



# The Tari - Kākā / Khandallah Literary Review

## November 2023

Welcome to the November 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)

"Why Can't People Just Sit and Read Books and Be Nice to Each Other?"

David Baldacci (Author)

(Kākā design by Michelle Carlton Wilderness Collection)

## [The Daughter Of Time](#) by Josephine Tey (Mystery)



Very much a product of its time (1951) this is an excellent story. In 1990 it was voted number one in The Top 100 Crime Novels of All Time list by the British Crime Writers' Association. Inspector Alan Grant of Scotland Yard, who featured in five other more conventional mysteries is in hospital with a broken leg. To while away the time, friends provide him with portraits of historical figures to do some academic investigating. Intrigued by the portrait of Richard the Third, the much-maligned King, Hunchback and Kin-Slayer, Alan decides he does not look like the monster he has been portrayed. What unfolds is a gentle but exciting investigation, conducted from his hospital bed, of historical sources and books. With the aid of a plucky assistant to do the legwork, they discover much is wrong with his legend. A truly original and thoughtful mystery. Greg

### Fun Fact:

New Research from Philipa Langley seems to support Tey's theories with a documentary screened last week in the U.K. showing archival records which support the idea that the Princes survived their uncle.

Philippa's book on her research [Princes in the Tower: Solving History's Greatest Cold Case](#) is on order at the library.

## [Visible Cities: Lockdown to Liberation, stress to sustainability:](#)

Aotearoa fiction inspired by Italo Calvino



The celebrated Italian writer Italo Calvino's novel 'Invisible Cities' explores the intersection of reality and imagination through 11 startling themes, from 'Cities and Desire' to 'Trading Cities' to 'Cities and the Dead'. A hundred years after his birth, 11 emerging writers from Aotearoa have each taken a city from their own country and written a short story that pays tribute to Calvino's work while addressing the themes that besiege our cities in the twenty-first century.

One of the contributors is our colleague Customer Service Librarian Marlon Moala-Knox whom you may have met at Karori or Cummings Park Libraries.

[Helena Rubinstein: The Australian Years](#) by Angus Trumble (Biography)



The captivating story of the first global cosmetics empire, the fascinating woman who built it, and the past she preferred to leave behind. In this wryly entertaining portrait, Angus Trumble retraces Rubinstein's forgotten years in Australia and New Zealand which laid the foundation of her incredible success.

When National Gallery of Australia Director Angus Trumble secured Graham Sutherland's 1957 portrait *Helena Rubinstein in a Red Brocade Balenciaga Gown* for the gallery's collection, he was enthralled by the subject and that fascination turned into this book. A portrait

which has led to this portrait in words.

Angus Trumble has written an intriguing story of the early years in Australia (and New Zealand) of the woman who would go on to create the first global cosmetics empire. For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Helena Rubinstein's name and image was synonymous with glamour, with her eponymous salons in Paris, London and New York and her skin care and make up products sold at cosmetics counters around the world. Rubinstein's energy, hard work and business acumen took her from a Polish ghetto to a 36-room penthouse in New York creating a business that employed thousands, mostly women, around the world.

Much less well known are the years Rubinstein spent in Australia before she was famous. In the arcades of Melbourne and the dusty streets of Coleraine, we see her laying the foundations of a global empire.

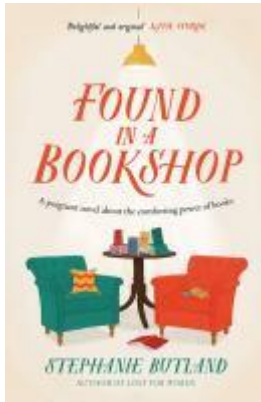
Arriving in Australia aged 23 at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and speaking very little English, Helena worked as a governess and waitress before opening her first salon in 1902. She also travelled to New Zealand to open salons in 5 cities. (Her Wellington salon was in Brandon Street) Ten years later, having made a fortune, she set sail for Europe and opened her first salon in London.

Later, Rubinstein worked hard to suppress key details of her early life, being famously "closely guarded" and protective of her own image and, later in life, her 'myth'.

While the meticulously researched book tells Helena's story it is also a social history of the culture of colonial Australia and New Zealand. In the author's hands Helena's story is told respectfully, empathetically and with humour and insight. This is a remarkable story of a woman who, overcoming misogyny and antisemitism, and with hard work, an instinctive business acumen and a willingness to take risks achieved a global business empire. David

Fun Fact: Greg was in Melbourne recently at a restaurant and noticed a plaque commemorating Helena Rubinstein's time working there as a waitress.

