

RTC LIBRARY E-NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2021

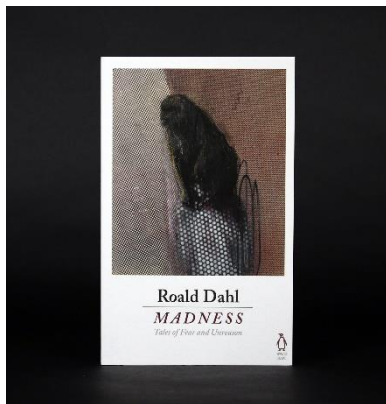
Welcome to the JUNE 2021 issue of RTC LIBRARY E-NEWSLETTER

In this issue: Recommended Reads: Madness, Every Breath, Please Don't Make Me Go, Two Therapeutic Systems: Greek and American Religious Healing.

Recommended Reads from the RTC community

Madness: Roald Dahl

Madness is a collection of ten short stories, which are domestically familiar, yet highlight a much darker side of human nature. The most “maddening” tales for me were “Edward The Conqueror” and “William and Mary.” In the first of these stories Edward, the husband, ends up killing a cat because of its curious behavior towards music and because of his wife’s affection towards the cat. One could say, that he felt the cat to be a threat to his relationship with his wife, or that he believed his wife was going to go mad if she kept insisting that the cat had a musical ear. In either case, the man killed a cat and believed his wife was the one going mad.



In “William and Mary”, it is a tale of revenge. Mary has been always overshadowed and dominated by her husband, William. So, when he dies, she learns through a letter left by him that he had signed up for a medical experiment, where his brain would be kept alive even after his death. Hence, she goes to visit her husband who is now nothing more than a slimy grey blob of a brain floating in a basin, with a pair of eyes in another bowl of water (through which he could see). The sight makes Mary pleasantly happy considering William could no longer control her life and tell her what not to do. So there she stood, taking a puff of her cigarette, which was not allowed before and in his eye, she could see the rage and fury of being disobeyed. Thus, Mary having been wronged by him decides to take revenge on her husband by taking him back home and doing everything she was never allowed to.

There are other stories, which depicts even darker side of the human nature, which we mostly keep under control through sanity. Other stories consist of a landlady who never let her guests leave, a man who unintentionally takes his own life due to greed, a boy whose love for pork leads him astray, and more.

In short, Dahl understood human nature's darkest secrets, fear and desires which every person would be guilty of carrying, if not all, but some of them.

Our greatest fear is of losing control - of our lives, but, most of all, of ourselves. In these ten unsettling tales of unexpected madness master storyteller Roald Dahl explores what happens when we let go our sanity.

**Thank you
Tenzin Om
BA Pol & Soc**

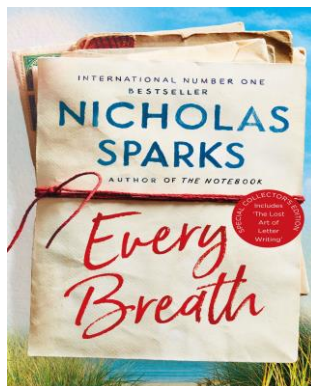
Every Breath: Nicholas Sparks

Nicholas Sparks is known as the international number one best seller. If you are familiar with his books you know that characters would be older than typical novels, and not forget this work always revolves around the theme of giving ourselves a second chance in love. *Every Breath* is yet another beautiful story by Nicholas Sparks filled with romance, emotions and an individual's responsibility. *Every Breath* is about how fate brings together two people: Tru Walls a 42 year-old safari guide from Zimbabwe and Hope Anderson, a 36 year-old Nurse from North Carolina, USA.

Tru visits North Carolina to find his biological father and Hope is deciding on the toughest decisions of her life, when her father falls ill and she has a boyfriend of six years that has no marriage plans. So to sort things out, she goes to her family cottage house located in North Carolina. When Tru and Hope meet one another Tru falls in love with her; they have an instant connection with one another which leads Hope to question herself, and she finds herself divided between the feelings she has for Tru, and her boyfriend of six years. In the novel we find the use of mailbox in the beach known as the "Kindred Spirit" where people put letter in it for others to read and is left there for years. Tru and Hope can also be seen using the "Kindred Spirit" to exchange letters. Though the whole story is fictional, the mailbox, "Kindred Spirit", is actually real. It is actually located at Sunset Beach in North Carolina.

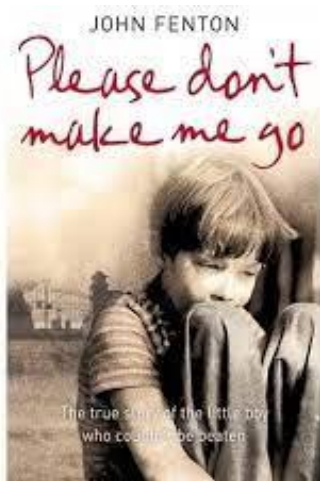
Every Breath is a bittersweet novel where we can see the struggle between what our head says and what our heart wants - it is about destiny and love that will make the readers cry, laugh with joy and warm their hearts.

