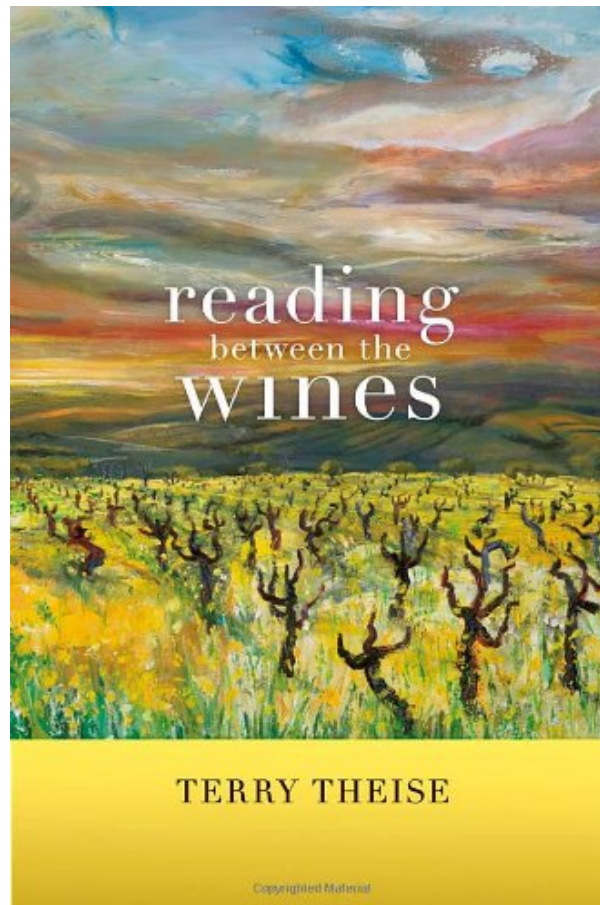
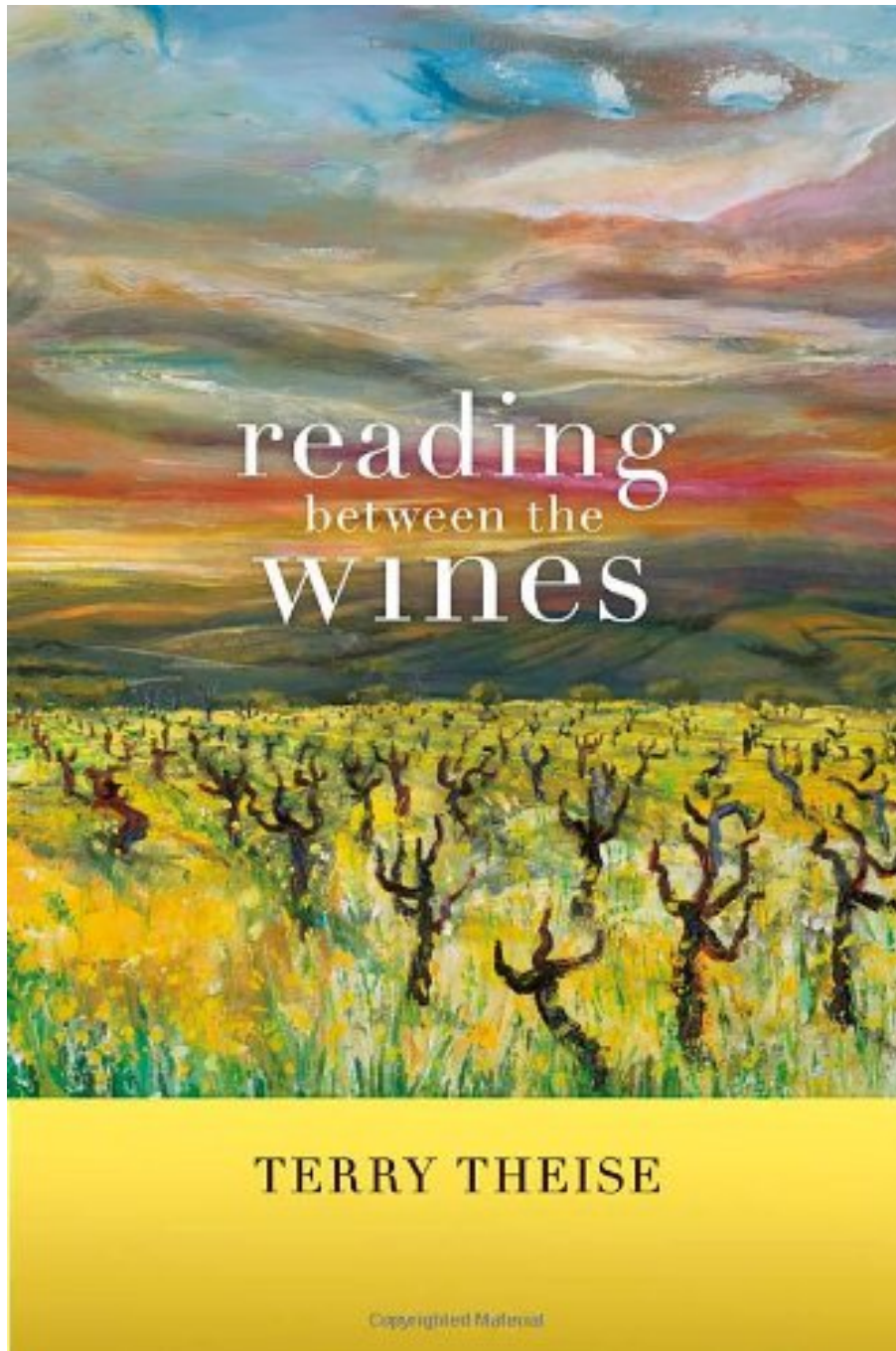