[Found in a Bookshop](#) by Stephanie Butland (Fiction)



“Found in a Bookshop” is set in the Lost for Words bookshop of Stephanie Butland’s earlier novel. It is relatively early in the covid pandemic – certainly pre vaccine – and times are pretty grim. Although set in York, England, where the complexities of the time – ongoing lockdowns, growing numbers of deaths and long covid and the overwhelming of the health system hit so much harder than New Zealand, so much of it is relatable to our own experience.

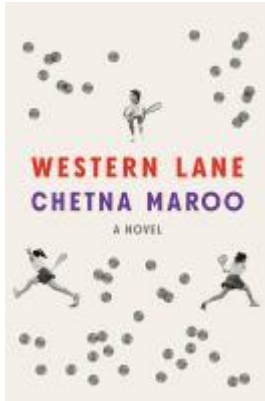
With her business on its knees, Loveday receives an email from an older couple with a request simply for “wonderful books to get us through the next few months”. Realising there is something they can do to help people through the crisis as well as save her ailing business, the idea of a book pharmacy is born. People write in with details of their situation and receive thoughtful replies and recommendations. There are many characters in the book and all have stories to tell – some intertwine, some inspire, some are heart-breaking and occasionally, some are amusing. I really enjoyed seeing what the staff recommended and came away with a list of many books to seek out. Wonderful! Although this is a sequel it stands perfectly well alone. Fiona M

[Emergence](#) Judged by Alice Pung and Christos Tsiolkas (Short Stories)



30 stories from the SBS Emerging Writers Competition, running for its third year. “Very well written stories. What I liked was it gave you a way to understand how young people think. They are all Australian, with some terrible situations, but the writing is terrific”. Brenda

[Western Lane](#) by Chetna Maroo (Fiction)



I picked this because it was the shortest entry in this year's Booker shortlist, and its length turned out to be its great strength. It captures a few months in the lives of Gopi and her sisters as they try to cope with the death of their mother. The local squash court becomes their second home as the girls spend hours practising. The concise time frame magnifies everything, turning small moments into hugely important ones. We, like Gopi, can't tell which relationships will last and which won't, whether squash will continue to dominate her life or whether it'll take a back seat when she starts high school. This focussed, precise lens gives the book a crystalline quality, small but beautiful. It takes real skill to say so much in so few pages. Charlotte

[The Last Word](#) by Taylor Adams (Thriller)



Emma and her dog are house-sitting on a remote beach in Washington state. To avoid thinking of tragic events she's reading anything she can download. When she reads a poorly written gruesome horror story 'Murder Mountain', she surprises herself by posting a scathing review. The writer, H G Kane, immediately responds to get her to change her rating, and this is the start of an escalating series of events which may end up as another book in the series - 'Murder Beach'. Adams is a solid thriller writer with a knack for creating unique scenarios and quirky characters. He tells the story from Emma's point of view, and from Kane's new book as he's trying to make events fit his murderous vision. He also has a nice turn of phrase: "to be a mysterious and beautiful bird you'll only later realise was endangered, like leaving a stuffy college party where the music is too loud and she doesn't know anyone, the sly Irish goodbye". Enjoyable and satisfying. Greg

[Yellowface](#) by R.F. Kwang



Juni Hayward is a young, frustrated writer with a best friend Athena who is a successful author. Athena dies in a freak accident at the start of the book and Juni is there at the scene and handy to steal the latest manuscripts from Athena's desk and later pass them off as her own. That's when the story really begins...lies...cultural misappropriation...theft...obsessive social media involvement... lies...bullying...the murky world of publishing. Who knows where it will end? What price fame? Probably not a book I would have persisted with had it not been a book club read. I felt I was the wrong generation. However, I'm glad I did as it became a real page turner. Jill

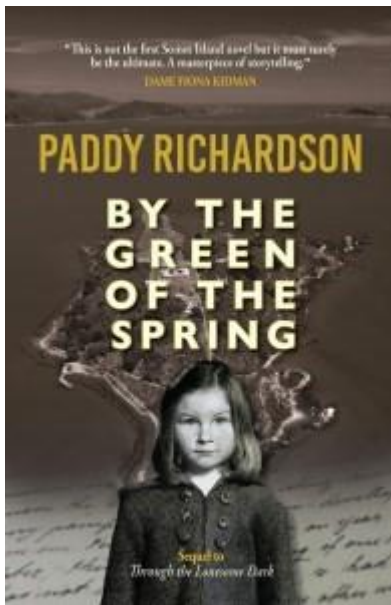
[Gaylene's Take](#) Her Life In New Zealand Film by Gaylene Preston (Biography)



