

The best way to read a book like a building is to read it over and over again. The mechanical is a system of gradual connections between dependent terms. D&G said that. Reading should be no different. Nothing is not substitutable with something else. All templates exist simultaneously, thus making the history of a book a static diagram with its own uniform past and predicted future. Roland Barthes was wrong. Like a grocery list or an anecdote, the interior of a book can be read innumerable times without damaging the contents. Things that are obvious are the most obtuse. Things that are lacking in details are the most languorous. The more generic a book is, the more consumable and lugubrious are its diagrams.

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Like an index of meaningful moments (constraints = affects)

, [desire is about waiting for nothing]. Cookbooks are the most empty diagrams of our lives. Reading a cookbook is an exercise in extreme loneliness. [I remember when] I first moved to New York to work for Viking Penguin as a poetry slush reader in 1979. I was 22 and had just graduated from college. I first lived in Riverdale on the couch of a college friend's sister, who was an editor at *Newsweek*, and her husband, who was a college physics professor and was about to run for a Congressional seat in New Jersey. Because all of us were always at work, I hardly saw them during my stay though I think we once all went on a picnic in Central Park to hear Pavarotti. They never said a word about how my apartment search was going. Because I was young, I really did not know how long not to stay and so it took 2 months for me to excuse myself to a series of cheap hotels, first the George Washington on 23rd Street and later the Pickwick Arms Hotel on 51st Street, where I settled in for 6 months. My room did not have a kitchen but it did have a sink, for which I was grateful. This sink enabled me to keep my milk and yogurt iced for the night and to eat breakfast in the morning on my way out the door. Because there was no kitchen in my room, I usually ate dinner at Blimpies or a Greek coffee shop on the corner of 2nd Avenue and 51st Street and then came back to a hotel whose lobby and carpeted corridors were populated by bag ladies. Everything that I think about New York, the ease and difficulty and anonymity of its foods and its forms of shelter, led me to think how the city's intellectual and literary life, which I dreamed of, must also be anonymous and non-specialized, a blank form for all those things that I did not yet know. And in that way everything that I wanted for myself was already formed and routinized in that short 7-month period and would become something entirely different after that year. How many times can one change and still remain exactly who one was? I have never gone back to see whether the cheap hotel or the Greek coffee shop still stands on 51st Street and Second Avenue. What does it mean to no longer desire something like a Greek coffee shop? People fall in love with anecdotes all the time. Life is non-specialized or it ceases to exist.

