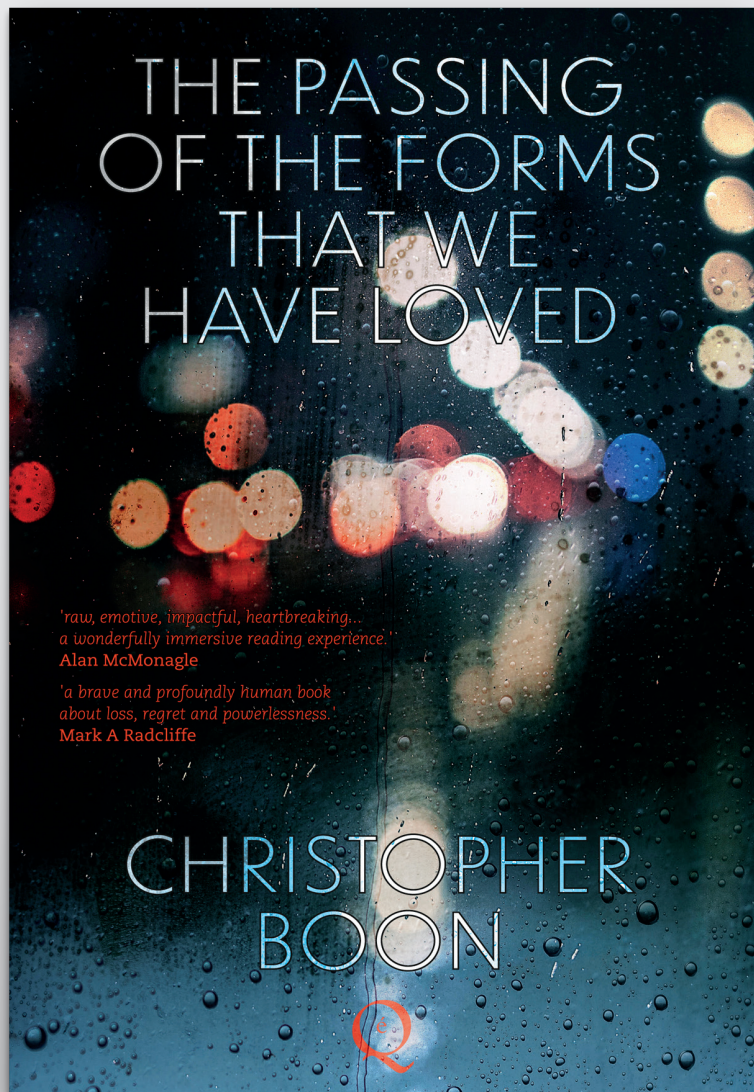


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## BOOK CLUB AUTHOR Q&A THE PASSING OF THE FORMS THAT WE HAVE LOVED BY CHRISTOPHER BOON



Our authors would be delighted to participate in any book club discussions you have arranged, either in person or via a video link. Should you choose one of our titles for your book club we are also happy to provide copies directly at a 40% discount. Please contact us at [info@epoquepress.com](mailto:info@epoquepress.com) for all enquiries.

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Please see detailed below some questions and answers provided by the author in relation to their book.

## 1. How would you summarise the book and your motivations for writing it?

The Passing of the Forms That We Have Loved is a semi-autobiographical book chronicling my father's death from oesophageal cancer. While I was writing it, my mother died from cancer of the lymph nodes. Essentially, the book came from the desire to turn something traumatic into something creatively positive, as well as being a stepping stone towards some measure of catharsis.

## 2. What is the significance of the title?

It's taken from a passage in The Hero with a Thousand Faces by Joseph Campbell: "The world, as we know it, as we have seen it, yields but one ending: death, disintegration, dismemberment, and the crucifixion of our heart with the passing of the forms that we have loved." This quotation had a lot of resonance for me. I took Death, Disintegration and Dismemberment as the titles for the three parts of the book.

