How Should I Read a Book?
A Pitts Weekly Workshop

Bo Adams
Head of Public Services
Pitts Theology Library
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Strategies For Reading a Book Without Reading It

• Few Books are Written to Be Read
• Many Books are Really Bad
• (But Some Books are Really Good…)
• You Need Books for Different Reasons
Strategies For Reading a Book
Without Reading It

• Search in Library Catalogs
  • http://pitts.emory.edu (and others!)
• Pay Attention to Subject Headings
• Shelf Browse! (even if virtually…)

• Learn about the Author
  • Other Publications? (Not Just Books)
  • Appointment?

• Who Else is Reading It?
  • WorldCat.org
  • Barnes and Noble on Shelf?
  • Google Scholar
  • Syllabi?
Reading a Book Without Reading It
An Example

‘There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.’

A Radical Jew
PAUL AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY
DANIEL BOYARIN
Strategies For Reading a Book Without Reading It

• Book Reviews are a Must
• Databases@Emory
  • ATLA Religion Database, JSTOR, etc.
• Online Publications
  • Marginalia, Review of Biblical Literature, etc.
• Publisher’s Website
• Subject-Specific Publications
  • NT Abstracts, OT Abstracts
• Crowdsourced Reviews
  • GoodReads, Amazon, Google, etc.
Reading a Book Without Reading It
An Example

THE TRINITARIAN FAITH
T. F. TORRANCE
Reading a Book Without Reading It
An Example

Changing our textual minds
Towards a digital order of knowledge
ADRIAAN VAN DER WEEL
Strategies For Reading a Book By Sort of Reading It

• The Layout of the Book
  • Are there footnotes/bibliography/indices? Is the front matter important? Language?

• The Title and Table of Contents
  • Do chapters build or do they stand on their own? Which chapters are essential?

• The Introduction and Conclusion
  • Is an envelope in place? Why was it written?
  • What does this book change? Whom else should I read?

• Dip into Each Chapter
  • Be consistent, but be flexible
Reading the Layout of a Book
An Example
Reading the Layout of a Book
An Example

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Reading the Layout of a Book
An Example

Central to this ideology is a future when all people, from the least to the greatest, will know YHWH. This knowledge, however, does not necessarily require social equality. The least and the greatest, the prince and the pauper, will presumably still be represented in the land, but no longer “greedy for unjust gain” (Jer. 6:13). Those who return to possess the land are not only the elite in exile; the great company returning “to their own country” (31:17) will also include the blind and the lame, the young and the old (31:7,17). They will all have a right to enjoy the fertility of the new land. Just who will have a right to own land in the new order is not specified. Nor is there any consideration of what has happened to the family lands while the elite were in exile.

The principle enunciated earlier in the book of Jeremiah still stands: knowledge of YHWH, rather than wealth or riches associated with the royal estate, counts before God (Jer. 9:22-23). And that knowledge of YHWH to be evident in the justice and righteousness in the land. Royalty as it had been known had to be terminated and a new order initiated. If there were to be leaders in the future, they would feed their people on the very knowledge of YHWH that the people themselves possessed (3:15).

In the ideology of the book of Jeremiah, the concept of the just monarch that was so freely abused under the royal ideology of the Israelite monarchs is redeemed. After condemning the monarchs of Judah for exploitation of the people, the poor, and the land (e.g., Jer. 22:11—23:14), YHWH promises to be the shepherd and raise up a new Davidic line to “execute justice and righteousness in the land” (23:5). The land will again experience that justice for the alien, the orphan, the poor, and the innocent, which guarantees peace, prosperity, and parity (cf. 29:5). The land will experience a reversal of those injustices that once defined YHWH’s personal plot.

Crucial to any future for Israel is the need to experience landlessness again, to die to the land. Before YHWH invests the people with new hearts and new knowledge, they must lose the most precious possession they ever had, YHWH’s own plot of land. It is precisely these people who are taken into exile and lose their land whom YHWH “regards as good figs” (Jer. 24:5; author’s translation). YHWH’s action is not based on their intrinsic goodness, their remarkable change of heart, or their potential as the “outcasts” of the community, but on YHWH’s grace. YHWH chooses them, YHWH gives them a heart “to know” their God, and plants them again in YHWH’s own neḥalah. Without death from land loss, there is no new beginning in the land.