READING BETWEEN THE WINES BY TERRY THEISE



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Review

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Terry Theise, winner of the James Beard Foundation Award for Outstanding Wine and Spirits Professional, is an importer of boutique wines from Germany, Austria, and Champagne. His articles have appeared in *The World of Fine Wine* magazine. He was *Wine & Spirits* magazine's Man of the Year in 2001 and *Food and Wine* magazine's Importer of the Year in 2006.

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READING BETWEEN THE WINES BY TERRY THEISE PDF

Acclaimed importer and wine guru Terry Theise, long known for his top-notch portfolio and his illustrious writing, now offers this opinionated, idiosyncratic, and beautifully written testament to wine. What constitutes beauty in wine, and how do we appreciate it? What role does wine play in a soulful, sensual life? Can wines of place survive in a world of globalized styles and 100-point scoring systems? In his highly approachable style, Theise describes how wine can be a portal to aesthetic, emotional, even mystical experience—and he frankly asserts that these experiences are most likely to be inspired by wines from artisan producers. Along the way, Theise tells us a little about how he got where he is today, explores the meaning of wine in the lives of vintners he has known, and praises particular grape varieties. Reading between the Wines is a passionate tribute to wine—and to what it can say to us once we learn to listen.

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Most helpful customer reviews

22 of 22 people found the following review helpful.

A necessity on a wine lover's shelves

By Katie Pizzuto

Any man who quotes Anaïs Nin in a book about wine automatically gets bonus Gonzo points from me, and if in same said book he's got wordplay with Blue Öyster Cult lyrics, well I develop a crush that tends to sway me to overlook the fact that I needed to keep a dictionary handy while reading his book, because I've simply never had cause to use words like ecumenical or pusillanimous. Terry Theise, iconic importer and rock star wannabe, will be the first to tell you that "there's a lot of lousy prose and shallow thinking out there" in the world of wine writing, but his is as far removed from that sad description as wine writing can possibly get, and I'm thankful for it.

My bookshelves are burdened down with tomes about wine. They're bowed with the weight of books given biblical status for their wealth of information and books that serve as little more than romantic memoirs about wine-soaked lives. But there are very few--in fact only one other I can think of besides this, Nossiter's "Liquid Memory"--that exist as visceral dissertations on what wine does...move us. Theise's new book speaks of wine having the capability of being a portal to the mystic, and his conviction to this end is utterly seductive. There were points when I found myself reading his proselytizing out on my deck well past twilight, sometimes laughing out loud, sometimes nodding in passionate agreement, and other times lost in his candor. It's no small coincidence that Terry describes taking wine-tasting notes as often being obtrusive when you are engaged in what you've just experienced, because I felt the same about trying to take notes while reading this book--"it's like ignoring a rainbow so you can balance your checkbook."

Theise's argument for terroir is impeccable, and one that I imagine would convince even the most hardened New Worlders to bend with the breeze, if only because his argument is sound...logical...clear. He manages to straddle the murky fault line between spirit and substance--between ethos, pathos and logos--and he manages to do it while jibing you about Chateau Bluebols at the same time. I imagine Terry to be the kind of guy that makes you feel like a complete idiot for being lulled into complacency by the gears of the wine industry, and then consoles you as you lick your wounds by offering you a glass of the most delicate, mind-blowing riesling you've ever let pass your lips. For the limited amount of time we have in our lives to imbibe, it begs the question, why drink what doesn't move you? Why drink the enological equivalent of white noise? His rhetoric is both compelling and convincing.

