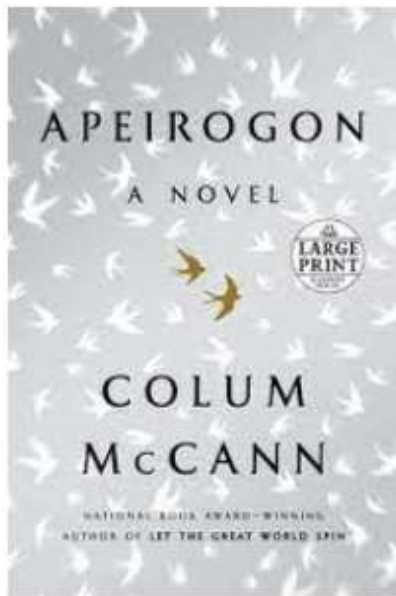


## March 2021



*Apeirogon* is certainly a weighty piece of work, both in size and in the density and weight of the subject matter. The sheer weight and depth of emotion here made the book a challenging, though rewarding read. It was long-listed for the Booker Prize in 2020. *Apeirogon* is structured as 1,001 individual chapters, some as short as a sentence, reflecting the Arabian 1001 Nights stories. Some are short, some are long, some are blanks, some are photos but all are designed to tell a story.

The apeirogon of the title is a shape with a ‘countably infinite number of sides’. As a whole an apeirogon approaches the shape of a circle. One can finally arrive at any point within the whole – anywhere is reachable. Anything is possible, even the seemingly impossible. It’s a message of hope in an almost hopeless conflict. That if both sides could only sit down and talk they would find that they have more in common than separates them.

While we’ve all heard of the conflict in Israel and Palestine forever, mostly we weren’t aware of the dynamics of the conflict. Much of what we hear through the western media is not a very balanced view, mostly being skewed in favour of the Israeli settlers. And that is what this book gives us – essentially the same story told from two perspectives. We see the relative peace and luxury of the Israelis and the poverty of the Palestinians but both are subject to the same fear and uncertainty, always watching for the suspicious person, always know where the exit is, living with one eye alert to the possibilities of violence and sudden death.

Rami is an Israeli Jew, Bassam is a Palestinian Muslim. The defining moment for each of them is the deaths of their young daughters, Smadar aged almost 14 in 1997 is blown up by

Rami is an Israeli Jew, Bassam is a Palestinian Muslim. The defining moment for each of them is the deaths of their young daughters, Smadar aged almost 14 in 1997 is blown up by Palestinian suicide bombers in a market place. 10 year old Abir is shot in the back of the head by a rubber bullet fired by a young Israeli soldier on patrol in 2007. For both men, this is the crystallizing instant by which they define the rest of their lives. The fathers become involved in the Parents' Circle, where parents who have been bereaved by the conflict can gather and talk. They use this as a way of bringing the message to the world – that nothing will change until we talk. We see their daughters deaths from the perspective of each father and then from each other.

All of the members were impressed by the incredible amount of research undertaken by the author and the insights into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict / dynamic BUT we all considered that the book was longer than it needed to be and was over-written to a great extent. While the book was beautifully written, the relentless repetition of the death scenes and aftermath evoked the constant pain of the fathers and the never-ending nature of the conflict, it leaves the reader with almost a compassion fatigue. The hopelessness of the struggle, the remorselessness of the fathers' grief and the knowledge that this scenario plays out hundreds of times each day in a never-ending cycle of violence and oppression is almost too much to bear. *The Guardian review* says that you don't so much read *Apeirogon* but feel it, and this is very true.

**Ratings:** Dianne 4, Nicola 4, Lynda 3.5, Robyn 4, Janet DNF, Jenny 3, Margie 4, Di 4, Viv 4, Pauline 4.

Our next meeting will be at Preece House on 12/04/21 at 6:30PM to discuss *The Yellow Notebook* by Helen Garner. Hope to see you all there and happy reading!

# Other Books We Read

## March 2021

Transcription by Kate Atkinson, 3.5

The Blue Flower by Penelope Fitzgerald, 2

Those Who Leave and Those Who Stay by Elena Ferrante, 3

The Story of the Lost Child by Elena Ferrante, 3.5

Accidental Feminists by Jane Caro, 3.5

The Details: On Love, Death and Reading by Tegan Bennett Daylight, 4

Learning from the Germans by Susan Neiman, 4

The phone box at the end of the world by Laura Imai Messina, 3.5

This has been absolutely lovely by Jessica Dettmann, 3

Rules of civility by Amr Towles, 3

Once more with feeling by Ceridwen Dovey, 3

The Jane Austen Society by Natalie Jenner, 3.5

Mindsight by Dan Siegel, 3.5

The Paris Library by Janet Skeslien Charles, 4

Franny and Zooey by J.D Salinger, 4.5

Bringing the Fight by Merle Thornton, 3.5

Landscape of Farewell by Alex Miller, 3.5

Emma by Jane Austen, 4

Moon Tiger by Penelope Lively, 3.5

Lost Children Archive, Valeria Luiselli, 3.5

Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and The Birth of the FBI by David Grann, 4

Turbulence by David Szalay, 3.5

The Girl With the Louding Voice by Abi Dare 3.5