

RTC LIBRARY E-NEWSLETTER

MAY 2020

Welcome to the May 2020 issue of *RTC LIBRARY E-NEWSLETTER*

In this issue: Recommended Reads: *The Testaments*, *Neuromancer*, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande*, *The last Surgeon*, *Finish*.

Recommended Reads from the RTC community

The Testaments by Margaret Atwood

I love "The Handmaid's Tale." It's one of those books that I can re-read again and again and still enjoy each time because it's so sharp and beautifully written and darkly funny. Despite its age (it was first published in 1985) it still feels like it's a true and terrifying warning of what could be coming with the political mood all over the world shifting to allow an increasing acceptance for isolationism and misogyny.

This means I was equal parts thrilled and nervous about this follow up. Would it be as good? Spoiler: no, it's not even close. But the first book ended ambiguously (which I love - who needs a tidy ending?), so it's possible some readers felt that the story was unfinished.

The book does have propulsive plot (one friend noted it felt far more like a beach read than a typical Atwood novel) but had almost none of the spot-on observations or juicy one-liners of the first book. The world is already built and known and so there are few surprises here. Even the reuse of the academic conference in the distant future at the end of the novel is repeated from the first book and no longer feels as fresh, irreverent or clever. There are three narrators instead of one and none of them offer the emotional heft of June / Offred so you never feel as invested in what happens to any of them. And the happy tidy ending felt - dare I say it? - A little like fan service. Maybe the main function of this book is to remind us how brilliant, fiercely original and necessary "The Handmaid's Tale" still is.

Thank You
Dr. Dolma Choden Roder
Associate Professor
Social Sciences

Neuromancer by William Gibson

Considered one of the most influential sci-fi books of all time, and a watershed moment for cyberpunk, Neuromancer is best enjoyed with appropriate historical perspective. The way we experience 'cyberspace' and data networks has evolved quite differently from how William Gibson imagined it in 1984, but when it comes to the abstract philosophy of the thing, one can see how far ahead of its time the book was.

The plot follows Henry Case, a washed up hacker hired by a mysterious employer to infiltrate and attack a powerful AI housed in a settlement in orbit around Earth. Case has help from Molly the Razorgirl, Riviera the psychotic, and Maelcum the gun-toting Rasta ever nodding to the dub in his earbuds. The characters are unique and entertaining, even the personification of Wintermute the AI. Maelcum, naturally, remains my favourite.

William Gibson's writing pulses and moves with paranoid velocity. He doesn't care to slow down and explain his ideas or even important plot points- in the first quarter the narrative just keeps hurtling on with the reader barely hanging on for dear comprehension. Patience is rewarded, though, and once you catch the rhythm of its madness you can hop along for the ride.

William Gibson was no computer genius- Neuromancer was written on a typewriter. But here was a man with a vision of the future that panned out a lot, if not in form then surely in function, the way he saw it.

Essential reading for sci-fi fans.

Thank you
Utsav Khatiwara Sharma
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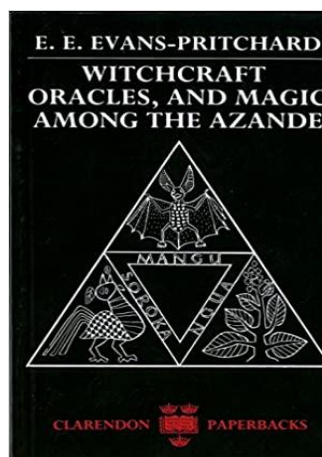
Witchcraft, oracles, and magic among the Azande by Evans-Pritchard

‘Witchcraft, Oracles and magic among the Azande’- a famous work by the anthropologist E.E. Evans-Pritchard that was published in 1937. It discusses how the notion of witchcraft and magic helps in organizing people and the functioning of their society. Evans Pritchard approached the Azande use of witchcraft, oracles and magic in terms similar to Malinowski’s structural functionalism which explained why every misfortune is due to a cause. This book is an excellent ethnographic study which explores the importance of witchcraft, life and death in the Azande community. Evans Pritchard demonstrated that belief in witchcraft is perfectly rational and rationality is cultural relative.

