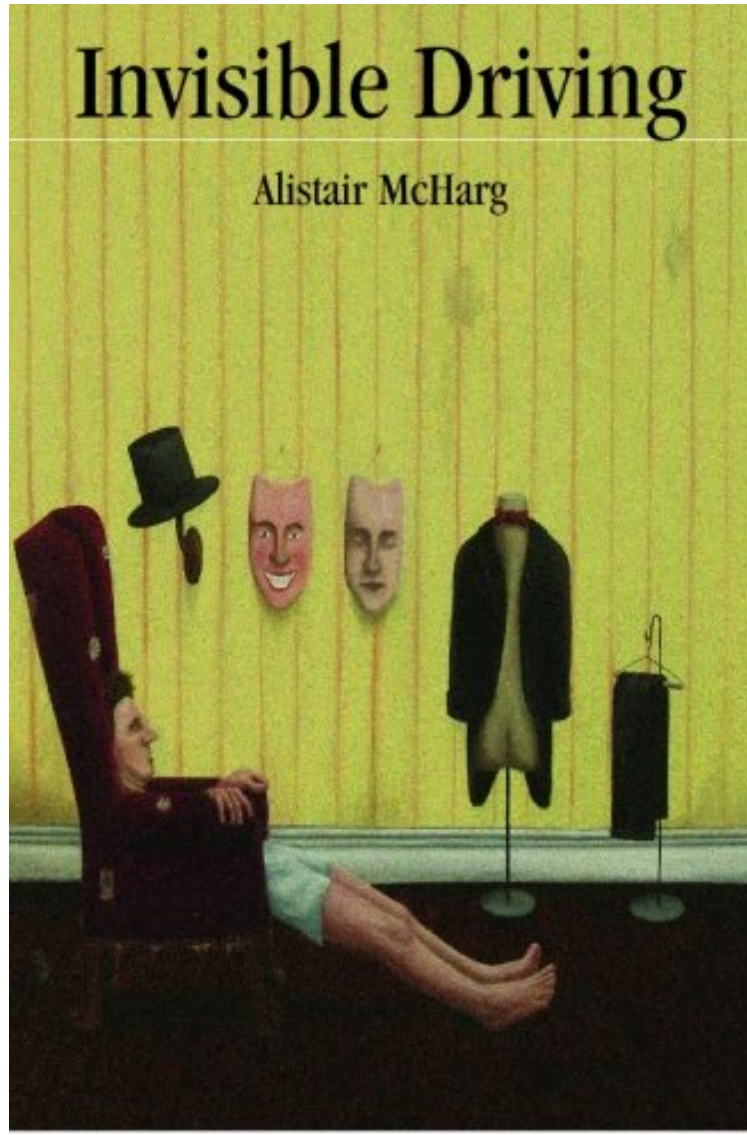


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Invisible Driving

Alistair McHarg

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Alistair McHarg : Invisible Driving before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Invisible Driving:

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Brilliantly written and a fascinating ride!!!By Ellen Stockdale Wolfe "Invisible Driving" is a personal memoir that reads like fiction, seducing the reader with gripping drama, humor, anguish, love, sex, drugs and a jazzy rendition of mental illness. But don't let that fool you. Alistair McHarg's book is a major contribution to the memoir genre in general, and to writing on mental illness, in particular. The book opens with

