



The Tari - Kākā / Khandallah Literary Review

September 2023

Welcome to the September edition of our monthly newsletter. Our newsletter can also be found online at:
wcl.govt.nz >About >Locations >Khandallah

We'll review books, and some music, which appeal to us. Contributions come from library members and staff (basically, anyone who tells us about a Book, Movie or CD they like)

“A book is made from a tree. It is an assemblage of flat, flexible parts (still called “leaves”) imprinted with dark pigmented squiggles. One glance at it and you hear the voice of another person, perhaps someone dead for thousands of years. Across the millennia, the author is speaking, clearly and silently, inside your head, directly to you. Writing is perhaps the greatest of human inventions, binding together people, citizens of distant epochs, who never knew one another. Books break the shackles of time – proof that humans can work magic.” Carl Sagan

(Kākā design by Michelle Carlton Wilderness Collection)

Mauri Ora: Wisdom from the Māori World by Peter Alsop and Te Rau Kupenga



A stunning book that presents whakataukī (proverbs) with beautiful historical photographs. I love this ‘taonga’ treasure!

Tangata ako ana I te kāenga, te tūranga ki te marae, tau ana.

“A person nurtured in the community contributes strongly to society.” (p39)

Nā koutou I tangi, nā tatau katoa.

“When you cry, your tears are shed by us all.” (p68)

He tangata takahi manuhiri, he marae puehu.

“When a guest is disrespected, the marae suffers.” (p105)

Becoming familiar with these ancient proverbs is the way forward for us in Aotearoa. Andy

Cassandra Darke by Posy Simmonds (Adult Graphic Novel)



The title character in this absorbing graphic novel is 71, overweight, divorced and rather bitter. Convicted of art fraud she is also unrepentant. *“my activity had hardly seemed criminal. More a way of giving certain clients what they asked for, and what they deserved. Clients who pissed me off. Speculators who had no interest in the art they bought, except for its ability to hold its value. I spit on them, their ignorance, their vulgarity, their itchy palms. Anyway, the game was up. Assume the worst, I remember thinking (my usual motto).* Avoiding jail, Cassandra takes in her step-

niece as boarder/dogsbody little knowing Nikki is caught up in the acts of a group of local thugs and may be holding a murder weapon. The art and text blend well together to propel the gritty story through realistic situations. The use of different tones and hues to suit the mood of the plot is particularly effective. Other graphic novels by Simmonds, Gemma Boverly and Tamara Drewe, have been made into films. If Cassandra Darke got the same treatment, I’d certainly go to see it. Greg

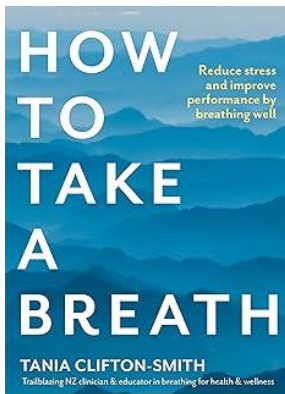
Hurricane Season by Fernanda Melchor



This is a gripping dark tale centred around the gruesome murder of a local witch in a remote Mexican village. The story unfolds as we explore how this murder affects various characters in the community. The unique narrative style takes us deep into the lives of these individuals, uncovering their hidden secrets, desires and vulnerabilities. What makes this novel stand out is its storytelling. It weaves together different viewpoints and timelines, immersing us in the minds of the characters. Melchor's writing is vivid and raw, portraying a world filled with superstitions, violence and disturbing descriptions.

It's a testament to Melchor's skill that the narrative grips you like a spell, refusing to let go. Hurricane Season is more than just a murder mystery; it's a journey that reveals the dark underbelly of a seemingly peaceful village. It's an exploration of human behaviour and the uncomfortable realities that often hide in the shadows. This book is like a literary storm, leaving you deeply affected and unable to forget its impact. Isabel

How to Take A Breath by Tania Clifton-Smith (Non-Fiction)



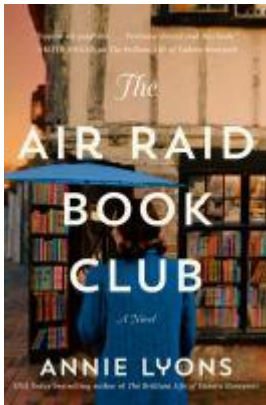
Reduce stress and improve performance by breathing well is the subtitle of this book. The author is a New Zealand clinician and educator with 30 years' experience in breathing for health and wellness. *"Breathing is not as simple as in and out. Each person has their own unique rhythm, style and pattern, and it's important that you physically connect with yours"*.

This is an incredibly detailed and informative handbook on probably our most important bodily function.

Breathing affects movement, sleep, bowel motions, feelings, thoughts and voice control. Clifton-Smith

examines all the physical processes of breathing and the chemicals and gases that are created and the role they play. There are plenty of examples of people she has helped and the methods she developed for them in various situations. Methods for self-checking your own breathing patterns and exercises to develop and strengthen your breathing are easy to understand and carry out. I was getting it wrong, how about you? Greg

The Air Raid Book Club by Annie Lyons



This heart-warming novel was a surprise hit for me. I hadn't heard of the author and picked it out of the library's online list of new books.