I like how this anthropological book demonstrated the relationship of witchcraft, oracles and magic between people and shows how they are linked and result in an original system that is expressed in the Azande social structure. The Azande believe that the substance of witchcraft can inhabit a human body and that those who have such power have the ability to bewitch someone and the possession of such power is inherent in Azande kinsmen. An Azande can identify themselves as a witch after consulting an oracle or through a post mortem examination; however, they do not admit such actions before others as witches are punished if identified. This is a very important book which demonstrates cultural relativism. Every society perceives and interprets things differently, especially misfortunes. Evans Pritchard is neither ethnocentric nor does he regard Azande’s practice of witchcraft as primitive or superstitious. You may read this book and see whether you agree or disagree with his ideas of social structure. Happy Reading!

Thank you
Pema Choden Dorji
BA Anthropology
2nd Year.

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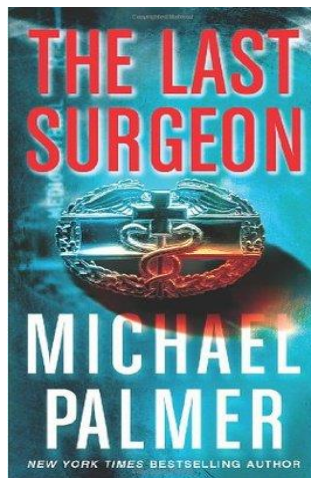


The last surgeon by Michael Palmer

The Last Surgeon by Michael Palmer is a medical thriller, which talks about former trauma surgeon Dr. Nick Garrity, who suffers from PTSD as the result of a suicide attack on his field hospital in Afghanistan, and is now in charge of the Helping Hands RV, a mobile clinic that plies the streets of Baltimore offering medical aid to the homeless. Meanwhile, a high-priced hit man starts to commit a series of murders, his first victim being Belle Coates, a nurse in Charlotte, N.C. When Belle's sister, Jillian, who lives in Virginia, searches for her sister's killer, she finds a connection to Nick. Several missing homeless men lead everyone to a massive plot involving high-level politicians and a secret CIA program. The actions in the plot is all fairly predictable, and the characters are off-the-shelf.

Thank you
Swati Chakraborty,
Associate Professor
Business.

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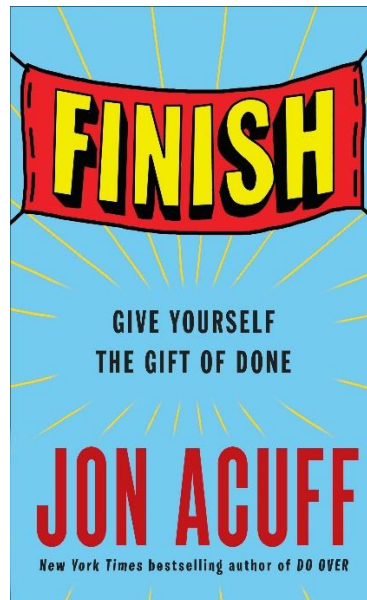


Finish: Give Yourself the Gift of Done by Jon Acuff

An enjoyable and funny self-help book that was a joy to listen to as an audiobook. Acuff helps readers understand why they are not finishing what they have started with astute insights, excellent advice, and lots of humor! This was an inspiring break from my normal shelf of literature that is already allowing me to give myself the gift of done!

Thank You

Dana M. Polanichka,
Ph.D. Social Sciences
Professor (Part-time)



"If taking a break from social media sounds intimidating, remember, you've already done this for an entire year. It was called 1997."

— **Jon Acuff, *Finish: Give Yourself the Gift of Done*.**

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.