



(Kākā design by Michelle Carlton Wilderness Collection)

# The Tari - Kākā / Khandallah Literary Review

Welcome to the March 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 or movies, which appeal to us. Contributions also come from library members and staff (basically, anyone who tells us their thoughts on an item from the library catalogue)

## March 2024

*Reading a book is like re-writing it for yourself. You bring to a novel, anything you read, all your experience of the world. You bring your history and you read it in your own terms. (Angela Carter, Author)*

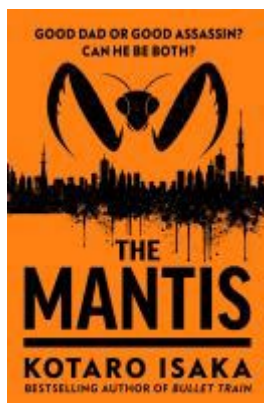
As part of the Khandallah Library's commitment to literacy and its benefits, please join us for the KHANDALLAH LITERARY QUIZ on Friday 19 April from 11.00 am – 11.30 am. It's a great chance to test your knowledge of books and authors with other bibliophiles!

## BLACK FEATHERS by Rebecca Netley (Fiction)



Shades of *Rebecca* and *Jane Eyre* mingle in this atmospheric gothic thriller, merging supernatural events with more human transgressions. Recently married Annie and baby John, arrive at the estate of her husband, the moody and withdrawn Edward Stonehouse. Guardbridge is equally gloomy, a cold and draughty house with one wing damaged by fire. Annie must make her new life with Edward's sister Iris, her companion Miss North and a few staff in the isolated house. Iris's interest in taxidermy, conducting seances and her agoraphobia creates an unsettling atmosphere for Annie, struggling with her own secret tragedy. Events and seeming visitations, possibly by Edward's deaf first wife and son, are heralded by a black feather. Netley escalates the tension and suspense with each event and secret revealed, until Annie must attempt desperate action to save herself and her son. Excellent spooky stuff. Greg

## THE MANTIS by Kotaro Isaka (Fiction)



I recently watched the movie "Bullet Train" based on the book by this author so was intrigued to read "The Mantis", which, along with "Three Assassins" form a trilogy. This is a story set in the Tokyo criminal underworld. Kabuto, the central character is burnt out from his life as a hit man working for the mysterious "Doctor" and wants to get out of this way of life. Unfortunately, the Doctor won't let him leave because he is too good at his job and the jobs are extremely lucrative. At home his wife and teenage son have no idea about his other life and believe him to be a very mild-mannered ordinary Dad with an ordinary job he goes out to each day. This is an unusual book and I found it really enjoyable. Interestingly, in Japanese folklore, praying mantis has a dual meaning, being interpreted as a symbol of great courage and fearlessness but also cruelty and mercilessness. Keep that in mind as you read. Jill

[WANDERING THROUGH LIFE](#) by Donna Leon (Memoir)



Wandering Through Life is a short, fun read that made me smile. This isn't a Brunetti novel or your standard autobiography. It's a collection of reflections and glimpses of the author's life. Many feature interactions that have brought her joy - often related to her love of opera (she's a huge Handel fan), Italian food and Venice.

I understood from reading this book why Donna Leon is so good at crafting characters - she's so curious about people and observes them and makes up stories about them even as they sit beside her on the efficient European trains. The chapter where she reflects on the queue-barging tactics of old ladies at the Rialto market is particularly well crafted.

This was a joy to read. Fiona R

[ON CALL: STORIES FROM MY LIFE AS A SURGEON, A DAUGHTER AND A MOTHER](#) by Ineke Meredith (Memoir)



This memoir from a Kiwi Samoan female general surgeon is about the strange, intense, messy and unpredictable world of surgery. Covering the good, bad, sad and the mad of her workday from bizarre accidents (how does someone manage to swallow fishhooks??) to silently holding someone's hand as they die. It's also about the challenges of being a surgeon and business owner while juggling also being a single mother and the daughter of aging parents. The skilful writing manages to be both funny and sobering. (If you can, listen to the interview between Dr Meredith and RNZ's Kathryn Ryan to learn more about her) David.

[THE SEARCH PARTY](#) by Hannah Richell (Thriller)



Five old friends, a long weekend, a holiday to die for.....Reading the first page I thought same old, same old.....but NO! Fresh, crisp writing about ordinary people, I could feel the grass, smell the ozone and it kept me guessing until the end Jane.

