

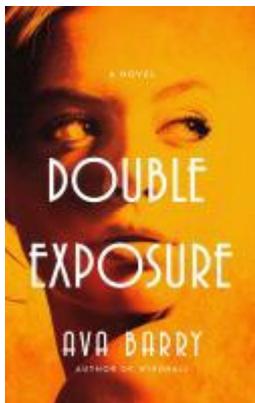
The Khandallah Literary Review

Welcome to the February edition of our monthly newsletter.

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

“To acquire the habit of reading is to construct for yourself a refuge from almost all the miseries of life.” – W. Somerset Maugham

Double Exposure by Ava Barry (Fiction)

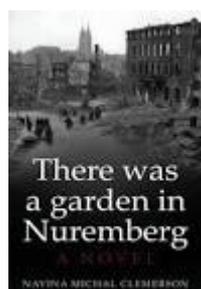


The city of Los Angeles is just as much a character as the people involved in this psychological book-noir. *“The city was a blank canvas, an empty memory, waiting until sunrise to reinvent itself anew. It was a city that encouraged stories, pretty lies, new names, smokescreens and disguises.”* It's a broken as the participants own lives. Rainey is the founder of an all-female private detective agency, a former child prodigy who abandoned music to avoid a breakdown; Melia is the heiress and survivor of a brutal attack that left both her parents dead, and her brother, the suspect, missing. Hired to investigate a threatening message to Melia, Rainey is also threatened and stalked by a previous relationship. The demons in their past bring the two women together, but the more Rainey learns about Melia, the more questions she has. Nothing is as it seems in this enigmatic beautifully written puzzle of a book. Greg

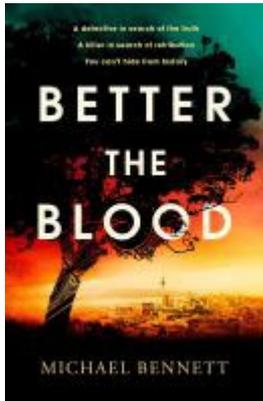
Evening with an Author

Khandallah Library on behalf of Wellington City Libraries invites you to hear local author Navina Michal Clemerson talk about her recently published book “A Garden in Nuremberg”. This is a very personal novel, based on her family's history and experiences in Germany during the rise of the Nazi movement.

Please join us at Khandallah Library on Friday 24 March 6pm to 7pm.



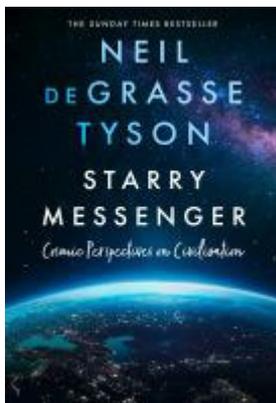
Better the Blood by Michael Bennett (NZ Crime Fiction)



This novel, the first in a series, has been described by the founder of the Ngaio Marsh awards as “the first crime novel about a Māori detective written by a Māori author.” A series of apparently unrelated murders in Auckland are the work of a man seeking utu for the killing of a Māori leader by soldiers eight generations ago. It is this concept of utu that moves this novel beyond the usual simple revenge story. While the killings are undeniably wrong the killer’s motives are multi-layered and complex. Themes of colonisation and its resulting injustices are also explored in greater depth and nuance through the main character,

Detective Sergeant Hana Westerman, who navigates the tensions between being wahine Māori and her work within the Police Department and the inevitable clashes between culture and duty. This is a contemplative, slow moving (rather than page-turning) novel but it is also a compelling mystery with complex and memorable characters, (particularly Hana) which provides a timely social commentary on so many of the issues facing this country.
David

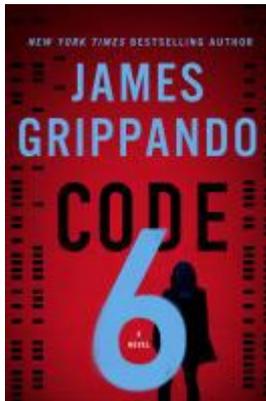
Starry Messenger: Cosmic Perspectives on Civilisation by Neil deGrasse Tyson



