



# The Tari-Kākā/Khandallah Literary Review

Welcome to the February edition of our monthly newsletter. Our newsletter can also be found online at:  
[wcl.govt.nz](http://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)

## February 2024

*“At a time when book banning is back in vogue, libraries remind us that truth isn’t about who yells the loudest, but who has the right information.”— Barack Obama*

(Kākā design by Michelle Carlton Wilderness Collection)

## Bibliotherapy: How books can benefit your mental and physical health

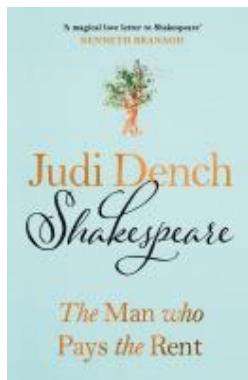
Before we start this month's book reviews we thought we'd highlight the benefits to our health that reading gives us. As if we needed any more encouragement to read.....

Dr Helena Popovic, author of "Can Adventure Prevent Dementia?" reports that 30 minutes of reading benefits your blood pressure, heart rate and mood as much as doing yoga or enjoying humour. She also found that MRI scans show reading increases brain connectivity not just at the time but up to several days after. The impact that reading has on the brain is so powerful that it's often suggested as a dementia preventative. "The more engaging the story, the more areas of the brain are stimulated" says Dr Popovic.

Research also shows that a gripping novel can lower stress levels faster than other relaxation methods such as walking or listening to music.

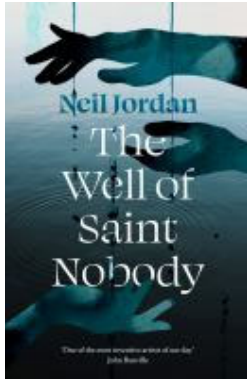
As part of the Khandallah Library's commitment to bibliotherapy and its benefits, please join us for our first Khandallah Literary Quiz on Friday 15 March from 11.00 am – 11.30 am. It's a great chance to test your knowledge of books and authors with other bibliophiles!

[Shakespeare: the man who pays the rent](#) by Judi Dench with Brendan O'Hea. Illustrations by Judi Dench. (Non-Fiction)



Dame Judi chats with Brendan O'Hea, actor, director and friend, about her roles in many of The Bard's plays. Her first role as Ophelia, which had bad reviews and meant she was swapped out for the overseas tour, playing a smaller part in Hamlet, is one of her favourites. She openly challenges some of Brendan's statements and argues her point of view on the plays without mincing her words. Dame Judi opens up about every Shakespearean role she has played throughout her seven-decade career, giving clarity on her perception of what each character brought to its play. All are told with her mischievous sense of humour and a peppering of hilarious anecdotes. Five stars. Raewyn

[The Well of Saint Nobody](#) by Neil Jordan (Fiction)



An almost fairy tale of past connections, secrets and emotional damage unfolding in a dreamlike way. William, a concert pianist who can't play due to incapacitating psoriasis in his hands, has retired to a little West Cork Village. His advertisement for a cleaner reunites him with struggling piano teacher Tara. They have met three times previously, once intimately, but to Tara's dismay, William doesn't remember. When he almost falls victim to a hidden well, Tara, for reasons even she is unsure of, invents a legend of its history and healing properties. The celebrated film director's skill is to keep the magical results plausible and inevitable. Even when the tone changes and the story takes a darker turn as the past intrudes, the mystical and beautiful qualities of love and second chances shine through. Greg

[The Spear Cuts Through Water](#) by Simon Jimenez (Science Fiction and Fantasy)

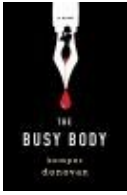


This book blew me away. I'm a fantasy lover through and through, and as in any genre there are books that stand above the rest. This one in particular reminded me of how compelling and profound fantasy can be in the right hands.

At its heart, the story is very simple: two young men escort a wounded god across the country, smuggling her from the cell where she has been imprisoned by a despotic emperor. But this is only one facet of the story Jimenez is telling. Without giving too much away, another character (in a skilfully done second person) watches the story unfold in a dreamlike theatre, where the main characters have become mythic, and where the repercussions of their actions are shown to reverberate through time. Jimenez handles these different time periods with ease, just as he seamlessly flits in and out of countless characters' minds in the main narrative, using this discordant chorus of voices to construct a world that is layered and vivid. There is beauty here, and horror. The themes have stayed with me: it made me think of history as an heirloom that we carry with us whether we want to or not, and how the present is always in conversation with the past.

