

“Close Reading as Method” (Lene Johannessen, IF, UiB)

QUOTES

To read: “Old Saxon *rādan* to advise, to plan, to arrange (Middle Low German *rāden* , also in senses ‘to rule’, ‘to predict’, ‘to relate’), Old High German *rātan* , *rāten* to advise, to deliberate, to assist, to plot (Middle High German *rāten* , also in sense ‘to guess’; German *raten*), Old Icelandic *ráða* to advise, to devise, to plot, to rule, to explain, to read, interpret, to punish, to undertake, Old Swedish *råpa* to advise, to deliberate, to rule, to determine, to deal with, to fathom, to interpret with explaining – e.g. Old Icelandic *ráða* to advise, to devise, to plot, to rule, to explain, to read, interpret.”

(from *Oxford English Dictionary*)

“Close reading, then, is about pausing, and looking at the precise techniques, dynamics, and content of the text. It’s not reading between the lines, but reading further and further into the lines and seeing the multiple meanings a turn of phrase, a description, or a word can unlock”

(<https://www.york.ac.uk/english/about/writing-at-york/writing-resources/close-reading/>)

“Reading the world precedes reading the word, and the subsequent reading of the word cannot dispense with continually reading the world”

(Paolo Freire, “The Importance of the Act of Reading,” *Journal of Education*, 1983, 165: 1, pp 5-11.)

“We read not to contradict, nor to believe, but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested: That is, some books are to be read only in partes; others to be read, but cursorily, and some few to be read wholly and with diligence and attention.”

(Francis Bacon 1597, quoted in Ane Ohrvik “What is close reading? An exploration of a methodology,” *The Journal of Theory and Practice*, April 2024).

Short story:

“Salvador Late or Early” (from Sandra Cisneros, *Woman Hollering Creek*, 1991)

Salvador with eyes the color of caterpillar, Salvador of the crooked hair and crooked teeth, Salvador whose name the teacher cannot remember, is a boy who is no one’s friend, runs along somewhere in that vague direction where homes are the color of bad weather, lives behind a raw wood doorway, shakes the sleepy brothers awake, ties their shoes, combs their hair with water, feeds them milk and corn flakes from a tin cup in the dim dark of the morning.

Salvador, late or early, sooner or later arrives with the string of younger brothers ready. Helps his mama, who is busy with the business of the baby. Tugs the arms of Cecilio, Arturito, makes them hurry, because today, like yesterday, Arturito has dropped the cigar box of crayons, has let go the hundred little fingers of red, green, yellow, blue, and nub of black sticks that tumble and spill over and beyond the asphalt puddles until the crossing-guard lady holds back the blur of traffic for Salvador to collect them again.

Salvador inside that wrinkled shirt, inside the throat that must clear itself and apologize each time that it speaks, inside the forty-pound body of boy with its geography of scars, its history of hurt, limbs stuffed with feathers and rags, in what part of the eyes, in what part of the heart, in that cage of the chest where something throbs with both fists and knows only what Salvador knows. Inside that body too small to contain the hundred balloons of happiness, the single guitar of grief, is a boy like any other disappearing out the door, beside the schoolyard gate, where he has told his brothers they must wait. Collects Cecilio and Arturito, scuttles off dodging the many schoolyard colors, the elbows and wrists criss-crossing, the several shoes running. Grows smaller and smaller to the eye, dissolves into the bright horizon, flutters in the air before disappearing like a memory of kites.