

Book Group Collection 2017

Ahern, Cecelia

The Marble collector

A box of possessions.

A father with no memory.

A daughter with just one day to piece together the past. When Sabrina Boggs stumbles upon a mysterious collection of her father's belongings, her seemingly uneventful life suddenly alters and shifts. In the single day she has to search for answers about the man she thought she knew, a man who can no longer remember his own story, Sabrina uncovers far bigger secrets than she could have imagined. At the same time she discovers that sometimes it's the people closest to us that we know the least.

Arnopp, Jason

The Last days of Jack Sparks

The most chilling and unpredictable thriller of the year. It was no secret that journalist Jack Sparks had been researching the occult for his new book. No stranger to controversy, he'd already triggered a furious Twitter storm by mocking an exorcism he witnessed. Then there was that video: forty seconds of chilling footage that Jack repeatedly claimed was not of his making, yet was posted from his own YouTube account. Nobody knew what happened to Jack in the days that followed - until now.

Atkinson, Kate

A God in ruins

Winner of the 2015 Costa Novel Award

A God in Ruins relates the life of Teddy Todd – would-be poet, heroic World War II bomber pilot, husband, father, and grandfather – as he navigates the perils and progress of the 20th century. For all Teddy endures in battle, his greatest challenge will be to face living in a future he never expected to have. This gripping, often deliriously funny yet emotionally devastating book looks at war – that great fall of Man from grace – and the effect it has, not only on those who live through it, but on the lives of the subsequent generations.

Backman, Fredrik

A Man called Ove

At first sight, Ove is certainly the grumpiest man you will ever meet. He thinks himself surrounded by idiots - neighbours who can't reverse a trailer properly, joggers, shop assistants who talk in code, and the perpetrators of the vicious coup d'etat that ousted him as Chairman of the Residents' Association. He persists in making his daily inspection rounds of the local streets. But isn't it rare, these days, to find old-fashioned clarity of belief and deed? Such conviction about what the world should be, and a lifelong dedication to making it just so? You will see, there is something about Ove that is quite irresistible...

Bauby, Jean-Dominique

The Diving bell and the butterfly (NF)

'Locked-in syndrome: paralysed from head to toe, the patient, his mind intact, is imprisoned inside his own body, unable to speak or move. In my case, blinking my left eyelid is my only means of communication.' In December 1995, Jean-Dominique Bauby, editor-in-chief of French 'Elle' and the father of two young children, suffered a massive stroke and found himself paralysed and speechless, but entirely conscious, trapped by what doctors call 'locked-in syndrome'. Using his only functioning muscle - his left eyelid - he began dictating this remarkable story, painstakingly spelling it out letter by letter. His book offers a haunting, harrowing look inside the cruel prison of locked-in syndrome, but it is also a triumph of the human spirit.

Baume, Sara

Spill simmer falter wither

A misfit man finds a misfit dog. Ray, aged fifty-seven, 'too old for starting over, too young for giving up', and One Eye, a vicious little bugger, smaller than expected, a good ratter. Both are accustomed to being alone, unloved, outcast – but they quickly find in each other a strange companionship of sorts. As spring turns to summer, their relationship grows and intensifies, until a savage act forces them to abandon the precarious life they'd established, and take to the road.

Spill Simmer Falter Wither is a wholly different kind of love story: a devastating portrait of loneliness, loss and friendship, and of the scars that are more than skin-deep. Written with tremendous empathy and insight, in lyrical language that surprises and delights, this is an extraordinary and heartbreaking debut by a major new talent

Bivald, Katarina

The Readers of broken wheel recommend

Sara has never left Sweden but at the age of 28 she decides it's time. She cashes in her savings, packs a suitcase full of books and sets off for Broken Wheel, Iowa, a town where she knows nobody. Sara quickly realises that Broken Wheel is in desperate need of some adventure, a dose of self-help and perhaps a little romance, too. In short, this is a town in need of a bookshop. With help from the locals, Sara sets up Broken Wheel's first bookstore. The shop might be a little quirky but then again, so is Sara. As Broken Wheel's story begins to take shape, there are some surprises in store for Sara too...

