

September 2024

### From the Librarian

Kia ora koutou,

We are finally past, what felt like, a very long winter. The library is warming up and we are looking into the future with exciting plans for events.

A warm welcome to our new members. The library's had lots of visitors lately. I am always thrilled to share this unique literary space with people.

The books on the ground floor have been sorted through and the New Zealand section is brimming with stories waiting to be read.

We have been donated chess pieces for the table. Please feel free to come in and have a game or make use of the library space for some reading or writing. There is a desk space set up at the end of the fiction area and we'd love to see it being used.

- Holly Fletcher

### What's Happening

Novelist, poet and The Robert Burns Fellow of 2024, Mikaela Nyman will be holding a poetry reading here in the library. Guests to be confirmed. This event will take place on:

Friday 25<sup>th</sup> October at 5pm.

From 2025 the University of Otago will be offering a Master of Creative Writing course. This is exciting news for our literary city. It will be great to see some emerging writers come out of this course.



### Book Review

Fiona Kidman  
*This Mortal Boy*

Published in 2018, I am once again reviewing an older book. Found amidst our vast collection of books here in the Athenaeum.

Kidman's ability to weave a story around a true event is impressive. In this novel we witness the life of young Albert Black. He becomes known as Paddy, when he leaves his home in Belfast in 1953 and then is later known as The Juke Box Killer.

The story tells us about one of the last executions to take place here in New Zealand during the 1950s. The tension within the novel is well crafted and the protagonist, young Albert who's only 18 years old when he lands in NZ, is a warm, naïve but very likeable character. He is often singing and misses his mother, with whom he survived the Blitz.

The novel almost reads like a Shakespearean tragedy. We witness the characters slowly ebbing themselves into what we already can assume is an impossible situation. Yet the craft of writing in this book, allows the reader feel hope. A complex emotion to portray when we already know this book is about an execution.



It was interesting to read about Teddy Boys and Auckland in this era and the kinds of attitudes "Real Kiwi Blokes" had towards people relocating here from Ireland and the UK.