It was a perfect novel for book lovers like me and you, particularly fans of the nineteenth century classics with the odd nod to the golden age of detective fiction.

The book revolves around Bingham Books - a shop set up in London in the 1930s by our hero Gertie Bingham and her husband Harry. But Harry has died, and Gertie is left bereft and grieving. Life no longer holds the joy and sense of purpose it did for Gertie, so she considers selling up

the book shop and retiring.

Until her friend Charles asks her to take in a child refugee from a desperate Jewish family living in Germany. Despite a tough start, head strong Hedy gives Gertie a reason to keep going. They bond over the Brontë sisters and start an air raid book club to keep up their neighbours' spirits during the Blitz. As the bombs fall, the neighbours huddle in the book shop's air raid shelter and connect over Jane Eyre, Rebecca and A Christmas Carol.

Rebecca is one of my favourite books of all time so for me Gertie has great taste! These connections lead to deepening friendships which get them through the war and the tough times it brings.

This book was charming and reminded me of all the classics I have loved. It has inspired me to reread some of my faves again, including Little Women. I guarantee you'll enjoy this book, and it would be a good gift to give to a book loving friend. Fiona R

A Rip Through Time by Kelley Armstrong (Science Fiction and Fantasy)

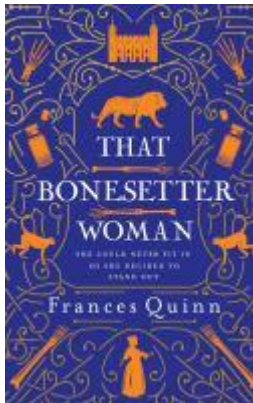


This is a jolly enjoyable hybrid novel, a cross between a time travel fantasy and a Victorian murder mystery. Mallory is a Canadian Homicide Detective visiting Edinburgh, who, when she is attacked and strangled wakes up in the body of Catriona who was also attacked in the same spot one hundred and fifty years earlier. Her body is a housemaid in the employ of a Funeral Director cum amateur forensic scientist. Mallory/Catriona must learn to cope with the mores and language of the times, as well as corset, stays and draughty underwear. At the same time, she suspects a series of murders may be the work of

another visitor from the 21st century. This, the first book in another series from the author, is meticulously researched and descriptively written.

Armstrong writes strong female characters and devises unusual thrilling plots. I've already reserved the next book. Greg

That Bonesetter Woman by Frances Quinn (Fiction)

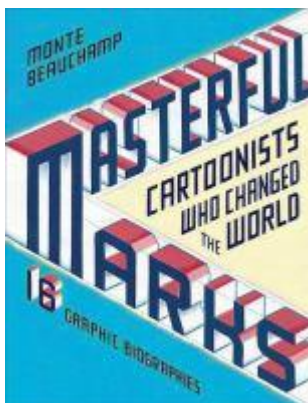


In the mid-1700s, straight talking and ungainly Endurance (“Durie”) Proudfoot wants nothing more than to follow in her father’s footsteps and become a bonesetter. She has proven she has the knack and strength for this job – part chiropractor, part orthopaedic surgeon – but one problem stands in her way. She’s a woman.

Dispatched to London to look after her equally ambitious sister whose attempts to use her bountiful good looks and charm to climb the social ladder has led her into shame, Durie becomes more determined than ever to follow her dream. The book immerses you in Georgian London with the theatres and coffee houses where the established medical fraternity gather to heckle and bully our impertinent bonesetter. The menagerie at The Tower of London, the Frost Fairs and the pathos of The Foundling Hospital provide a vivid setting for the assorted villains and heroes of this story.

Inspired by the life of Sally Mapp, a bonesetter who found fame in 18th century England, I think Durie Proudfoot has become my favourite literary heroine of all time. Fiona M

Masterful Marks: Cartoonists Who Changed the World by Monte Beauchamp (Non-Fiction)



An inspiring book of remarkable men who were driven to create and had a passion for cartoons. Most were born in the early years of the 20th century, although one, Rodolphe Töpffer, credited with writing the first comic strips, was born in 1799. Each of the luminaries featured have their own section, their story told in the unique cartooning style that made them famous, however the section about Hergé is an earlier style of drawing rather than the more familiar TinTin. It is a powerful way to demonstrate their art and illuminate their life story. Artists like Dr. Seuss, Charles M.

Schultz, Walt Disney and Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster (Superman) are easily recognisable. You will know the work of the others, even if their names are unfamiliar; Jack Kirby (Captain America), Chas Addams (Addams Family), Harvey Kurtzman (Mad Magazine) even Hugh Hefner (Playboy). Most of all these are stories of artists who demonstrated extraordinary tenacity and dedication to their calling. Greg

Poems to See By: A Comic Artist Interprets Great Poetry by Julian Peters
(Non-Fiction)



A stunning expression of subjective visual artwork which I know some readers will critique but it is exceptionally well done.