Bray, Carys

The Museum of you

Clover Quinn was a surprise. She used to imagine she was the good kind, now she's not sure. She'd like to ask Dad about it, but growing up in the saddest chapter of someone else's story is difficult. She tries not to skate on the thin ice of his memories. Darren has done his best. He's studied his daughter like a seismologist on the lookout for waves and surrounded

her with everything she might want - everything he can think of, at least - to be happy. What Clover wants is answers. This summer, she thinks she can find them in the second bedroom, which is full of her mother's belongings. Volume isn't important, what she is looking for is essence; the undiluted bits: a collection of things that will tell the full story of her mother, her father and who she is going to be. But what you find depends on what you're searching for.

Burnet, Graeme Macrae

His bloody Project (Scottish)

The year is 1869. A brutal triple murder in a remote community in the Scottish Highlands leads to the arrest of a young man by the name of Roderick Macrae. A memoir written by the accused makes it clear that he is guilty, but it falls to the country's finest legal and psychiatric minds to uncover what drove him to commit such merciless acts of violence. Was he mad? Only the persuasive powers of his advocate stand between Macrae and the gallows.

Graeme Macrae Burnet tells an irresistible and original story about the provisional nature of truth, even when the facts seem clear. His Bloody Project is a mesmerising literary thriller set in an unforgiving landscape where the exercise of power is arbitrary.

Carey, M R

The Girl with all the gifts

Not every gift is a blessing.

Every morning, Melanie waits in her cell to be collected for class.

When they come for her, Sergeant Parks keeps his gun pointing at her while two of his people strap her into the wheelchair. She thinks they don't like her. She jokes that she won't bite. But they don't laugh. Melanie is a very special girl.

Emotionally charged and gripping from beginning to end, the most powerful and affecting thriller you will read this year.

Conaghan, Brian

The Bombs that brought us together

Fourteen-year-old Charlie Law has lived in Little Town, on the border with Old Country, all his life. He knows the rules: no going out after dark; no drinking; no litter; no fighting. You don't want to get on the wrong side of the people who run Little Town. When he meets Pavel Duda, a refugee from Old Country, the rules start to get broken. Then the bombs come, and the soldiers from Old Country, and Little Town changes for ever.

Sometimes, to keep the people you love safe, you have to do bad things. As Little Town's rules crumble, Charlie is sucked into a dangerous game. There's a gun, and a bad man, and his closest friend, and his dearest enemy.

Charlie Law wants to keep everyone happy, even if it kills him. And maybe it will ...

Crossan, Sara

One

Grace and Tippi don't like being stared and sneered at, but they're used to it. They're conjoined twins - united in blood and bone. What they want is to be looked at in turn, like they truly are two people. They want real friends. And what about love?

A heart-wrenching decision lies ahead for Tippi and Grace. One that could change their lives more than they ever asked for...

This moving and beautifully crafted novel about identity, sisterhood and love ultimately asks one question: what does it mean to want and have a soul mate?

Winner of the CILIP Carnegie Medal in 2016.

De Bernieres, Louis

Blue dog

From the author of Captain Corelli's Mandolin, the spellbinding story of a young boy and his dog adventuring through the outback.

When a family tragedy means Mick is sent to the outback to live with his Grandpa, it looks as if he has a lonely life ahead of him. The cattle station is a tough place for a child, where nature is brutal and the men must work hard in the heat and dust. However, after a cyclone hits, things change for Mick. Exploring the floodwaters, he finds a lost puppy covered in mud and half-drowned. Mick and his dog immediately become inseparable as they take on the adventures offered by their unusual home, and the business of growing up, together.

In this charming prequel to the much-loved Red Dog, Louis de Bernières tells the moving story of a young boy and his Grandpa, and the charismatic and entertaining dog who so many readers hold close to their hearts.

