

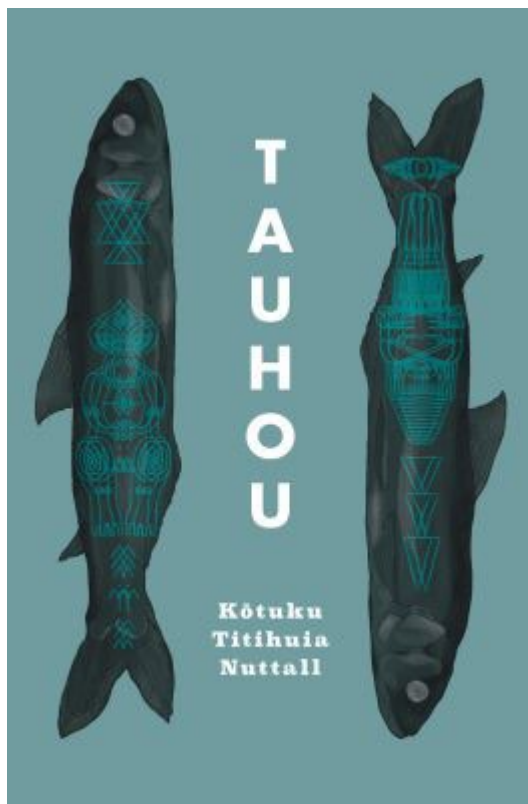
The Khandallah Literary Review

Welcome to the January 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)

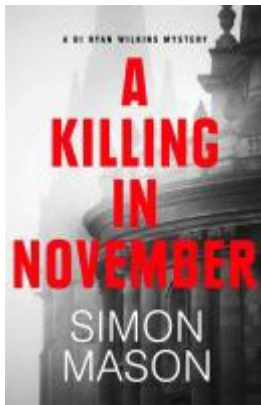
"There is no enjoyment like reading" Miss Bingley in *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen

Tauhou by Kōtuku Titihuia Nuttall (Fiction)



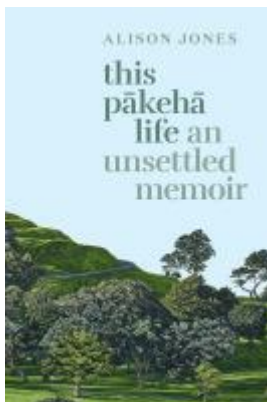
This is a beautiful first novel by a young New Zealand writer, who imagines a world where her Māori and Native American tīpuna live on islands side by side. Nuttall's writing is at once dreamy and pristine, capturing a myriad of indigenous experiences through moments in her characters' lives. It's non-linear, told in a cascading series of perspectives of interlinked characters. I couldn't quite figure out how they were all related to one another, but it didn't affect my enjoyment of the book. To me it read like poetry - you don't need to fully understand it to appreciate its magic. Grab this book if you see it - it's well worth reading. Charlotte

A Killing in November by Simon Mason (Crime Fiction/Police Procedural)



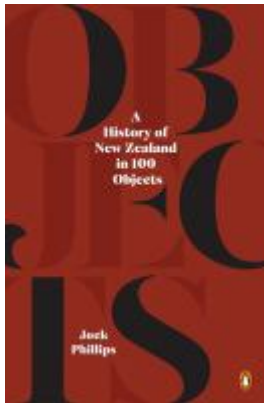
It takes a brave author to follow in the footsteps of Colin Morse, Dorothy L. Sayers et al and set a crime novel in the “town and gown” world of Oxford but author Simon Mason has done this admirably in the first of a new series. This terrific crime novel is not the Oxford of Morse and Lewis but the Oxford of the 21st Century where a murder occurs while the university deals with sexual harassment charges and seeks funding from morally dubious sources. This is well plotted, full of twists and turns and sometimes very funny. If you thought Dalziel and Pascoe were a mismatched duo wait till you meet these two Detective Inspectors. While there are many well-crafted crime novels it is the unconventional character of one of the Detective Inspectors in particular that makes this book memorable. 27-year-old D.I Ryan Wilkins is less than suited to work that requires tact and sensitivity (he has been transferred to Oxford after headbutting the Bishop of Salisbury) but graduated top of his class at the Police Academy. His shamelessly undiplomatic and brutally honest interactions with colleagues, superiors and suspects are balanced by an incredible eye for detail and a retentive memory. It is due to the skill of the author that such a challenging character is understandable and sympathetic. David

This Pākehā Life by Alison Jones (Biography)



