

Everything is a form of longing if you say it is. Nothing that is indignant is very ugly. Nothing that is not consumed exists for very long. T.S. Eliot said that. A friend of mine who likes to rip me off is an auto mechanic who was trained to repair Jaguars and Mercedes Benzes. They are the only cars he knows how to fix, and he has set up a shop called Foreign Motors in an old gas station where he works on cars, listens to Van Halen, and sleeps and lives as well. When my father passed away in 1989, I inherited my father's favorite car, a brown 1978 Mercedes SE. I had just moved to Charlottesville, Virginia, where I had been hired to teach literature. By the time I got the car, it leaked whenever I drove in the rain, and the floor absorbed all sorts of water from the road because the undercarriage was rusted out. I hardly ever drove the car because I always thought that it would rain, but for some reason I could never bring myself to sell it. And in that way I was never allowed to think about driving at all or experience my feelings of driving while I was driving but only after I came home or when I was no longer driving, which was the more relaxing part of driving anyway. Reading like consumption should be very fast and very hypnotic and very wasteful of the actual time of reading so that one doesn't really know what one is reading or consuming or throwing away at the moment one is throwing it away. I never knew why my father loved that car or why I kept it for so long. One should never know one is reading a book when one is reading it.