Flanagan, Richard

The Narrow road to the deep north

Forever after, there were for them only two sorts of men: the men who were on the Line, and the rest of humanity, who were not.

In the despair of a Japanese POW camp on the Burma Death Railway, surgeon Dorrigo Evans is haunted by his love affair with his uncle's young wife two years earlier. Struggling to save the men under his command from starvation, from cholera, from beatings, he receives a letter that will change his life forever.

This is a story about the many forms of love and death, of war and truth, as one man comes of age, prospers, only to discover all that he has lost.

French, Tana

In the woods

When he was twelve years old, Adam Ryan went playing in the woods with his two best friends. He never saw them again. Their bodies were never found, and Adam himself was

discovered with his back pressed against an oak tree and his shoes filled with blood. He had no memory of what had happened.

Twenty years on, Rob Ryan - the child who came back - is a detective in the Dublin police force. He's changed his name. No one knows about his past. Then a little girl's body is found at the site of the old tragedy and Rob is drawn back into the mystery. Knowing that he would be thrown off the case if his past were revealed, Rob takes a fateful decision to keep quiet but hope that he might also solve the twenty-year-old mystery of the woods.

Gale, Patrick

A Place called Winter

To find yourself, sometimes you must lose everything.

A shy but privileged elder son, Harry Cane has followed convention at every step. Even the beginnings of an illicit, dangerous affair do little to shake the foundations of his muted existence - until the shock of discovery and the threat of arrest force him to abandon his wife and child and sign up for emigration to Canada.

Remote and unforgiving, his allotted homestead in a place called Winter is a world away from the golden suburbs of turn-of-the-century Edwardian England. And yet it is here, isolated in a seemingly harsh landscape, under the threat of war and madness that the fight for survival will reveal in Harry an inner strength and capacity for love beyond anything he has ever known before.

George, Nina

Little Paris bookshop

On a beautifully restored barge on the Seine, Jean Perdu runs a bookshop; or rather a 'literary apothecary', for this bookseller possesses a rare gift for sensing which books will soothe the troubled souls of his customers.

The only person he is unable to cure, it seems, is himself. He has nursed a broken heart ever since the night, twenty-one years ago, when the love of his life fled Paris, leaving behind a handwritten letter that he has never dared read. His memories and his love have been gathering dust - until now. The arrival of an enigmatic new neighbour in his eccentric apartment building on Rue Montagnard inspires Jean to unlock his heart, unmoor the floating bookshop and set off for Provence, in search of the past and his beloved.

Guskin, Sharon

The Forgetting time

Noah is four and wants to go home. The only trouble is he's already there.

Noah is a little boy who knows things he shouldn't and remembers things he should have forgotten. Because as well as being a four-year-old called Noah, he remembers being a nine-year-old called Tommy. He remembers his house, his family, his mother, and now he wants to go home. Two boys, two mothers. One unforgettable story . . .

Harris, Robert

An officer and a spy

Paris, 1895: an army officer, Georges Picquart, watches a convicted spy, Alfred Dreyfus, being publicly humiliated in front of a baying crowd.

Dreyfus is exiled for life to Devil's Island; Picquart is promoted to run the intelligence unit that tracked him down. But when Picquart discovers that secrets are still being handed over to the Germans, he is drawn into a dangerous labyrinth of deceit and corruption that threatens not just his honour but his life...

Hickson, Joanna

Agincourt Bride

Her beauty fuelled a war. Her courage captured a king. Her passion would launch the Tudor dynasty. When her own first child is tragically still-born, the young Mette is pressed into service as a wet nurse at the court of the mad king, Charles VI of France. Her young charge is the princess, Catherine de Valois, caught up in the turbulence and chaos of life at court.

Mette and the child forge a bond, one that transcends Mette's lowly position.

