

READER GUIDE: JONAH CAMPBELL'S EATEN BACK TO LIFE

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Hello readers!

Thanks so much for choosing to read *Eaten Back to Life*, and still more for deciding to do so in some kind of group setting! I've never been in a book club or, for that matter, taken anything above an English 101 literature course, so I've little idea how these things are supposed to go.

If I can make one, possibly annoying, suggestion, it is this: follow the footnotes (endnotes, technically). So much meaning and so much potential resides in the asides, the references and allusions, and that which must remain unsaid or incompletely articulated in order for the main text to get on with its business. For all its decadent self-absorption, *Eaten Back to Life* is very much a text that points outside of itself, and each reference is an off-ramp, or perhaps a trash-strewn country road. I can't tell you how many of these essays would not exist had I not followed some such citation or strange-sounding allusion in another text.

Does your book club like additional work? Voluntary assignments? Why not have each reader select a reference to follow up on, that they then bring back to the group with their own impressions. You need not even make sure people don't pick the same ones, because surely they'll come away with different impressions. Watch *The Fly* or Renoir's *La Règle du jeu!* Pick up some M. F. K. Fisher or muddle your way through the "new materialism" of Bruno Latour, blind-taste some weird chips, invent a cocktail with a portentous name! Buy yourself a drink, for God's sake!

Which brings me to my second suggestion: bring snacks! Meet over dinner, bring a bottle of wine to the park, if at all possible try something new, together. Get buzzed, argue with the book, or use the book to argue – respectfully if energetically – with one another. André Simon famously said that food without wine is a corpse, wine without food a ghost, and I'm going to go ahead and say that this book might as well be ashes without either of them.

So I hope you enjoy it!

Best,
Jonah Campbell