I have but one gripe with *Reading Between the Wines* and that is its forced linearity for a style of writing that is otherwise so intrinsically organic. It's like taking an e.e. cummings poem, dissecting it and cramming that

dissection into an eighth-grade lit class outline. At times, Terry's views were broken down into a sort of laundry list, and that sacrificed some of the book's "naturalness" in my opinion, but that's probably also partly me being a pain in the ass after one too many glasses of nowhere wine. In all honesty, when I read his description of a red Burgundy, "If truffles had orgasms, they might emit this fragrance" I'm nearly certain my schoolgirl crush kicked in, and I probably just started looking for any reason to find flaw with Theise so that the spell would be broken. "Reading Between the Wines" is easily the most passionate, poetic, and necessary book on wine I've ever read, and it ended all way too soon.

35 of 38 people found the following review helpful.

Full of insights, but occasionally over the top

By Chambolle

Here we have yet another in a growing library of recent books that delve into the heart and soul of wine and ask the Big Questions. Why does wine matter? Why does terroir matter? Who gives a damn about "scoring" wine? Are there universal and absolute measures of "quality," or is a simple and honest bottle of cool, crisp rose, slurped with good ham, ripe melon and a fresh baguette on a hot summer day as "great" in its own way as a bottle of 1990 La Tache, sipped reverently on a grand occasion? Is Robert Parker The Devil, or just a guy with his own quirky palate who has been misunderstood and misused by armies of newbies hungry for easy answers to the questions "what wine should I buy" and "what wine am I supposed to like"?

Terry Theise has got his chops down, no doubt about it. He sure as heck knows German and Austrian wines better than any human I know -- to the extent that his focus on these wines makes portions of this book a bit of a tough sled for a dyed in the wool Burgundy addict like me, and probably for other folks who aren't devoted acolytes of Riesling, Gruner Veltliner, Scheurebe and the like. It would be easier for me to connect with the book were it more focused on the wines, the growers and the land that I do know pretty well, which ain't Germany and Austria.

As others have said here, this is a heartfelt and insightful little book, full of wisdom and witticisms about the making and enjoyment of wine -- wine as an integral part of life and culture, not as an academic exercise, or a competition among Screaming Eagle swilling hedge fund managers who buy and drink by the Parker bible. For all that, Theise is not a Parker basher, like some others. This book attempts to put both ends of the spectrum -- the terroiristes and the Wine Advocates and everyone in-between -- in a healthy perspective. There are turns of phrase and random observations that made me laugh out loud, or stop and think for a long, long time. Flashes of recognition abound.

So why not an unqualified five stars? Well, at times Theise wanders off into flights of psychobabble that are just a tad too much. At other times its just a bit too clever and too cute.

Despite these quibbles and misgivings -- and they are purely my own and may not be there for others -- I strongly recommend that anyone who cares about wine and who spends a good bit of time drinking and pondering it should buy the book and read it with a glass in hand. Short and to the point, it will get your juices flowing and make you think about the fermented grape juice to which quite a few of us devote quite a bit of our time and energy.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

One of the Best Wine Books in the Last Decade

By J. Lefevere

Joining Lawrence Osbourne's *The Accidental Connoisseur* and Matt Kramer's *Making Sense of Wine* on the thoughtful wine enthusiasts bookshelf, Theise has written a book that is so wholly singular to his point of view, yet so persuasive that he may yet convert thousands to the wonders of small, artisanal wines from around the world, joining the insider cadre that have followed his German, Austrian and grower Champagne

import selections and annual catalog-cum-stream of consciousness manifesto.

To be sure, Theise isn't the first to espouse a conviction about the value of Old World wines that are authentic, terroir-based and in possession of a bent toward the transcendental, he's just the first in the last decade to write with enough clarity and generosity of spirit to potentially turn New World agnostics into Old World disciples, connecting with a new generation of wine enthusiasts for whom the lifestyle mavens and old media dogs are as relatable as a narc at a biker rally.

While reading the slim volume, losing myself in the theatre of my mind, I imagine Theise sitting across the table from me in the dining room of an old row house in a hardscrabble town, maybe Cleveland, Pittsburgh, or Upstate NY, somewhere suitably unfashionable, explaining to me his philosophy on wine -- and by proxy -- life. The education is just getting started when Theise says, at the end of the introduction, just pages into the book, "Confectured wines are not designed for human beings; they are designed for `consumers.' Which do you want to be?" At this point, he has removed my defenses, punched me in the gut and put his arm around me whispering reassuringly that I am not that big of a jerk, there is still time to see the light; there is hope.

What follows in *Reading between the Wines* is as thoughtful of a rumination on small wine and the beauty of being human, in all of our fragility, that you are ever likely to find in a wine book.

Making Sense Of Wine

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