But as Catherine approaches womanhood, her unique position seals her fate as a pawn between two powerful dynasties. Her brother, The Dauphin and the dark and sinister, Duke of Burgundy will both use Catherine to further the cause of France.

Catherine is powerless to stop them, but with the French defeat at the Battle of Agincourt, the tables turn and suddenly her currency has never been higher. But can Mette protect Catherine from forces at court who seek to harm her or will her loyalty to Catherine place her in even greater danger?

James, Henry

Turn of the screw

The Turn of the Screw. Douglas reads a manuscript from a former governess who is now dead. It is the story of how the young governess was hired by a man who lives mainly in London and is not interested in raising his niece and nephew himself after their parents' death.

Kelly, Lesley

A Fine house in Trinity (Scottish)

Joseph Staines, an unemployed chef, has left Edinburgh with the tally book of the late debt collector, Isa Stoddart. Her son Lachie thinks Stainsie killed her, but Lachie has apparently committed suicide. To his surprise, Stainsie is the sole beneficiary of Lachie's will and has inherited a dilapidated mansion. Isa's debtors and the local priest who paid Stainsie to leave town want him gone. A certain young mum, Marianne (whose uncle, Wheezy, is Stainsie's

drinking buddy) does too, and his old school-friend, Detective Sergeant Jamieson, wants to interrogate him about the deaths. Why are the lawyers lying to him, and who is the bruiser asking about him down the pub?

Landman, Tanya

Buffalo soldier

Winner of the CILIP Carnegie Medal 2015. "What kind of a girl steals the clothes from a dead man's back and runs off to join the army? A desperate one, that's who." At the end of the American Civil War, Charley – a young African-American slave from the Deep South – is ostensibly freed. But then her adopted mother is raped and lynched at the hands of a mob and Charley is left alone. In a terrifyingly lawless land, where the colour of a person's skin can bring violent death, Charley disguises herself as a man and joins the army. Soon she's being sent to the prairies to fight a whole new war against the "savage Indians". Trapped in a world of injustice and inequality, it's only when Charley is posted to Apache territory that she begins to learn what it is to be truly free.

Lewis, Matt

Last man off (NF)

In the depths of Antarctic winter, hundreds of miles from land or rescue, a small fishing boat is swallowed by waves as high as houses. The captain is fatally slow to act, and then paralyzed by fear. The officers flee for their lives. Only the actions of Matt Lewis, a 23-year-old British marine biologist and one of the most inexperienced men aboard, will save the lives of the South African crew.

Lewis is the last man off the sinking boat, and leads the escape onto three life rafts. There the battle for survival begins.

Liptrot, Amy

The Outrun (NF) (Scottish)

At the age of thirty, Amy Liptrot finds herself washed up back home on Orkney. Standing unstable on the island, she tries to come to terms with the addiction that has swallowed the last decade of her life. As she spends her mornings swimming in the bracingly cold sea, her days tracking Orkney's wildlife, and her nights searching the sky for the Merry Dancers, Amy discovers how the wild can restore life and renew hope.

McCarthy, Michael

The Moth Snowstorm: nature and joy (NF)

Nature has many gifts for us, but perhaps the greatest of them all is joy; the intense delight we can take in the natural world, in its beauty, in the wonder it can offer us, in the peace it can provide - feelings stemming ultimately from our own unbreakable links to nature, which mean that we cannot be fully human if we are separate from it.

In *The Moth Snowstorm* Michael McCarthy, one of Britain's leading writers on the environment, proposes this joy as a defence of a natural world which is ever more threatened, and which, he argues, is inadequately served by the two defences put forward hitherto: sustainable development and the recognition of ecosystem services.

Drawing on a wealth of memorable experiences from a lifetime of watching and thinking about wildlife and natural landscapes. *The Moth Snowstorm* not only presents a new way of looking at the world around us, but effortlessly blends with it a remarkable and moving memoir of childhood trauma from which love of the natural world emerged. It is a powerful, timely, and wholly original book which comes at a time when nature has never needed it more.