humor that made me laugh aloud (books never do that for me) and it ends with a sublimely peaceful trip to the middle road of sanity-- an amazing accomplishment after the roller coaster ride he takes you on throughout the book. This is one of the most powerful mental illness memoirs I have ever read, and I have read many because I have written one myself. Alistair McHarg's memoir is on such a lofty level of creativity, description and sheer writing ability that it leaves memoirs by Kay Jamison, John McManamy and William Styron on dusty shelves below his. Not one of them comes close to his portrayal of Bipolar Disorder. McHarg's writing is very well-crafted. He is a master of metaphor and comparisons. His descriptions are so vivid as to stop you dead in your tracks to admire the writing itself, despite the desire to race ahead because the story is so riveting, one can't wait to find out what will happen next. (I had to read the book through once for the story and then go back to admire the writing.) He paints a visual picture, complete with sound track, and, indeed, this memoir could make a memorable film. The words he comes up with that have no established meaning but are mood-activated, punctuate the narrative with pizzazz and are never tiresome. The humor is a cross between Robin Williams and the Marx Brothers but is delivered with the auspicious feeling of a mind racing out of control with breathtaking speed. That is how the book starts out. It quickly proceeds to the seriousness of it all. The juxtaposition of comedy and tragedy is extremely effective. The descriptions are spot-on. My all-time favorite is his description of mental hospital inmates as "aristocrats of the soul." McHarg is a poet at heart and the heart of this story comes out as poetry. McHarg tells you what it is really like to think as someone with Bipolar Disorder. He shares his thoughts and motives with a generous honesty that is stunning and a clarity that is crystal clear. I can avow to the accuracy of this portrayal because I am Bipolar myself. But this book is not just for people "on the back of the bus," as McHarg describes the mentally ill in one of his postings on his blog. This memoir is for everyone! The drama has mass appeal as all good drama does. It is a page-turner, make no mistake about it. And I would venture to say should be required reading for all brands of therapists. Particularly poignant is the role his love for his daughter plays in this book, and, in his life. We, and I mean by "we" in this context, those of us with mental illness, need an added incentive to work towards in our journey to sanity. For me, it was to find real love. For McHarg, it was to be there for his daughter who, from the very beginning shows a love for her father that is totally touching, as is his for her. And that is what it is all about in the end, for all of us, mentally ill or not. We all have our journeys but some are more treacherous than others. "Invisible Driving" offers a message of hope to the road-weary traveler. Take his tour. It will not disappoint!

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A brilliant and funny book! By Customer I laughed so hard at this amazing book. I finished it in two days. For anyone who has suffered from mental illness this is a must read. McHard's description of Philly's posh hotels, the bars, Wannamakers, Claire's bohemian house in West Philly, the homeless, etc. are so genuine you feel like you are there with him. I'm from Philly and could relate to his drives alone around the City of Brotherly love. If you are a fan of Henry Miller, please add this book to your list of books to read.

20 of 24 people found the following review helpful. ...there and back, and much improved by the journey By A. Stiber Reading Invisible Driving, as I now have several times, I can't help wondering what sort of cab driver Alistair McHarg would be, and I don't guess I'd want to find out (though I'm sure it would be amusing). But I'll say this: he's unparalleled as a tour guide through the mess one's mind can become when the science experiment we call the brain goes just a little off spec. I read much of this book in horror. And much of it in fits of laughter. And much of it in mute admiration at the courage McHarg must have had to summon to recall, and relive in order to recreate and confront the prolonged misery of the manic depressive rollercoaster ride. Sometimes, I felt all those at once. It's been my blessing as well as, I suppose, my curse to have had as close friends many brilliant, creative, but ultimately self-destructive people. And I've lost too many of them far too soon. That McHarg has been able to survive is in itself one of his great personal triumphs. That we readers can become the lucky beneficiaries of his wonderfully told story is a triumph we can proudly share with him. Others will make the inevitable comparisons to help you relate to what you may be in store for when you read Invisible Driving. Yes, it's got the all of the elements of suspense and character and story and insight and humor that we prize in our entertainment. All of which is to say, it's a good read--no it's better than that, lifted by a skill in narration and a fluency in language that puts McHarg in the company of Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett. But this book was destined for greatness the day he decided to peel himself up off the ocean floor and write it. In a literary sea swimming with too many opportunistic and ravenous sharks, this book is a beacon, flashing madly, but reliably, to help us find our way back through the mind's storms and, at last, to safe harbor. On my wish list before it was even written, it is among the most optimistic works of literature and memoir that I have ever read.