In her recount of her journey into Māori studies, Alison Jones describes her interactions with Te Ao Māori and Māori people throughout her life, and how this consequently shaped the understanding that she holds today. It is in these encounters where she highlights her positionality as a Pākehā, and importantly what owning this term (compared to its vaguer counterpart "European New Zealander") means for Pākehā in a post-colonial Aotearoa. With rich yet sharp perception, Jones addresses the ambivalences, incongruences and confusions that Pākehā often face in their relation to Māori. As she states in the book, there are no solutions to the issues she highlights, but rather relationality, a call to engage. This is a compelling book for everyone who identifies as Pākehā, as well as those who call New Zealand home. Yani

A History of New Zealand in 100 Objects by Jock Phillips (NZ Non-Fiction)



I have only “dipped in’ to a few of these vignettes in this impressive book, but as the author notes, as the objects took centre stage “I began to realise that it was just as likely that people would dip into the book, attracted to particular titles and images” as they would read start to finish. From his days helping set up one day exhibitions at Te Papa Phillips learnt the value of telling stories through objects. Divided into 11 periods in New Zealand’s history- before 1800-, 1800-1839- and 20-year blocks thereafter- he located objects to best illuminate this period. So, it is not just the objects themselves that are so fascinating but the meaning and wider ramifications around them. These objects include the kete of an unknown Māori woman circa 1680-1730, a baton used against striking watersiders in 1913 by farmer turned Special Constable Leslie Adkins, the steam train *Josephine* which was the first to use the new gauge dimensions in New Zealand and the Northland Gum Cathedral, made up of 600 pieces and taking 10 years to create! An excellent book which should be essential reading for all New Zealanders. Greg

Kawai: For Such a Time as This by Monty Soutar (Fiction)



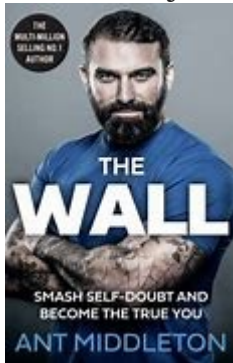
I was really excited when this one arrived. A historical epic about pre-colonial Aotearoa, *Kawai* tells the story of the legendary chief Kaitanga, and his quest to avenge the slaughter of his family. Soutar's background as a historian is obvious, which is both a strength and a weakness. There's a wealth of detail about Māori life and cultural practices, but it's often clumsily integrated into the story, with the narrative stopping so things can be explained. The prose is clunky as well, with the reader always told rather than shown what characters are thinking and feeling. The material is so good it's a shame the writing style doesn't live up to it, especially because there aren't many books out there like this. I'll be reading the next book in the series but hoping that it gets a better edit. Charlotte

Entanglement by Bryan Walpert (NZ Fiction)



A memory-impaired time traveller attempts to correct a tragic mistake he made in 1976, a novelist becomes romantically involved with a New Zealand philosopher and a writer obsesses over the disintegration of his marriage. Are they separate stories or one? “Not the sort of thing I thought I’d like, but a very intelligent book. Well worth a read”. Gail from Ngaio

The Wall by Ant Middleton (Non-Fiction/Self-Help)



I must be one of few people who've not heard of Ant Middleton because when I selected this book to review, I thought I'd picked a book by Ant McPartlin from light entertainment duo Ant and Dec. How wrong I was. Instead, I received a book with an intimidating cover photo of a muscled man with piercing blue eyes staring out at me looking like an old school personal trainer who yells and swears to motivate you. For those of you who are new to this author, Ant Middleton is a former British SAS soldier who presents a TV series called SAS Australia and has published a series of books about mental toughness. His latest book covers a series of themes that stand in the way of us reaching our potential with advice on how to smash through these limiting thoughts or behaviours. There's nothing new here – it's simply packaged up differently to align to the hard man, ex-soldier brand that Ant Middleton has become known for and references later in the book. If you can get past the references to Australian celebrities (who I hadn't heard of), the swearing and the initially male-dominated narrative about being a better husband and father then the advice is pretty good. And if you stick with it then a different side to the author emerges in the second half of the book. There are stories of contestants from the TV series and readers to help illustrate his advice and they can be easier to relate to than the author. One story that stayed with me was the contestant who had to overcome her fear of being in a car submerged in water. Amazingly she completed the challenge of escaping the submerged car without panicking by making one commitment at a time and breaking the challenge down into small, clear but simple steps. This chapter alone was worth the price of the book. I wouldn't normally read a book from an author like this and I'm probably not his target audience. But despite that, I've taken away some of the advice and started to put it into practice.