Meyrick, Denzil

Whisky from small glasses (Scottish)

DCI Jim Daley is sent from the city to investigate a murder after the body of a woman is washed up on an idyllic beach on the West Coast of Scotland. Far away from urban resources, he finds himself a stranger in a close-knit community.

Love, betrayal, fear and death stalk the small town, as Daley investigates a case that becomes more deadly than he could possibly imagine, in this compelling novel infused with intrigue and dark humour.

Orr, K J

Lightbox

From Argentina to Siberia, Papua New Guinea to London and New York, *Light Box* explores lives in transition, in a world where boundaries and human relationships are shifting. An astronaut struggles to adapt to life back on earth; a young man discovers he is going blind in a foreign city; a retired plastic surgeon uncovers old wounds; and two lovers become unexpectedly intimate. Each tale in K J Orr's moving collection is charged with the irrepressible human urge to connect in the face of disorientating change. With exquisitely cadenced storytelling, Orr introduces us to worlds and places that are familiar, yet tinged with a lingering sense of uncertainty. The result is a wonderfully diverse and captivating debut from a rising literary talent.

Oswald, Alice

Falling awake (NF)

Alice Oswald's poems are always vivid and distinct, alert and deeply, physically, engaged in the natural world. Mutability – a sense that all matter is unstable in the face of mortality – is at the heart of this new collection and each poem is involved in that drama: the held tension that is embodied life, and life's losing struggle with the gravity of nature.

Working as before with an ear to the oral tradition, these poems attend to the organic shapes and sounds and momentum of the language as it's spoken as well as how it's thought: fresh, fluid and propulsive, but also fragmentary, repetitive. These are poems that are written to be read aloud.

Orpheus and Tithonus appear at the beginning and end of this book, alive in an English landscape, stuck in the clockwork of their own speech, and the Hours – goddesses of the seasons and the natural apportioning of Time – are the presiding figures. The persistent conditions are flux and falling, and the lines are in constant motion: approaching, from daring new angles, our experience of being human, and coalescing into poems of simple, stunning beauty.

Pascoe, Sara

Animal (NF)

Sometimes I confuse myself. I get wildly and pointlessly jealous. I spend too much time hating my bum. And you know what I hate more than my bum? My preoccupation with my bum. I've had sexual experiences with boys I wasn't really in to, but I got a post-coital crush on them. I've ruined the start of a relationship by immediately imagining it going into reverse.

There is so much about my behaviour I want to understand. So I started researching what makes me - and us - tick. And what I read made my eyes fall out of my face.

Reader, here is everything I've learned from science about love, sexuality, infidelity, boobs, periods, pubes, broodiness, and clever old fat. Merry Christmas and Hallelujah, suddenly being a woman doesn't look like such a minefield after all.

Rebanks, James

The Shepherd's life (NF)

Some people's lives are entirely their own creations. James Rebanks' isn't. The first son of a shepherd, who was the first son of a shepherd himself, he and his family have lived and worked in and around the Lake District for generations. Their way of life is ordered by the seasons and the work they demand, and has been for hundreds of years. A Viking would understand the work they do: sending the sheep to the fells in the summer and making the hay; the autumn fairs where the flocks are replenished; the gruelling toil of winter when the sheep must be kept alive, and the light-headedness that comes with spring, as the lambs are born and the sheep get ready to return to the fells.

Schwalbe, Will

The End of your life book club (NF)

Mary Anne Schwalbe is waiting for her chemotherapy treatments when Will casually asks her what she's reading. The conversation they have grows into tradition: soon they are reading the same books so they can have something to talk about in the hospital waiting room. Their choices range from classic (*Howards End*) to popular (*The Girl with the Dragon*

Tattoo), from fantastic (The Hobbit) to spiritual (Jon Kabat-Zinn), with many in between. We hear their passion for reading and their love for each other in their intimate and searching discussions. A profoundly moving testament to the power of love between a child and parent, and the power of reading in our lives.