[AN ANGEL CALLED PETERBILT](#) by Eric Flint (Science Fiction and Fantasy)



Eric Flint almost has a whole genre to himself, writing alternative historical fiction. The overarching theme in his work is that a segment of modern-day people are transported back in time. In the 1632 series it was a whole town, here it is a family, their truck and some bystanders that arrive on the American prairies circa 1000 AD. His books are always well researched into the actual historical places and events he uses for his settings. The arrival of the 'up-timers', their Peterbilt truck and the tanker of petrol and diesel attached forces

change in the most unexpected ways. Flint and co focus not on catastrophic clashes between the displaced and the native inhabitants, although there are some, but rather the social mores and customs that change when faced with technology from the future. A thoughtful story that has depth as well as excitement. Greg

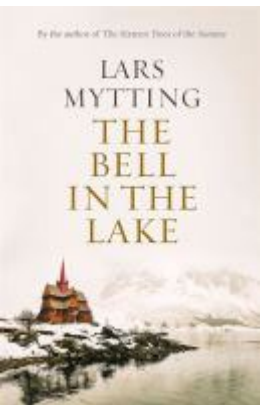
#### [THE LOST MAN](#) by Jane Harper (Thriller)



This is Australian Jane Harper's third novel, her previous two have been made into successful movies. Again, the outback is the setting and the heat and imagery in this hostile, yet beautiful place are so well described that you could almost be there and feel it too. A man's dead body is found next to an old grave of a stockman miles from anywhere. The victim's vehicle is a long way away and mystery surrounds his death. Did he take his own life? and if so, why? He was part of a local farming family and his older brother, formerly an outcast but now returned, asks questions and reveals past family memories which eventually help us understand what sort of man he

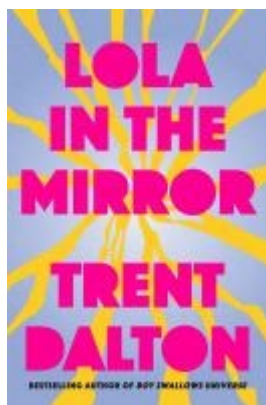
was and perhaps why he met this end. A really absorbing tale well worth a read. Jill

#### [THE BELL IN THE LAKE](#) by Lars Mytting (Historical Fiction)



A compelling historical novel of a young woman whose fate plays out against the mystical church bells of her village. A Number 1 bestseller in Norway. Very interesting with its links to Norse mythology, an intriguing page turner. Marie

[LOLA IN THE MIRROR](#) by Trent Dalton.



Lola in the Mirror sends the reader on a rollercoaster of emotions, experiencing the love, unconventional dynamics and harsh reality of life for the homeless (or houseless) on the mean streets of Brisbane – and by crikey they can be mean!

Despite the gritty and, at times, harrowing subject matter, Dalton's writing is often light and breezy, filled with humour and accentuating the unexpected positives, especially the way people look out for each other. Each chapter is supported with an illustration supposedly drawn by the main character, a young woman about to turn 18. Obsessed with people's names and the meaning of names, she does not know her real name or the truth of how she came to be brought up on the streets. She imagines a time in the future when she has become a famous artist and her life story is narrated.

Dalton's novel holds a mirror to who and what we may otherwise be privileged enough to ignore. Fiona M

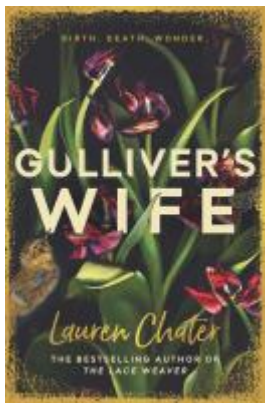
[OLD GOD'S TIME](#) by Sebastian Barry (Fiction)





A beautiful story of a man's love for a wife and children that transcended abuse and trauma, death and bombings and tragedy. Ex Garda Detective Tom Kettle is nine months into retirement, living in a granny flat in a Victorian castle with a view of his beloved ocean. Withdrawn and barely speaking to anyone, he watches the cormorants and seagulls through his window and daydreams the days/time away. All that is changed when two policemen visit with questions about one of his cases from decades ago. Haunted by the past, errors of judgement and his unreliable memory, Tom is drawn out of his reclusive existence, and into the lives of his neighbours, particularly the harried young mother and child next door. Unmistakably Irish in its sensibility and history, this is an eloquent howl of protest at the wrongs done to generations of children. A harrowing, and at first understated story that builds ever stronger, Barry also writes elegant passages about life's simpler joys: *"And Tom was grateful to witness this old ritual and dance of a gardener. And there seemed to be a sort of gratitude even in the sea, with its coat of many colours, streaming as may be between the difficult land and the lonesome island. The way the wind raked at it betimes, and the overwhelming cascades of spring rain, nearly stiff you would think as iron nails, dressing the surface like some celestial mason with his hammer and pointed chisel"*. Powerful, moving and exquisite. Greg