The award-winning director has crafted an intelligent, moving, fascinating and humorous memoir. Gaylene takes us on a journey, skipping from a childhood on the West Coast and Napier, her time in a Psychiatric unit in Cambridge, England to the Cannes Film Festival, bringing to life the eclectic people and characters she has met. In her engaging way she talks about her years working in male dominated New Zealand and particularly the film industry, having to hire movie theatres to show her films when she was virtually blacklisted. An early feminist she describes her activism in England and the struggle to make My Year with Helen, as well as her first big film Mr Wrong, the ground-breaking Ruby and Rata, sinister Perfect Strangers and the very personal Bread and Roses about Sonja Davies, Home By Christmas and War Stories our Mothers Never Told Us.

*"I make films to get the conversation going. To shine a light into something that's bothering me, to illuminate the kinds of lives you don't see in the movies much. The Invisible ones. I try to make my films gentle and strong, leavened with humour and a wry eye".* This book is all of those things. Greg

[By The Green Of The Spring](#) by Paddy Richardson (NZ Historical Fiction)



By the Green of the Spring is the gripping story of lives changed forever by war, the hurts suffered, the losses borne, and the secrets kept, yet it is also the story of the capacity of the human spirit to endure, to hope and to love. After reading this book as you gaze over Wellington's beautiful harbour to Soames Matiu Island you will think of the island's history as an internment camp. "It has a gloomy beginning, but I loved it!" Bridget

[The Heart Is a Star](#) by Megan Rogers (Fiction)



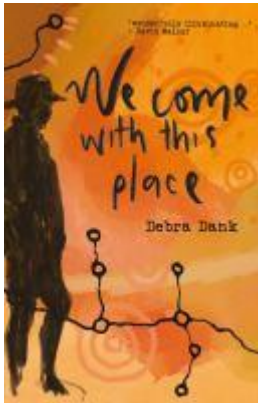
Layla's life is falling apart. A busy anaesthetist with young children, a failing marriage and a needy lover, her unstable mother is the last straw. When revelations about her father are promised, Layla flees to Tasmania to come to terms with her past. "Very interesting ideas and insights into families. Definitely a Readers' Choice book". Anon

[Did I Ever Tell You This?](#) By Sam Neill (Biography)



Following a recent cancer diagnosis Sam felt the need to write the story of his life - and what a life! Growing up in the South Island, the start of the NZ film industry, big film career breaks, overseas success, unlikely and likely friendships, anecdotes from around the world finishing in Central Otago with his wine interests. He is a gifted storyteller and recounts tales both funny and sad with great warmth. It truly feels like he's in the room with you having a chat - especially true if you get the talking book version! Highly recommended. Jill

[We Come With This Place](#) by Debra Dank (Non-Fiction)



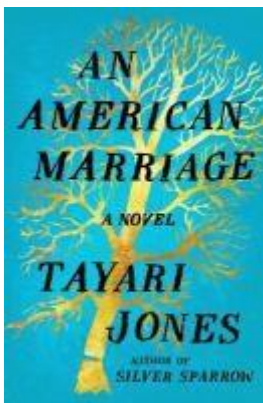
This deeply personal memoir and family history spanning many generations by Debra Dank, a Gudanji / Wakaja woman explores Australia's dark history since colonisation and the special connection First Nation people have with Country – the lands and waterways they are connected to. I found this a difficult read, both in terms of subject matter, unfamiliar language and it's nonlinear structure, but it was also beautiful and full of emotion and vivid description. There is racism, pain, rape, and the overriding fear of children being taken away. But also there is so much love, kindness and connection to and learning from

those who have been there before. And resilience, so much resilience.

“Listen well when this country is telling you our story. Listen with your feet in the sand and your heart in your hands and give it over to this Country. She deserves it most.”

I read this book the weekend of Australia's Voice to Parliament referendum and finished it, with much sorrow, to find that, so many had not listened. Fiona M

[An American Marriage](#) by Tayari Jones (Fiction)



"Newlyweds Celestial and Roy, the living embodiment of the New South, are settling into the routine of their life together when Roy is sent to prison for a crime he didn't commit. An insightful look into the lives of people who are bound and separated by forces beyond their control"

An American Marriage is a masterpiece of storytelling, an intimate look deep into the souls of people who must reckon with the past while moving forward – with hope and pain- into the future.

