

# RTC LIBRARY E-NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2019



Welcome to the August 2019 issue of *RTC LIBRARY E-NEWSLETTER*

**In this issue:** Recommended Reads: *Seventh Grade*, *Sapiens*, and *The Red Room Stories*.

## Recommended Reads from the RTC community

### SEVENTH GRADE.

“Seventh grade” by Gary Soto is a story about a boy named Victor who just started seventh grade and his experience on his first day of class. On the first day of school he came early filled with confidence and stood in line where he was given a packet of papers and a computer card on which he listed the subjects that he would be taking. Although he knew Spanish he decided to take French classes as Teresa, the girl he had a crush on was taking French classes. When he heads to his class he runs into Teresa, she says “Hi Victor”, he then replies “Yeah that’s me”. Then he wishes he should have said something more clever.

He was late for French class and when he entered the class the back seats were all taken so, he had to sit in the front. The class started with Mr. Bueller (French teacher) saying “Bonjour” and asking the students whether they knew French or not. Victor in an attempt to impress Teresa pretends to know French. When the teacher asked him question he was not able to answer but he tried to bluff and murmured some random phrase to sound like he was speaking French. Other students were surprised to hear him speak but Mr. Bueller knew that he did not know how to speak French so, to save him from embarrassment he kept quiet.

At the end of the French class Teresa asks Victor to help her in French and he says he will. The he goes to library and grabs three French books so that he can learn properly to teach to Teresa and impress her.

**Thank you**  
**Contributed by Pema Wangmo**  
**BA Dev Econ**  
**Former Student.**

## Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind by Yuval Noah Harari.

Liberalism has become a religion sanctifying the subjective feelings of individual. It has enabled and empowered individual feelings as the supreme source of authority typified by slogans like “beauty lies in the eye of the beholder” and more indoctrinating inscription like “know thyself!” However, no matter what our efforts and achievements, in the hindsight, we have never broken the biologically determined limits. For about 4 billion years, every single organism on the planet evolved subject to natural selection.

However, the game isn’t played by this rule, anymore. At the dawn on twenty first century, we have begun to break the laws of natural selection, replacing them with the laws of intelligent design. Today, this transcendence is becoming apparent with the plausibility of ‘biological engineering’, ‘cyborg engineering’ and, yes not to skip, ‘the engineering of in-organic life’. Yet of these countless evangelical predilections, an attempt to devise a direct two-way brain-computer interface (that will allow computers to read the electrical signals of the human brain, simultaneously transmitting signals that the human brain can read in turn) would be the most revolutionary.

What if, within the next decade, such interfaces are used to directly link a brain to the internet, or link several brains together, therefore creating a sort of inter-brain-net?

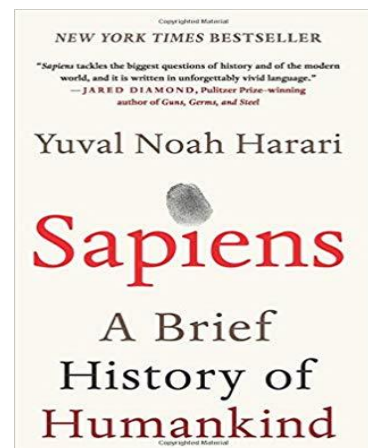
What will happen to our memory, consciousness and the identity if our brains had direct access to the collective memory bank?

How could you and I know thyself and myself respectively? What implications will it usher in on philosophical, political and psychological fronts?

Or what are we wanting to want?

**Thank you  
Kinley Dorji  
Associate Lecturer  
Social Sciences.**

**Location: 573.2 H25s 2011**



## The Red Room stories of trauma in contemporary Korea / translated by Bruce and Ju-Chan Fulton; foreword by Bruce Cumings.

Quite honestly, it was actually the cover of *The Red Room* that caught my eye itself, yet it was the detailed back cover or the blurb that finally made me decide to borrow this book from the library.

Despite the mention of trauma, I couldn't help but gawk and be awed at the deep red of the cover and wonder at how pretty it is! Don't you think so?