The illustrator says, "I must confess, however, that my own motivations in creating these works had little to do with their potential educational uses. The truth is, I did it all for love of beauty. A beautiful poem is pretty much the most beautiful creation I can imagine."

Poem examples include:

- Emily Dickinson's "Hope is the Thing with Feathers"
- William Henley's "Invictus"
- Robert Hayden's "Those Winter Sundays"
- Yeats's "When You Are Old"
- W.H. Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts"
- Thomas Hardy's "The Darkling Thrush"
- Wordsworth's "The World is Too Much With Us"
- Gerald Manley Hopkins' "Spring and Fall"
- Dickinson's "Because I Could Not Stop for Death"
- Poe's "Annabel Lee"

Yeats's "When You Are Old" – Without reading commentaries it would seem a love letter to the widow he would leave behind.

Romantic and emotive with grief and love.

"But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you.."

Thomas Hardy's "The Darkling Thrush" - Beautiful ending:

"That I could think there trembled through

His happy good-night air

Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew

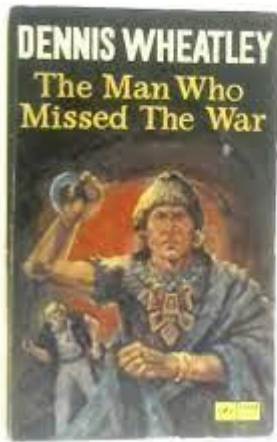
And I was unaware."

Wordsworth's "The World is Too Much with Us" - Heart-wrenching!

"We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

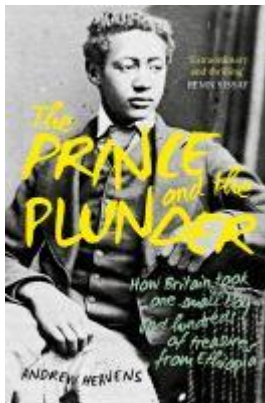
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon.." Andy

The Man Who Missed the War by Dennis Wheatley (Fiction)



I'm not sure when I read a Dennis Wheatley novel last, at least 40 years ago probably, and he hasn't aged that well. This book is jingoistic and casually racist, a 'ripping yarn' where the characters exclaim 'By Jove!', 'Gosh' and 'Holy St. Bridget!'. If you can get past that style, it's also a solid, exciting adventure story with an unusual real-life basis. During World War Two the author was a member of the Joint Planning Staff of the War Cabinet. To avoid the loss of ships and cargo sunk by German U-Boats he came up with a proposal to use the Gulfstream and prevailing winds to float a connected convoy of rafts across the Atlantic. The idea was never implemented so is

used for the plot of this story. The idea works, but is undone by treachery, a stowaway and a freak storm. Drifting past the Canaries, Africa and ending up in Antarctica, our hero, and companion discover a lost civilisation, a tropical climate, magic, human sacrifice and the means to strike a blow against Hitler. This was written in 1945, and they don't write 'em like this anymore, but you can see why Wheatley sold over 50 million books. Greg



The Prince and the Plunder: How Britain took one small boy and hundreds of treasures from Ethiopia by Andrew Heavens (Non-Fiction)

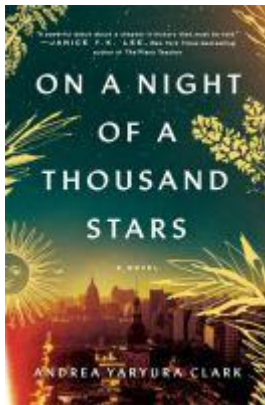
(This is an abridged review from another publication given with the author's consent)

The British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, Westminster Abbey and the National War Museum of Scotland all figure amongst tens of institutions in Britain and other countries in Europe and North America that hold religious artefacts, manuscripts and other items seized in a raid by British forces on the citadel of King Tewodros 11 at Maqdala (today: Amba Mariam) in the highlands of Ethiopia in 1868.

The difference from other such raids, and amassing of war booty, is that the British took back with them the six-year-old son of Tewodros. Prince Alamayu, who was to spend the remaining twelve years of his life outside his native country, lived an extraordinary life, educated at Cheltenham College and Rugby School and briefly at Sandhurst.

At a time when the return of items from museums to their country of origin is a topical issue, Andrew Heavens's account of the plunder – Ethiopia's Elgin Marbles- is a fascinating tale, told in a very chatty way and illustrated with drawings and photographs from the period. Together with the account of the expatriation and upbringing of Prince Alamayu, this book addresses the unintended consequences of displacing precious relics and the challenges this represents for the countries involved. James

On A Night of a Thousand Stars by Andrea Yaryura Clark (Fiction)



In this moving, emotional narrative of love and resilience, a young couple confronts the start of Argentina's Dirty War in the 1970s, and a daughter searches for truth twenty years later.

A skilful debut which serves as a reminder that a country's past can never be left in the past.

This is a really good book and I highly recommend it.

Jane