“Desperately sad in its exploration of the layers within our relationships, how quickly a life can unravel and the state of race relations in the U.S” Stephanie



## Windmill Hill by Lucy Atkins



Former actress Astrid has gone from leading lady to recluse, hiding away in a windmill in rural Suffolk with her loyal companion Mrs Baker.

The windmill represents safety from the outside world for both women, but at first we don't know what or who they're seeking safety from. Ironically the aging windmill is so badly in need of repairs that it seems to be crumbling around them and an imminent threat to their physical safety adding to plot tension.

The trigger for Astrid's life getting smaller is the hint of a scandal in the 70s involving her previously much-loved ex-husband Magnus and a Hollywood director. Astrid is blamed for the scandal and her career crumbles, while Magnus flees to Hollywood unscathed to become a film star.

Now Magnus is on his deathbed, he's writing his tell all life story. Astrid is so scared of what he'll write about her, that she's driven to leave the safety of the windmill and her amiable companion Mrs Baker to travel to Magnus in Scotland and stop the scandal and the media from coming to her door again.

Meanwhile, Mrs Baker has her own demons she's hiding from and the two form an enduring friendship of sorts.

The plot unfolds slowly revealing little by little what the two women are running away from -both have reasons relating to their ex-husbands and misogynist males in powerful positions.

We're left guessing whether passive, and seemingly privileged, Astrid will have the courage to face her fears and go through with confronting her husband. Meanwhile back at the windmill the reader is left wondering about the 'Awful Incident' and what has happened to the mysterious Alan.

I highly recommend this well written book with its beautifully crafted characters who become more complex, nuanced and admirable as the book progresses. Put this on reserve and enjoy it over summer. Fiona

Thanks Fiona! Speaking of reserving books for your Christmas reading, if you would like to learn about finding (and reserving) the latest books in the library catalogue please come along to the session with Greg and David on Friday 8 December at 10.30 a.m. where we can show you how to get the best from the library resources. You may have noticed the new "straight to the catalogue" computer by the self-issue machine we'd love to show you how to use it!

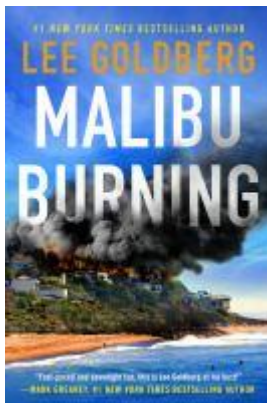
[I'm A Fan](#) by Sheena Patel (Fiction)



This is on the surface a novel about social media, while its real substance is concerned with the ways social media culture reflects real-life racial, economic and gender inequality. The unnamed narrator is having an underwhelming affair with a married man. At the same time, she compulsively follows the Instagram of another woman he's involved with, an influencer who markets her lifestyle of organic produce, trendy art, and vintage furniture. The narrator comments scathingly on the family wealth and white privilege that enable this lifestyle, advantages she herself lacks, and yet she can't stop

scrolling. There isn't much plot, the story instead unfolding in a series of brief, disconnected chapters that mirror the fragmentation of scrolling through a feed. There's a strong sense of millennial malaise, but it's prevented from becoming too depressing by the author's sly sense of humour and clear-eyed take on contemporary culture. This is a short book that packs a real punch. Charlotte

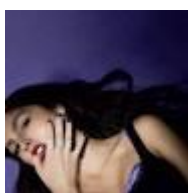
[Malibu Burning](#) by Lee Goldberg Thriller



A slick and polished thriller from the author/screen writer. The main character master thief and con man Danny Cole is engaging, but larger than life. He goes to prison for helping an accident victim rather than escaping. He arranges to go into a special programme for California inmates. It is interesting for the fact convicts are used for, and in fact trained to fight fires for a couple of dollars a day. Cole comes up with a risky plan to loot houses in revenge for the unnecessary death of a convict. By fantastic coincidence the US marshal that arrested him is now working as an arson investigator. Minor

characters are developed and believable, but the villains have no redeeming qualities. Entertaining and enjoyable if you don't think about the plot contrivances too much. Greg