Fiona from Khandallah

When We Had Wings by Ariel Lawhorn, Kristina McMorris and Susan Meissner (Historical Fiction)



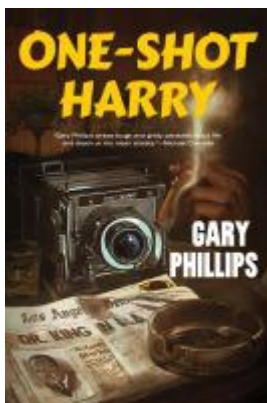
The Philippines, 1941 3 U.S navy nurses forced to serve under combat conditions and are ultimately the first female prisoners of the Second World War. Based on the true experiences of the 'Angels of Bataan'. "I thoroughly recommend this book! Interesting, thoughtful and factually correct down to the smallest details". Jane of Khandallah

Disorientation by Elaine Hsieh Chou (Fiction)



Ingrid Yang is a postgrad student struggling with a dissertation she doesn't want to write. Pressured into studying a Chinese American poet by a supervisor who wants a more diverse student body, she jumps at the distraction of a cryptic note in the university archive. It leads her into a mystery that turns her life - and the whole university - on its head. This is a smart, funny novel that I genuinely can't find anything to criticise about. It tackles big topics in the culture at the moment - cultural appropriation, American nationalism, what constitutes an authentic voice - without being swept away by its ambition or losing sight of Ingrid's day to day reality. I breezed through this book in a day and enjoyed every minute of it. Charlotte

One Shot Harry by Gary Phillips (Fiction)



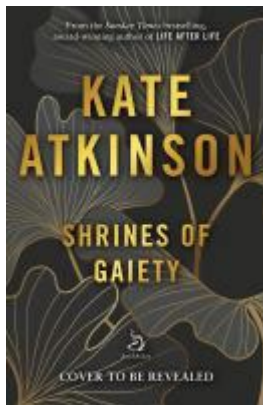
An interesting and intelligent mystery set in 1963 Los Angeles. Martin Luther King is organising his Freedom Rally, the L.A. Police Department is advertising in the deep south for the right kind of white policeman and Harry Ingram is just trying to make the rent. A black Korean war veteran, he is just as likely to be assaulted by the people he seeks as a process server, as he is by the police as a freelance crime photographer. The suspicious death of a fellow veteran, a white jazz trumpet player ensnares Harry in a conspiracy involving racists, radicals and rascals. Very evocative of it's time and place, Phillips manages to incorporate the real events and people his characters encounter and embellishes his tale with little known historical titbits and great detail. Powerful and exciting. Greg



The Hostage by A F Carter (Fiction)An impressive thriller set in depressed Baxter, a town in the American Rust Belt. A new Nissan plant is due to be built, and Captain Delia Mariola is tasked with ridding the town of the petty crime and drug dealing that is prevalent. The fact that that she is a gay single mother seems to be accepted and not worthy of comment, she's just good at her job. When the 15-year-old daughter of one of the owners of the building construction company is kidnapped by a professional gang the race is on, of course. What sets this

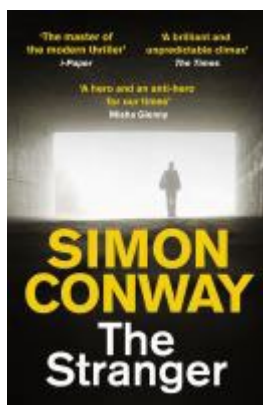
apart from other thrillers, apart from the lead character, is the kidnappee, an exceedingly bright teen determined not to be a hapless victim. The cryptic clues she manages to slip past the kidnapppers may lead to her rescue, but her dysfunctional family make it difficult for Delia to decipher. Her son and potential romantic partner give her support and enliven this suspenseful tale. Well written and fast paced. Greg

Shrines of Gaiety by Kate Atkinson (Fiction)



If Charles Dickens had lived to write about the Jazz Age this is the novel he may have written. Kate Atkinson magnificently describes the world of 1920s London, its nightclubs and boarding houses, its theatres, and streets where princes and gangsters rub shoulders with policemen and dancers.

The queen of the nightclubs is Nellie Coker (based on the legendary Mrs Meyrick) whose success has bred enemies who plot to take over her business empire, but are these rivals gangsters or perhaps closer to home? This entertaining, sardonically amusing, ingeniously plotted novel is partly a romance, partly a mystery and partly a police procedural as Inspector Frobisher works to solve a murder (or two). Like Dickens, the author captures not only the lives of people with money (often made dishonestly) but the lives of people struggling for survival in London's dark underbelly. The characters are original, intriguing and often touching but always memorable. David



The Stranger by Simon Conway (Fiction) With a background in the military, mine and bomb clearance and planning strategy the author has crafted an explosive thriller reminiscent of the best of Le Carre and Mick Herron. The British Government declared terrorist and bombmaker 'The Engineer' dead, so when it is revealed he has been rescued from a black site by a criminal gang, the scandal could be disastrous. Agent Jude Lyon is tasked with finding the terrorist and shutting him down. In the finest traditions of the spy genre, conspiracies, double crosses and twists abound. Another player, 'The Stranger' could be a bigger threat. An ingenious and ruthless villain, a complex but always credible plot and realistic characters make for a very satisfying read. Greg