Ultimately the ideology of the book of Jeremiah does not offer a substitute for the totally new social order, but presents images hinting at the restoration of an idealized past order where everyone will know YHWH personally as they once did when Israel was first a bride (Jer. 2:2). In that society YHWH, as the source of fertility, will bring glorious prosperity to all the people (31:10-14). “Their life shall become like a watered garden” (31:12) and even the once derided priests will enjoy “their fill of fats” (31:14). The vision is one of a new age when YHWH as the landowner will celebrate the fertility of YHWH’s neḥalah with one and all. The restored symbiotic bond among YHWH, people, and land will mean economic prosperity and social justice.

SUMMARY

An intimate bond exists between YHWH, Israel, and the land, a bond that might be characterized as symbiotic. YHWH is bound to both land and people. The land seems to be personified as a third party in this relationship. The land is YHWH’s chosen neḥalah from among all lands; the people are “planted” in YHWH’s personal plot of land. No other deity or power is tolerated in this union.

The charter for this claim is the story of YHWH bringing a people as a virgin bride through the wilderness to a pure land, free from Canaanite pollution. YHWH, who is also creator of earth and heaven, is to be acknowledged as the sole source of fertility in the land prepared for this people.

According to this ideology, when God’s people violate their relationship with YHWH through cultic or social evils, they pollute the sacred land. The land becomes a tragic victim, suffering at the hands of God’s people and God’s anger. The once beautiful neḥalah of YHWH mourns and laments like a bowling wasteland. The land suffers desolation and the people suffer exile; YHWH suffers with both land and people. In
Reading a Title
An Example
# Reading a Table of Contents

## An Example

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Strategies For Reading a Book
By Reading It

- Determine a Reading Strategy
  - What questions are you asking?
  - Take your cues from the author
- Determine a Memory Strategy
  - Read for the next project
  - Reflect!
- STAMP: Structure, Thesis, Argument, Motives, Primaries
- Get Comfortable
- Get Uncomfortable
Strategies For Reading a Book
By Reading It

Creative Agreement

“From the outset, be alert for ways to read your sources not passively, as a consumer, but actively and creatively, as an engaged partner . . . It is a happy moment when a source confirms your views. But if you just passively agree, you won’t developed any of your own ideas.”

(Turabian, 4.1)
Strategies For Reading a Book
By Reading It

Creative Disagreement

“It is even more important to note when you disagree with a source. . . . Instead of just noting that you disagree with another writer’s views, use that disagreement to encourage your own productive thinking.”

(Turabian, 4.1.2)
Strategies For Reading a Book
By Reading It (Many Times)

Interviewer: “Some people say they can’t understand your writing, even after they read it two or three times. What approach would you suggest for them?

William Faulkner: “Read it four times.”
6 Reading Habits to Develop in Your First Year at Harvard

• Previewing: Looking ‘Around’ at the Text Before You Start Reading

• Annotating: Make Your Reading Thinking-Intensive from Start to Finish

• Outline, Summarize, Analyze: Take the Information Apart, Look at its Parts, and Then Try to Put it Back Together Again in Language that is Meaningful to You
6 Reading Habits to Develop in Your First Year at Harvard

• Look for Repetitions and Patterns

• Contextualize: Re-view a Text You’ve Encountered, Framed by its Historical, Cultural, Material, or Intellectual Circumstances

• Compare and Contrast: Set Course Readings Against Each Other to Determine Their Relationships (Hidden or Explicit)
Bibliography

• Harvard’s “Six Reading Habits” Guide
  • http://guides.library.harvard.edu/sixreadinghabits

• Bowdoin’s “Reading, Writing, and Researching for History” Guide
  • http://www.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/

• Librarians! : http://pitts.emory.edu/ask
Questions?

http://pitts.emory.edu/ww