touchstone over the years for writers.” —*Bookforum* for *The Oyster Review*

About the Author

Renata Adler was born in Milan and raised in Connecticut. She received a B.A. from Bryn Mawr, an M.A. from Harvard, a D.d’E.S. from the Sorbonne, a J.D. from Yale Law School, and an LL.D. (honorary) from Georgetown. Adler became a staff writer at *The New Yorker* in 1963 and, except for a year as the chief film critic of *The New York Times*, remained at *The New Yorker* for the next four decades. Her books include *A*

Year in the Dark (1969); *Toward a Radical Middle* (1970); *Reckless Disregard: Westmoreland v. CBS et al., Sharon v. Time* (1986); *Canaries in the Mineshaft* (2001); *Gone: The Last Days of The New Yorker* (1999); *Irreparable Harm: The U.S. Supreme Court and The Decision That Made George W. Bush President* (2004); and the novels *Speedboat* (1976; winner of the Ernest Hemingway Award for Best First Novel) and *Pitch Dark* (1983).

Guy Trebay reports on culture for *The New York Times*. He was previously a columnist for *The Village Voice* and has written for *The New Yorker*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, *Travel and Leisure*, *Harper's*, *Esquire*, *Grand Street*, and other major publications. His work, twice honored with the Meyer Berger Award, presented by the Columbia University School of Journalism, has received numerous other awards, been widely anthologized, and was collected in *In The Place to Be: Guy Trebay's New York*.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Linda Carroll:

Have you spare time for just a day? What do you do when you have more or little spare time? Yes, you can choose the suitable activity regarding spend your time. Any person spent their spare time to take a walk, shopping, or went to the Mall. How about open as well as read a book titled *Speedboat* (NYRB Classics)? Maybe it is to become best activity for you. You already know beside you can spend your time along with your favorite's book, you can wiser than before. Do you agree with their opinion or you have different opinion?

Jennifer Wadsworth:

The book *Speedboat* (NYRB Classics) can give more knowledge and information about everything you want. Exactly why must we leave the great thing like a book *Speedboat* (NYRB Classics)? A few of you have a different opinion about guide. But one aim that will book can give many information for us. It is absolutely right. Right now, try to closer with the book. Knowledge or information that you take for that, you could give for each other; you can share all of these. Book *Speedboat* (NYRB Classics) has simple shape but you know: it has great and massive function for you. You can search the enormous world by wide open and read a reserve. So it is very wonderful.

Betty Neal:

The experience that you get from *Speedboat* (NYRB Classics) will be the more deep you excavating the information that hide in the words the more you get thinking about reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to understand but *Speedboat* (NYRB Classics) giving you joy feeling of reading. The article author conveys their point in selected way that can be understood through anyone who read it because the author of this publication is well-known enough. This book also makes your current vocabulary increase well. Making it easy to understand then can go along with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We highly recommend you for having that *Speedboat* (NYRB Classics) instantly.

Kim Free:

The guide untitled Speedboat (NYRB Classics) is the e-book that recommended to you you just read. You can see the quality of the reserve content that will be shown to an individual. The language that writer use to explained their way of doing something is easily to understand. The article writer was did a lot of analysis when write the book, and so the information that they share to you personally is absolutely accurate. You also could possibly get the e-book of Speedboat (NYRB Classics) from the publisher to make you much more enjoy free time.

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