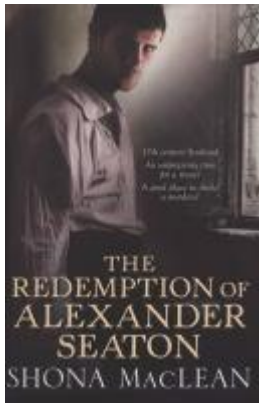
[Guts](#) by Olivia Rodrigo (Popular CD)



This is the second release for the ex-Disney star. Her 2021 debut broke the record for the most streamed female debut in a single week but she's new to me. This apparently is a bit more playful than her first CD. Rolling Stone calls the song punk pop Ragers and aching pensive Burners. I hear suggestions of

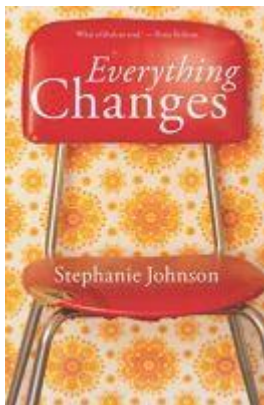
Alanis Morissette, Avril Lavigne and Lorde in her songs and sound. Great songwriter, lovely voice. Greg

[The Redemption of Alexander Seaton](#) by Shona Maclean (Historical Fiction)



This novel is the first in a series for the Scottish author with a storytelling legacy; she is the niece of Alastair Maclean. Her hero, Alexander Seaton is reduced to being a schoolteacher in the town of Banff in the year of our Lord 1620. He was disgraced on the day he was to be ordained and is embarrassed in front of his few friends. Religion is a matter of life and death, a time of witch hunts and burnings. When a friend is accused of the murder of the apothecary's assistant and Alexander seeks to clear his name, he is drawn into a miasma of treason, spies and foreign powers. Absorbing and so evocative of the times and mores, you can smell the brimstone and the heather. Maclean is a literate, clear writer and includes a glossary of Scottish terms to flesh out her haunting debut. Greg

[Everything Changes](#) by Stephanie Johnson (Fiction)



Buying a rundown motel to start a new life — what could possibly go wrong?

“Each well-drawn character tells the story in the first person. This makes the plot swing back and forth as it builds in pace. Wild, sometimes comical, often sad, the story is bizarre yet believable, Added bonus, it’s pure Kiwi!”

Anon

[The Fallen](#) by John Sutherland (Fiction)



The recently dismissed assistant to the Policing Minister is on Westminster Bridge, planning to jump. Hostage negotiator Alex Lewis tries to talk her down and realises she may be privy to information detrimental to the minister, and possibly the government. A political thriller with a conspiracy and lives at risk at its heart.

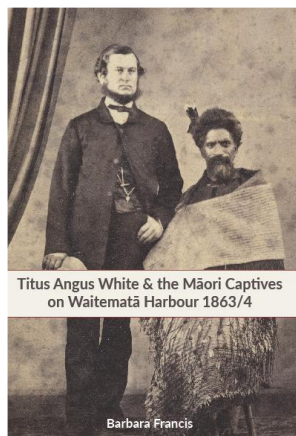
“I really like this. The author was a high-ranking policeman so it feels real”. Jennifer

## Book Launch

### [Titus Angus White & the Māori Captives On Waitematā Harbour 1863/4](#)

by Barbara Francis

**Wednesday 29 November Unity Books 57 Willis Street 6pm**



In November 1863 at the battle of Rangiriri over 180 Māori defenders were taken prisoner. They were held captive on the prison ship Marion for nearly eight months, supervised by their bilingual Pakeha Superintendent Titus Angus White, who was also sent to retrieve them after their subsequent escape from Kawau Island. This book is the story of Titus Angus White and the men he ended up supervising as they were imprisoned. It is also the wider story of the invasion of the Waikato and the circumstances that led to the establishment of New Zealand's largest ever floating prison.

Barbara is uniquely qualified to write this history as Titus Angus White was her Grandfather.

Prior to the book launch Barbara is attending a special event to mark the 160<sup>th</sup> commemoration of the battle of Rangiriri. She will present a copy of her book to Kingi Tūhetia.

## Discovering Newly Released Books At The Library

If you are keen to learn how to find out about new Books, DVDs, and CDs that the Library has purchased each month, and how you can order them come along to **Khandallah Library Friday 8<sup>th</sup> December at 10.30 am.**

This is an informal session for you to not only learn about new items and how to get them, but to have a cup of tea and refreshments as well.