



# I Remember

*Georges Perec*

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Georges Perec

## **I Remember** Georges Perec

At once an affectionate portrait of mid-century Paris and a daring pointillist autobiography, Georges Perec's *I Remember* is the last of this essential writer's major works to be translated into English.

Consisting of 480 numbered statements, all beginning identically with *I remember*, and all limited to pieces of public knowledge (brand names and folk wisdom, actors and illnesses, places and things ( *I remember: When parents drink, children tinkle ; I remember Hermès handbags, with their tiny padlocks ; I remember myxomatosis* ) the book represents a secret key to the world of Perec's fiction.

As critic, translator, and Perec biographer David Bellos notes in his introduction to this edition, since its original publication, it's hardly possible to utter the words *je me souviens* in French these days without committing a literary allusion. As playful and puzzling as the best of Perec's novels, *I Remember* began as a simple writing exercise, and grew into an expansive, exhilarating work of art: the image of one unmistakable and irreplaceable life, shaped from the material of our collective past. For this edition, Perec's 480 memories, sometimes obvious, sometimes obscure, have been elucidated and explained by David Bellos.

This book is manifestly autobiographical and also obeys a rigid (but not difficult) formal constraint. It is also one of the oddest works of literature ever written. Published in 1978 shortly after Perec's masterpiece, *Life A User's Manual*, won the Médicis Prize, *I Remember* is not a play, a poem, or a novel, and it's not a memoir in the ordinary sense either.

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