Thank you
Deepika Pradhan
BA Eng Studies



Please Don't Make Me Go: John Fenton

John Fenton was born in April 22nd in 1944, and would have been 77 this year. 'Please Don't Make Me Go' is a horrifying true story of a little boy who had to pass through a lot of hurdles in life. It is a heart wrenching story of John, who was beaten and tortured by his abusive father from a very early age. John couldn't bear the torture and threatened his father with a knife at the age of 13, which led to his father filing a charge against him to remove him from his family home. He landed up in a juvenile courtroom, who later sends him to a notorious St. Vincent's school, run by a group of Catholic Irish brothers. Where kids of his age are fed with bread and butter, he was fed with daily beatings and was abused. This became a part and parcel of his life. Not a single brother from the school came forward in his support. Even the head master of the school ignored



the happenings in the school and let the brothers take charge.

To add on to his already sad life, he was also physically and sexually abused by one of the seniors and brothers in the school. However tormented his life was, he never gave up. He lost his childhood, but he learnt to survive. Even though toilet chains, stones and loneliness became his daily routine, he still came out strong. During his term in the school, he saw the light through his best friend

Bernard and Father Delaney. He learnt what friendship is and father Delaney made him realize that love prevails. Reading books took him to places he had never been to, and he often thought of his mother, who might be suffering in the hands of his violent father. After spending most of his life in the notorious school, he finally found a life of his own. He got trained as an army soldier and later became a lorry driver. After his retirement, he finally settled, forming a family with three children and living in Cumbria.

Reader's opinion

Even though this story kept me on my toes and gave me goose bumps, it impacted me a lot. He taught me that being resilient can be one of the greatest weapons to survive in this inhumane

world. Having experienced a lot of hardships in life both in the home front and school, he still came out courageous. John also taught me that no one will love us more than our mother. The unconditional love between the two even at the hand of their violent father is commendable. This book can be a guide to those who experienced being bullied and even for those who bully others. They will learn how and what one goes through. Some might not wish to have this book in the library because of too much violence in the story, but I would dare anyone who reads the story will come out more positive and change their outlook on life.

Moreover, it is based on a true story and one will surely enjoy it. I felt all emotions of tears and joy while reading this book, and twists in the story will keep you moving. The words are simple to understand and the places are real. You could visualize every little thing in the story which makes it even more interesting.

Recommendation

I would like to recommend this memoir to every high school and college students. I assure, you won't regret reading it. Also, besides recommending this book to students, if a copy is in the library, even faculties and staff will surely enjoy reading it.

Thank you
Palden Wangmo
Lecturer
Humanities

Two Therapeutic Systems: Greek and American Religious Healing: Loring M. Danforth

Loring M. Danforth is a professor of anthropology working in Bates College who had written much on Macedonia, Greece, Australia, and nationalism. He is famous for his work the 'Fire Walking and Religious Healing: The Anastenaria of Greece and the American Fire-walking Movement' which mainly evokes and contrasts two forms of fire walking and religious healing; first the Anastenaria, a Greek ritual in which people are possessed by Saint Constantine and Helen, and dance dramatically over red-hot coals, and, second, American fire walking, a picturesque and striking activity of New Age psychology. Danforth's compassionate ethnography of the Anastenaria and the Anastenarides did a remarkable job in integrating religious and cultural anthropology with symbolic and medical anthropology. Anastenaria was a ritual performed largely by women, which included spiritual possession by Saint Constantine, fire walking, and idolatry performed by the twentieth-century refugees from Thrace. Danforth examines and explains the role of religious healing in maintaining the health of the individuals who believe in Saint Constantine and the ritual. This is a good work of contemporary ethnography based on intensive participant observation. His work helps to look at how religious activity can help to determine the identity of a person and self-realization. The ritual healing gives symbolic meanings and has a significant contribution to symbolic anthropology. I will proceed by giving the main argument of the book followed by its value as work of ethnography.

Danforth's interpretive ethnography illuminates the importance of ritual in the lives of the Anastenarides in either bringing happiness or sadness to their lives. Idolatry, an important aspect of the ritual had a prominent role to play. Icons created links between humans, saints, and gods and the Anastenaria believed that "...the icons of Saints Constantine and Helen possessed supernatural power and the ability to perform miracles" (Danforth, 1989). The icons further enforced the power of women and their roles. The treatment of the icons varied by gender; women were responsible to repaint, wash, care for, and place the icons inside their homes here as the men moved them. Women's role to care for the icons enabled them to gain a sense of power and control over their lives since they were believed to be blessed by the Saint which could also contribute to increasing power of women in Greek society. Anastenaria

was a road to power and health for marginal women. It is amazing that the Anastenarides also resembled that of icons because the Anastenarides also had an important role as the icons. They were the mediators between saints and humans and were the hosts of divine power which either caused or healed varieties of illness.