[GULLIVER'S WIFE](#) by Lauren Chater (Fiction)



A wonderful historical novel re-imagining the life of Gulliver's long suffering wife Mary. She is left to look after home and children when her husband Gulliver heads away to sea, often for prolonged periods, which was a common occurrence in 18th century London when the novel is set. After several years away, he is presumed dead, and Mary has a chance to be independent of him and work and earn her own living as a midwife and herbalist of some renown. We get some interesting details about Mary's work, about the treatment of women, about the poverty endured at that time and the challenges of being a working mother. When Gulliver turns up again Mary's new life is threatened and his outlandish claims of being tied up by little people make them both vulnerable to people's suspicions and prejudices. Life is a dangerous and violent place, especially for young women. We hear of the many instances of violence towards them, as well as the many dangers childbirth brings. I highly recommend this novel and found it a fascinating read.

Gulliver's Travels is a classic written by Jonathan Swift but even if you haven't read it, don't worry. All you really need to know is that on one of his travels Gulliver met little, tiny people. Jill

[THE WARTIME BOOK CLUB](#) by Kate Thompson) Fiction)



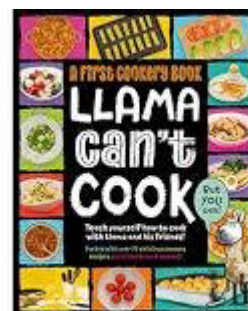
From enchanting cliff tops and white sandy bays to the pretty cobbled streets of St Helier, Jersey is known as the land of milk and honey. But for best friends Bea Rose (the local postwoman) and Grace Le Motte (who works in the island's only library) it becomes the frontline to everyday resistance when their beloved island is occupied by German forces in 1940.

Inspired by astonishing true events, THE WARTIME BOOK CLUB is an unforgettable story of everyday bravery and resistance, full of romance, drama and camaraderie and a tribute to the joy of reading and the power of books in our darkest hours.

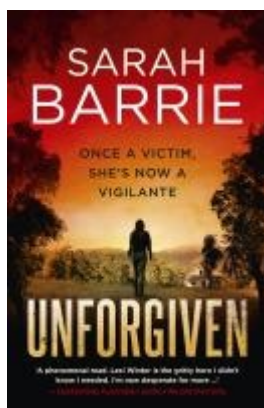
I was worried this book might be “The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society” re-visited but it wasn't. This is a really good book, based on a true story. The author really gets to the heart of the situation of the story. Jane

[LLAMA CAN'T COOK BUT YOU CAN](#) by Sarah Walden (Junior Non-Fiction)

Join Llama, Guinea Pig and Parrot as Llama learns to cook over 70 recipes from a simple boiled egg to a roast chicken dinner. This is a delightful, glorious book. I have recommended it to a lot of people. Jane



[UNFORGIVEN](#) by Sarah Barrie



Another strong Australian writer to join the ranks of Jane Harper and Chris Hammer, Barrie presents a very, very dark tale of child abuse, pornography and serial killers. Once a victim of child abuse herself, Lexi lives life on her own terms. When she isn't drinking or working as an escort, she uses her hacking skills to track down and expose paedophiles. She is investigating one such man when he is murdered. There is a link to serial killer 'The Spider' who was involved in her own abuse. Lexi is unwillingly drawn into the investigation by Rachael, now a detective inspector who solved the earlier case, but could not help Lexi. Barrie expertly draws out the conflict and tension in a compelling way. Throw in an ex-con neighbour with a knack for disposing of bodies with a cop's daughter in danger, and you have a taut and suspenseful story. Greg

[GODLAND](#) directed by Hlynur Pálmason (DVD)\*



In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a Danish priest is sent to build a church in a remote corner of Iceland. He is ill-prepared to deal with either the environment or the people, speaking little of the language and insisting on lugging a bulky camera through ice, rivers, and snow. The film moves slowly, matching the pace of life of its characters and lingering on stunning landscapes for long shots. It could almost be an Icelandic tourism ad, if the story weren't so grim! What plot there is moves slowly, but if you have the patience to let it unfold you'll find a subtle study of colonial power dynamics and the way they play out through the actions of individuals. Bleak, haunting and beautiful. Charlotte

\*also available on Kanopy