This 219-page book is a succinct, enlightened and wide-ranging examination of the way we think and why. Beliefs and opinions are tested for validity, not from a global perspective, but one from the universe. Astrophysicist and Director of the Hayden Planetarium Dr Tyson dissects prevailing and dearly held notions from a range of topics. They include colour and race, gender and identity, meatarians and vegetarians and conflict and resolution. His conclusions and facts are dispersed with wit and humour, interspersed with poetry

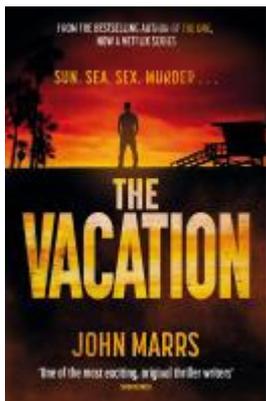
and quotations to illuminate the points: *“The great tragedy of Science – the slaying of a beautiful hypothesis by an ugly fact”*. Thomas Henry Huxley. An absorbing, informative and definitely entertaining way to think about the important issues of our time. Greg

Code 6 by James Grippando (Fiction)



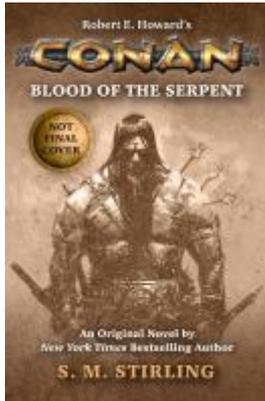
I regard Grippando as being on a par with John Grisham at his best. He writes exiting intelligent thrillers, including a series featuring trial lawyer Jack Swytek. This is a standalone thriller that focuses on Big Data, personal information gathered from a range of sources, and the use it is put to. Kate Gamble, the daughter of the CEO of a technology software company, is in law school but wants to be a playwright. Disturbed by the suicide of her mother, she is driven to develop her play about Thomas J Watson, co-founder of IBM and its role in creating and expanding the Hollerith D-eleven card sorting machine, used to expedite the Nazi's Final Solution. When an employee of her father's firm, and also a childhood friend, is kidnapped, the ransom demand is for top secret Code 6, also a code for the Hollerith machine. The same ethical dilemmas that Watson faced, are placed before Kate and her father in a gripping well told story. Incidentally 'Watson' is a real play written by Grippando with details at the end of the book. Greg

The Vacation by John Marrs (Fiction)



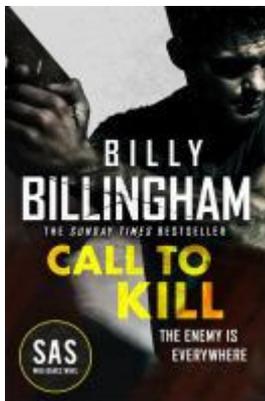
The author is well known for his Netflix series 'The One', which sounds like this book; a good idea marred by clumsy writing and clunky dialogue. A disparate group of people, most of whom arrive at the same time, gather at the Venice Beach International Hostel. They are all desperate, one way or another, hiding from something or seeking something. Marrs is apparently praised for his plot twists, and there are a few of those, but there are too many implausible connections, two separate serial killers for one. Entertaining in an undemanding way. Greg

Robert E Howard's Conan: Blood of the Serpent by S M Stirling (Fantasy)



Sword and Sorcery tales still have a following, myself included. This is a throwback to the days of 1930s 'pulp fiction' with all the ingredients included: Magical creatures, brutal sword fights and strange civilisations. Stirling writes exactly in the style popularised by Howard, and it is written as the prequel to one of his original stories "Red Nails" which is included in the book. The two stories flow seamlessly together for an entertaining old-fashioned read. Greg

Call to Kill by Mark 'Billy' Billingham (Thriller)



Yet another SAS soldier turned thriller writer in the footsteps of Chris Ryan and Andy McNab, so if you like them, you'll like this. The author can tell a good tale, and this involves missing tactical weapons, terrorists trying to arrange an ecological disaster and the hero trapped behind enemy lines. A boy's own mix of interesting characters and believable situations even if the hero's ability to survive is near miraculous. Greg