Danforth's ethnography displayed intensive fieldwork and participant observation. He was fascinated by both ancient and Modern Greek culture and spirit processions before he did his fieldwork. He visited Ayia Eleni in Greek Macedonia to see the Anastenaria in May 1973 and again in May 1975 during his stay in Athens. The book interprets the Greek ritual performed by a group of refugees believed to have emerged among the descendants of Greek refugees in Macedonia following the Balkan War (Harry, 1999) in the early 1920s, and the ritual became famous when the Orthodox Church celebrated the festival of Saints Constantine and Helen.

Danforth did his best to conduct his research in the field by communicating with the villagers. His interest in Greek culture and his frequent visits to the field enabled him to maintain a good relationship among the people. Moreover, his fieldwork was conducted from September 1975; long before his first draft in 1986–1987. The period at which he conducted his fieldwork was extremely long which questions whether his work had an impact on the society and whether the perception and belief changed or stayed the same. Danforth himself also participates in the bare-foot fire walking ritual in the rural Maine risking his own life which is very unlike many anthropologists (Danforth, 1989). As a deeply researched topic, you will be able to see how the rituals can be an act of self-realization helping the Anastenarides to identify themselves and move from the state of illness to the state of health.

The study of Anastenaria helped to show how religious mysticism continued to exist in the modern Western world. The Anastenarides live in the twentieth-first-century, practicing Anastenaria, and believe that being an Anastenaria enables them to communicate with the Saint as they dance on hot coals. Though there might be a tendency to view these cultures as exotic by the outside world, people can be rational regarding it. For example, there are cultures where oracles, witch doctors, and shamans who exist as a medium between the deceased, god, and humans. The idea of idolatry can also be associated with Buddhist worshipping the deities

or statues like Guru Rinpoche or Lord Buddha especially to fulfill their wish and for their own health. We see a symbolic meaning behind worshipping statues and so does the practice of Anastenaria which can mean the transition of a person's good health from illness.

Danforth's work illuminated the explanatory model of Arthur Kleinman and helped to explain what caused the illness. Danforth explained that the health care system contains three health systems within which sickness is experienced and healed namely; popular, professional and folk sector. (Kleinman, 1978) Anastenarides can fall under the popular sector as it includes families, communities and parents to cure illness. For example, Danforth discovered through interviews that people first went to doctors to treat their illness and turned to Anastenaria when Western medicine failed (Danforth, 1989, pg.78). Danforth successfully differentiated between illness and diseases. Diseases were curable and treated by doctors whereas the other was not so they eventually had to go to Anastenarides. For example, a person suffering from headaches or who couldn't eat nor walk turn to a general practitioner after they are not satisfied consulting a doctor (Danforth, 1989, pg.78).

Danforth was primarily a functionalist. He considered how rituals contributed to the functioning of society. People who made fun of Anastenaria were heavily punished by Saint Constantine through unfortunate events like the victim often landing up hurting themselves. They were, however, forgiven after repenting and were required to stay loyal to the Saint and the ritual. If an individual ever identifies a sign of the Saint, calling them in their dreams, they were considered a fire walker or an ethical Christian; otherwise they would suffer misfortunes as punishment (Xygalatas, 2014). The ritual enabled people to maintain a strong bond and resolve any conflicts that occur in the families resulting in harmony and peace. Danforth was successful in showing how a ritual has a function in keeping the society together. . The social organization of the community can depend on various aspects religion and ritual being one. The ritual has an important role to play in the lives of the people (Turner, 1967) from healing illness and solving conflict-laden family relationships. As a result, ritual helped organize the social structure of a community.

'Fire walking and Religious Healing' is an intensive ethnographic book. Danforth approaches ritual culturally, symbolically, and medically and is an excellent discussion of mysticism and

idolatry, which is often regarded as exotic. Danforth's work helps us to understand the study of religion and gender cross-culturally. It enabled us to look at how religion is often associated in relation to gender. Different cultures have a different view regarding gender relations. While patriarchy is prominent, we can still see the growing power of women in Ayia Eleni. Much of the women's power is still surprised by the men.

This is a great work of ethnography as the book examines to integrate religious healing with the social pattern of the society contributing to symbolic and medical anthropology. Rituals have symbolic meanings like keeping a society together and often are a means to cure illness.

Thank you
Pema Choden
BA Anthropology

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 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.