Shemilt, Jane

Daughter

She used to tell me everything. They have a picture. It'll help. But it doesn't show the way her hair shines so brightly it looks like sheets of gold. She has a tiny mole, just beneath her left eyebrow. She smells very faintly of lemons. She bites her nails. She never cries. She loves autumn, I wanted to tell them. She collects leaves, like a child does. She is just a child. One year later - Naomi is still missing. Jenny is a mother on the brink of obsession. The Malcolm family is in pieces. Is finding the truth about Naomi the only way to put them back together? Or is the truth the thing that will finally tear them apart?

Spufford, Francis

Golden hill

New York, a small town on the tip of Manhattan Island, 1746. One rainy evening, a charming and handsome young stranger fresh off the boat from England pitches up to a counting house on Golden Hill Street, with a suspicious yet compelling proposition -- he has an order for a thousand pounds in his pocket that he wishes to cash. But can he be trusted? This is New York in its infancy, a place where a young man with a fast tongue can invent himself afresh, fall in love, and find a world of trouble . . .

Stibbe, Nina

Love, Nina (NF)

Being a nanny is great. Not like a job really, just like living in someone else's life. Today before breakfast Sam had to empty the dishwasher and Will had to feed the cat.

Sam: I hate emptying the dishwasher.

MK: We all do, that's why we take turns.

Will: I hate the cat.

MK: We all do, that's why we take turns.

In the 1980s Nina Stibbe wrote letters home to her sister in Leicester describing her trials and triumphs as a nanny to a London family. There's a cat nobody likes, a visiting dog called Ted Hughes (Ted for short) and suppertime visits from a local playwright. Not to mention the two boys, their favourite football teams, and rude words, a very broad-minded mother and assorted nice chairs.

From the mystery of the unpaid milk bill and the avoidance of nuclear war to mealtime discussions on pie filler, the greats of English literature, swearing in German and sexually transmitted diseases, Love, Nina is a wonderful celebration of bad food, good company and the relative merits of Thomas Hardy and Enid Blyton.

Tallack, Mallachy

60 degrees north (NF) (Scottish)

The sixtieth parallel marks a kind of borderland. It wraps itself around the lower reaches of Finland, Sweden and Norway; it crosses the tip of Greenland and of South-central Alaska; it cuts the great spaces of Russia and Canada in half. The parallel also passes through Shetland, at the very top of the British Isles.

In *Sixty Degrees North*, Malachy Tallack explores the places that share this latitude, beginning and ending in Shetland, where he has spent most of his life. The book focuses on the landscapes and natural environments of the parallel, and the way that people have interacted with those landscapes. It explores themes of wildness and community, of isolation and engagement, of exile and memory. In addition, *Sixty Degrees North* is also a deeply personal book, which begins with the author's loss of his father and his troubled relationship with Shetland. Informed by the journeys described, it moves towards a kind of resolution: an acceptance of loss, and ultimately a love of the place Tallack calls 'home'.

Walker, Adrian

The End of the world running club

When the world ends and you find yourself stranded on the wrong side of the country, every second counts. No one knows this more than Edgar Hill. 550 miles away from his family, he must push himself to the very limit to get back to them, or risk losing them forever... His best option is to run. But what if your best isn't good enough?

An original and powerful post-apocalyptic thriller, perfect for fans of *The Martian*

Woolf, Virginia

Mrs Dalloway

Virginia Woolf's singular technique in *Mrs Dalloway* heralds a break with the traditional novel form and reflects a genuine humanity and a concern with the experiences that both enrich and stultify existence.

Society hostess, Clarissa Dalloway is giving a party. Her thoughts and sensations on that one day, and the interior monologues of others whose lives are interwoven with hers gradually reveal the characters of the central protagonists. Clarissa's life is touched by tragedy as the events in her day run parallel to those of Septimus Warren Smith, whose madness escalates as his life draws toward inevitable suicide.