It may not be for everyone. It requires work from the reader – at times it can be disorienting and dense – but if you don't mind being patient with a story, giving it time to fully crystallise, you will be rewarded! I can honestly say I have not read a book like it before, and I am so glad I did. Madeleine

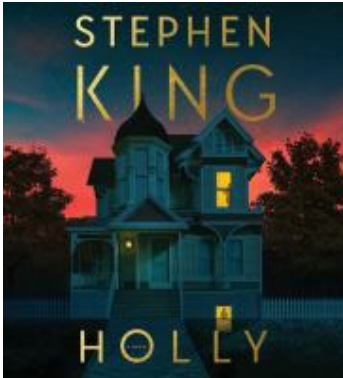
[The Busy Body by Donovan Kemper](#) (Mystery Fiction)



Author Donovan Kemper is the host of the “All About Agatha” Podcast devoted to Agatha Christie and his love of cleverly plotted whodunits is obvious in this hugely entertaining mystery. Former Senator Dorothy Gibson, a recently defeated Presidential candidate, needs a ghostwriter to write her memoirs and invites the novel’s unnamed protagonist to her rural retreat in Maine.

When a neighbour dies in suspicious circumstances the two women join up to identify suspects and untangle motives. Full of twists and turns, often amusing, Kemper’s wry, perceptive observations lift it above the usual cosy mystery. David

[Holly](#) by Stephen King (Fiction)



King revisits one of the characters from Mr Mercedes and makes her the focal point of his new novel. Holly Gibney, now a private detective, is just so darn good and genuine. As King has said “*Holly was supposed to be a walk-on character in ‘Mr. Mercedes’ and she just kind of stole the book and stole my heart.*” Her mother, a anti masker has just died of covid when Holly is called about a missing woman. She must fight her own foibles, her grief and poor sense of self-worth as she uncovers their unthinkable fate. Some of Kings greatest novels are

not out and out horror. Here he is at his restrained best, examining contemporary events and beliefs at the height of the epidemic. His strength has always been the characters he brings to life, the fully developed people who are his heroes and monsters. Not a horror story as such but being King has elements of the macabre. Brilliant. Greg

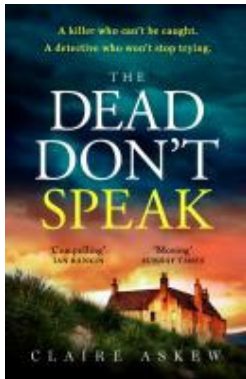
[My Lady Parts](#) by Doon Mackichan (Memoir)



BAFTA winning Performer Doon Mackichan (“Plebs”, “Toast of London”) charts her career from stand-up, and alternative comedy to TV, stage and film. This is a bold memoir which exposes the sexism and misogyny of the entertainment industry (“just pop your top off love”) and the challenges of staying true to your principles while earning a living and the price you pay for doing so. She calls out the bad behaviour she sees and questions the stereotypical way women are portrayed (demented mother, desperate cougar, hot lesbian etc) in the roles she is offered and the stories of women that are told and not told.

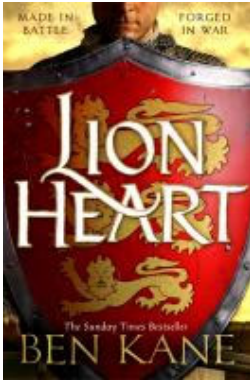
Brave, forthright and uncompromising! David

[The Dead Don't Speak](#) by Claire Askew (Mystery)



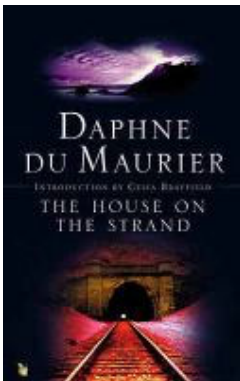
The fifth book in the series featuring Scottish policewoman D.I Helen Birch may not be the best place to start but it is a strong story. It does refer to events in the previous book as to how Helen was injured. The dedicated officer is now struggling with a debilitating injury, self-doubt and being forced into therapy. Not allowed to work and confined to her partner’s flat her relationships are strained. When a vigilante appears, she can’t resist surreptitiously investigating despite being warned off. The journal therapy patients are encouraged to write offers insights to her character and thought processes and is a counterpoint to the drama on the streets. Finally making a connection with a largely absent father adds poignancy to a well-constructed “tartan noir” entry. Greg