INVISIBLE DRIVING is a bipolar memoir that reads with the urgency and literary excitement of a novel. This unprecedented work delivers an inside view of a major manic episode, from initial euphoria all the way through to the devastating crash. Readers witness this frightening and fascinating mental illness from front-row seats and watch as hilarity, pain, joy, unbridled creativity, and rage swirl together until they are almost indistinguishable from one another. Because the narrator is a prisoner of his mania, unwittingly self-disclosing, all elements of the illness are exposed. Interspersed throughout the narrative are brief chapters written in the voice of the author himself, fully recovered and coping with his illness effectively. These chapters offer a larger context for the action and provide background informing it. The author describes what it is like to survive, manage, and ultimately triumph over this

devastating disability. He also provides an unsentimental look at his life and the forces that shaped his emotional architecture. This is crucial since bipolar disorder is an illness where psychology, biology, and external events all play equally important roles. Above all else, INVISIBLE DRIVING is rip-roaring read. The manic narrator, who lacks any self-governing ability, has been transformed into an entertainment factory. While the forces driving his behavior may be dark, the action and language blaze with a delirious intensity and outrageousness so otherworldly that readers simply must find out what happens next. INVISIBLE DRIVING is not a "how to" book, a coolly detached autobiography, or a manual for defeating bipolar disorder. It is an adventure story in which the protagonist lives his worst nightmare, is reduced to cinders, and emerges with a newfound strength, self-assurance, and happiness.

"Reading Invisible Driving, as I now have several times, I can't help wondering what sort of cab driver Alistair McHarg would be, and I don't guess I'd want to find out (though I'm sure it would be amusing). But I'll say this: he's unparalleled as a tour guide through the mess one's mind can become when the science experiment we call the brain goes just a little off spec. I read much of this book in horror. And much of it in fits of laughter. And much of it in mute admiration at the courage McHarg must have had to summon to recall, and relive in order to recreate and confront the prolonged misery of the manic depressive rollercoaster ride. Sometimes, I felt all those at once. It's been my blessing as well as, I suppose, my curse to have had as close friends many brilliant, creative, but ultimately self-destructive people. And I've lost too many of them far too soon. That McHarg has been able to survive is in itself one of his great personal triumphs. That we readers can become the lucky beneficiaries of his wonderfully told story is a triumph we can proudly share with him. Others will make the inevitable comparisons to help you relate to what you may be in store for when you read Invisible Driving. Yes, it's got the all of the elements of suspense and character and story and insight and humor that we prize in our entertainment. All of which is to say, it's a good read--no it's better than that, lifted by a skill in narration and a fluency in language that puts McHarg in the company of Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett. But this book was destined for greatness the day he decided to peel himself up off the ocean floor and write it. In a literary sea swimming with too many opportunistic and ravenous sharks, this book is a beacon, flashing madly, but reliably, to help us find our way back through the mind's storms and, at last, to safe harbor. On my wish list before it was even written, it is among the most optimistic works of literature and memoir that I have ever read." A. Stiber "For those afflicted with bipolar disorder, for those suffering along with them (or because of them), for anyone wanting to help them, professionally or personally, this is the book for you! A dizzying account of the roller coaster ride of manic depression, the book is written like the rises and falls of the disorder itself. It is all at once a brilliant spotlight that exposes the manic thinking, rationalizations, and erratic behavior that is bipolar disorder, as well as a thoughtful retrospective of the disease by a survivor in recovery. At the same time exhilarating, terrifying, and entertaining, McHarg is, above all, a writer, with a poet's sensibilities, using metaphor, symbolism, and playful twists of language to convey a depth of understanding rarely seen and a depth of description rarely achieved. The result is that the reader not only lives the experience of McHarg in the throes of his illness, but also arrives at an almost clinical understanding of the illness, its impact on life decisions and relationships, and the long road back through recovery. McHarg exposes, with courage, humor, and masterful language, the naked and hungry ego of mania, the terrifying yawn of depression that lies underneath, and the bitter sweet taste of recovery and redemption. Along with Vonnegut's Eden Express, Invisible Driving should be required reading in Medical Schools and Clinical Psychology Programs." F. Baird "I can't tell you how much I enjoyed Invisible Driving. It is brilliantly written, the story of the incredible journey of someone in the midst of an amazing ongoing self destructive manic episode. It is an audition for sanity through grandiose eyes that leads you through an extraordinary voyage. It is hilariously funny, while tragically frightening. McHarg masterfully lays open his soul to provide the details of this misunderstood illness through to his recovery. As a fellow traveler in this curse of a disease I truly appreciate McHarg's generous insight that makes this a must read, you will not be able to put it down!" P. Blanshard