My interest in Korean literature is a recent development. So I ideally wanted to pick up this book just to broaden my perspectives about books and stories from Korea. However, since trauma was mentioned, I debated whether I had the mental space to read something heavy, dense and thought provoking.

But, it was the beautiful blurb that sealed the deal!

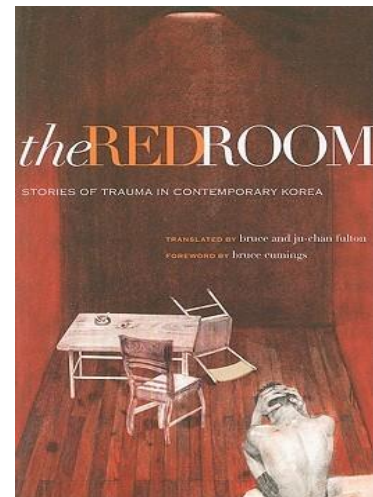
*The Red Room*, translated by Bruce and Ju Chan Fulton, has three stories about "trauma in contemporary Korea." The stories narrate how traumatic experiences have become a part and parcel for many Koreans especially because of the Korean War and the Gwangju/Kwangju Massacre. The Red Room is bookended by in-depth forward and afterword that help the reader to know more about the specific events that the stories in the novel talk about.

The first story, *In the Realm of the Buddha*, by Pak Wan-so is about the how a mother-daughter duo have yet to come to terms with the death of their father and brother, twenty years later. It is a heartfelt story about what binds the living together, despite their differences in the way they share this unresolved grief.

The second story, *Spirit on the Wind*, by O Chong-hui is my favourite and employs two point of views to present its story. Un-su is the wife who often abruptly leaves her home at random for short intervals, without any consideration for her husband or son, Sung-il.

Un-su's husband's is a first person narrative whereas Un-sun's narrative is in third person. The husband is obviously perturbed by his wife's constant disappearances and once, becoming saturated by her actions, he shuts her out and lets her go. There seems to be no rationale to Un-su's behavior which is what tests her husband's patience as well. Yet, the story skillfully conveys the hidden trauma behind her seemingly inexplicable behavior.

The third story is the eponymous one by Im Choru. The story begins with the protagonist, O Ki sop, ruminating about the endless, mundane routine of his life.



This story is also a dual narrative, both first person, which alternates between O Ki Sop's torture (which includes horrific regular beatings and water-boarding) in the infamous red room and the Section Chief Ch'oe Tal-Shik's stream of consciousness style of narration that jumps from his current life with his wife and kids and his ailing mother to his childhood, particularly when at Nagil Island he had to witness horrific scenes committed at the hands of the People's Army. He holds that particular incident as the defining moment that utterly traumatized his father and laid the seed for his intense hatred of the Reds. This hatred is then projected onto those who the police apprehends who are usually associated with these activities. Which is why O Ki Sop got caught, for alleged Communist activities which is revealed later on.

However, Ki Sop's initial bafflement and utter confusion at the reason behind his seemingly unjust arrest is reminiscent of Kafka's "The Trial" where its protagonist, Josef K, is similarly apprehended without really knowing why and despite facing several layers of bureaucracy, still remains oblivious to the reason for this arrest.

Though the short story, *The Red Room*, is not as bleak as Kafka's, it still chronicles the vicious cycle that abuse and violence can unleash on individuals.

And indeed all the three stories of the novel, *The Red Room*, portray how each person grapples with modern trauma in their own unique way.

**Thank you  
Aakanksha Singh  
Former lecturer  
Humanities.**

**Location: 895.7 B8863r 2009**

## **Wanted! Book reviews from Faculty, Staff, and Students**

If you have read a good book and would like to contribute a review to the Library Newsletter, we would love to receive one from you. Tell us a little about the book and why you liked it in 250-500 words. If interested, send your review to [gyanupradhan@rtc.bt](mailto:gyanupradhan@rtc.bt) or come by the library and see the library staff.

Thanks!!

**YOU MUST TELL YOURSELF, "NO MATTER HOW HARD IT IS, OR HOW HARD IT GETS, I AM GOING TO MAKE IT..."-Les Brown.**