[Lionheart](#) by Ben Kane (Historical)



The author seems to be an interesting character in his own right. The ex-veterinarian raises money for charities and is an historical tour guide on walking and cycling tours. This first book in a series of Richard Coeur de Lion is a departure from his Roman series of novel but just a well-researched. Ferdia, also called Rufus because of his red hair, is a fictional character set among the real/historical figures of the time. He is an Irish hostage for his rebel father and comes into Richard's orbit. He is crucial in winning a battle, is eventually knighted by Richard and is witness to the great events and intrigues of the late 12 century AD. Kane's attention to detail and accuracy doesn't get in the way of an exciting and epic tale. He is a historical storyteller, rather than a historian writing a story. Thoroughly enjoyable. Greg

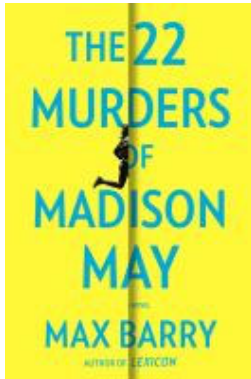
[The House on the Strand](#) by Daphne du Maurier (Fiction)



One of the author's later and lesser-known books, set in her beloved Cornwall, it is a character study in a framework of time travel, of the mind not the body. Dick Young agrees to test a drug for university friend, and idol, Magnus which transports him back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. There he witnesses events, including infidelity and murder, that as far as he can verify actually happened. The physical danger he faces as he moves about the countryside under the thrall of events, and the emotional strain on his marriage and sanity are explored with elements of the gothic and supernatural as his actions in one world impacts on the other. Influenced by the drug culture of the 60s, when it was written, Dick's search for meaning in his life is timeless. Greg



[The 22 Murders of Madison May](#) by Max Barry (Science Fiction)



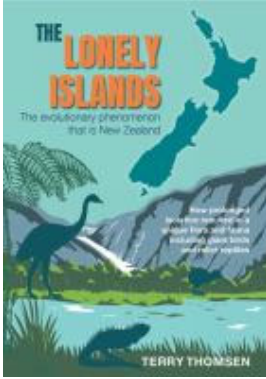
This is an intelligent Science Fiction thriller hybrid, a murder mystery set in parallel worlds. Intrepid reporter Felicity, who normally writes city politics and lifestyle stories, deputises at the murder scene of Real Estate agent Madison Mays. This turns out to be literally a life changing event as Felicity's investigation brings her into contact with escaped con Hugo and the strange device he gives her for safekeeping. Felicity finds herself in a succession of worlds trying to stop the murder, and dealing with different versions of her life, cats and live-in boyfriend Gavin. Barry is a bit thin on the mechanics of the travel process but has a deft touch with the relationships and iterations of the characters. A great premise well thought out and written. Greg

[The House of a Thousand Lies](#) by Cody Luke Davis (Thriller)



Debut psychological novel from an author more used to the process of taking books to film. Slightly shady Kerry Perkins, a surveyor who calls himself a cartographer (so he can charge more), is hired by Diana Wolf, wife of an alcoholic country music star to map their county estate. The discovery of a human skull with two wolves carved into it finishes that project but is the start of more macabre revelations. Kerry encounters disturbed stalker/hacker Pink who is obsessed by Diana and the two Wolf sons, one missing and the other a painter of psychotic art. Davis keeps the story of this dysfunctional family moving and evolving with rotating narrators each with their own selfish viewpoint, and different timelines. Everybody lies, to each other and to themselves. Engrossing. Greg

[The Lonely Islands](#) by Terry Thomsen (Non-Fiction)



The story of how the formation of Zealandia occurred over millennia, the co-joining of the islands and unique flora and fauna of New Zealand that was developed by the isolation of this part of the world. *“The more I read, the more I enjoyed this book. I particularly liked the examples of how the landforms have changed over time”.*  
Anon.

Congratulations to the young Khandallah library readers who took part in the Summer Reading Adventure. Jax, Paige and Natalie achieved great results with the number of books they read.

Here’s one of Jax’s reviews for the book “Scrambled Eggs Super”.

*I like it that the boy has to get eggs from these different creatures. I also like that the story rhymes.*