## 3. What are the main themes of the book? What do these themes mean to you as the author?

The novel is about loss: not just the literal loss of one's parents, but the loss of everything one holds dear in childhood. I had a very enjoyable childhood, but much of it felt tainted by the unnecessarily cruel, graphic deaths of my parents; as if those memories had been betrayed in some way. There's also a lot of guilt in the novel; much of this is focused around attempting to live up to the sacrifices parents often make for their children, and experiencing a resultant sense of failure.

## 4. Did you decide on a specific style of writing for this book, and if so, why? What are you trying to convey through your style?

The style evolved as I was writing. For a long time, I considered my influences as being rooted in various authors of contemporary US fiction, but as I was writing, I was reading more literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, so this inevitably crept into my writing style.

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## **5. Was the structure and layout of the book an important consideration? If so, why?**

I tend to overwrite first drafts and then edit them down significantly. The first draft of this novel was over 200,000 words, whilst the final draft was 112,000 words. The structure, based around the Joseph Campbell quotation above, actually came about while I was halfway through the initial draft. I hadn't planned it that way; it developed organically.

## **6. What would you highlight as some of the pivotal scenes of the book, what is their importance to the narrative and to you on a personal level?**

There's a section in which the narrator goes home to witness his father's final few days. Specifically, in one of the scenes, the narrator helps to lift his father from a chair so that the latter can void himself in a commode. This was based on personal experience: as I was helping to perform this action, I grasped my father too tightly beneath his armpit, unaware that he had a cancerous growth there, which caused him to cry out. How could I not have known this? It brought home to me how much pain my mother had gone through in my absence, as she had such an intimate knowledge of each of his sores and lesions and tumours, whereas I was oblivious to them. Yes, I was working in London at the time; no, I couldn't have been there for the duration of my father's illness, which went on for over six months. But it's in my nature to feel an oppressive guilt over such actions, or lack thereof. Whenever I reflect on the book, this is the passage that comes to mind, as its counterpart in reality is etched inexorably onto my memory.

## **7. How important was the time period or the setting to the story? What were you looking to evoke through this?**

I'm always careful in my writing not to evoke a very specific time period. I never include brand names, dates, stories from the news and so forth because I believe their omission helps to engender a sense of timelessness and universality.

## **8. Which location in the book would you most like to visit and why?**

As the novel is semi-autobiographical, I've visited them all. They're the

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landscapes of my childhood in rural Hertfordshire, my adult life in North London and the travels I undertook in my twenties.

## 9. What emotions are you hoping to evoke in the reader?

I'll leave that up to the reader. I received one very negative review of the novel, which stated that it should have come with a trigger warning. I wasn't deliberately trying to shock readers. In all honesty, the process of writing felt less about readership than it did about catharsis. I had a lot of undirected anger in me after my parents' deaths, and writing has always been a means for me to explore my emotions.

## 10. As an author you are very close to your characters. Reflecting back on the book, which of your characters would you like to meet in real life and why?

Parts of the book were semi-autobiographical, so at least some of the characters are based on people from various stages of my life. To this end, I'm closer to the narrator than I'd like to be.

## Additional questions your book club may wish to consider:

- Other readers have commented on the minutiae of observation in the novel. Why do you think the author chose to write in this way?
- Why do you think the author chose to write the novel using only full stops and question marks, omitting other conventional punctuation such as speech marks, commas, semi-colons etc.? What kind of effect does this produce? 'Who is the bravest person in the book?'
- Why do you think the depictions of illness are so graphic?

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Christopher Boon spent his formative years in a small village in rural Hertfordshire. He studied English at Manchester University and, upon graduating, worked for three years as an English teacher in Ogaki City, Japan. He now works as a teacher in southern France.

He started working on the novel after his father died of oesophageal cancer in 2008 and whilst writing it his mother also succumbed to cancer. These experiences helped shape the novel. Christopher has also written a trilogy of screenplays based on loss and is currently working on his next novel.