

BOOKS

Cover story:
Collector's
passion for
printed word

The Book Collector
by Tony Eyre, Mary Egan
Publishing, \$45

Who better to write a bibliomemoir than a bibliophile?

Dunedin-based chartered accountant Tony Eyre is the ultimate bibliophile.

His collection of books runs into the thousands. Many are sourced from this country's eclectic second hand book stores, book fairs or, more latterly, via the internet.

Then there are the many finds he's discovered on overseas travels.

Like any self-respecting collector, he delights in stumbling on first editions.

New Zealand literature is one of his greatest pleasures. Dan Davin rates multiple mentions as the Kiwi-raised author he most favours.

Close runners up are Robin Hyde, David Ballantyne, Janet Frame and Frank Sargeson. It is of note each is the product of years past.

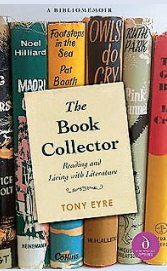
Eyre frets his fellow New Zealanders aren't great readers of local fiction. He bases that claim on Bookseller surveys which conclude book sales are as low as five per cent New Zealand-published. If this figure remains current one can but share his pain when so much excellent fiction is being written by home-grown authors.

Like so many of his era, Eyre learned to read from the Janet and John primers. They gave him his thirst for the written word and the subsequent accumulation of so many books of all genres.

At the start of his fifth chapter, he poses the seemingly rhetorical question "when does a random accumulation [of books] become a collection?"

For him, it was when he acquired an ornate early settler's study, moving it his own home nearby. It gave him the space to grow his hobby into a collector's haven.

It's snippets like this that make *The Book Collector* an engaging read.



— Jill Nicholas



Witi Ihimaera edited the book *Ngā Kupu Wero*, one of two by contemporary Māori writers published by Penguin.

Delicious revival of Māori writing

These two delightful and powerful collections by contemporary Māori writers show the depth and breadth of essays, articles, commentary and creative non-fiction in *Ngā Kupu Wero* and poetry and fiction in *Te Awa o Kupu*.

Ngā Kupu Wero is a "challenge" from such esteemed writers as Patricia Grace, Haere Williams, newcomers such as CocoSolid and Hana Pera Aoake and younger writers still in school.

Witi Ihimaera asked academic and lawyer Professor Jacinta Ruru to write an introduction and she captures the content beautifully. There is an examination of what is Mātauranga Māori – that cultural language of knowledge which is being given its due more and more these days. Although with a change of government, that may not continue.

There is the sorrow of losing te reo, how language shapes what we remember and the new words that are arriving to keep the language alive. They include rorohiko for computer – combining brain and electric, and kiriāhua for selfie – all of which will be adapted over time.

In the fiction companion, more than 80 contemporary writers cover a wide range of issues in poetry and short stories. This "river of words" about the land, urban development, and every facet of Māori life deserves to be explored one piece at a time, then reflect and digest. Delicious.

— Linda Thompson



Ngā Kupu Wero
Edited by Witi
Ihimaera, Penguin
Random House, \$40



Te Awa o Kupu
Edited by Vaughan
Rapatahana and
Kiri Pihana-Wong,
Penguin Random
House, \$40

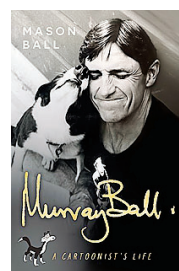
Another image of cartoonist

Murray Ball – A Cartoonist's Life
by Mason Ball, Harper Collins,
\$45 (Hardback)

Murray Ball was a farmer, a rugby player and a much-loved cartoonist. Murray's son Mason takes us on a warm and humorous journey as he shares his father's life. Mason's is the first biography written about Murray Ball and from a candid and honest perspective that only a close family member can bring to the table.

Mason tells the story of how his father became the leading cartoonist of his generation. How his endearing characters evolved and the long years of hard graft which finally bore fruit through Murray's wildly successful creative enterprise Footrot Flats.

We are introduced to the backstory of Murray's most iconic characters and themes. Mason tells the story of the man, the father, the



creative who could see the quirks of human nature and capture them with the stroke of a pen. It wasn't until after his father died that Mason was able to reflect. His writing helped him sort through his feelings and soothed the pain of loss. Missing him

deeply sharpened his cataloguing of moments he had witnessed. So *Murray Ball A Cartoonist's Life* is more about Mason's father, the person, not just the cartoonist. About the creator of Footrot Flats, but a whole lot more.

The book is richly illustrated with family photos and cartoons by the bloke who will always be known through his most loveable character The Dog.

— Tony Nielsen

A story slowly going nowhere

The MoDERN
By Anna Kate Blair, Simon &
Schuster, \$33

Like this book's author, Anna Kate Blair, it's central player Sophie has moved from Australia to settle in New York.

As Blair has also done she has a job at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA).

Equipped with a PhD Art historian Sophie has secured a two-year fellowship there. It's her dream job. She never wants to leave but there's no guarantee her stay will be extended.

Away from MoMA she lives with her Ivy League boyfriend, Robert, in an apartment his well-heeled family owns.

The night before he leaves New York to hike the Appalachian trail (all 3524km of it) he proposes, Sophie accepts.

But Sophie is bisexual. Robert knows but

Twin tales of grief explored deftly

Light Keeping
by Adrienne Jansen, Quentin
Wilson Publishing, \$37.50

As one who teaches creative writing Adrienne Jansen has with *Light Keeping* set a benchmark students of the craft would be wise to follow.

At first glance her story of two orphaned children taken in by their grandparents may appear hackneyed, even prosaic.

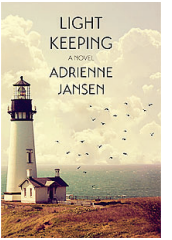
But the home in which they are lovingly embraced is no ordinary home. It is attached to a lighthouse, their grandfather is its keeper. But for how long? They arrive when moves are in train for virtually all this country's light houses to be automated.

As the children deal with their own grief their grandparents are facing an uncertain future. The year is 1977.

Jansen deftly moves the parallel storylines through the decades. The final chapter is set in 2020.

It is unsurprising *Light Keeping* was shortlisted for the prestigious Michael Gifkins prize.

— Jill Nicholas



Hunza lends a friendly ear

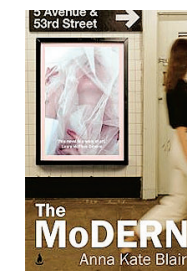
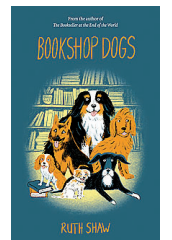
Bookshop Dogs
by Ruth Shaw, Allen & Unwin,
\$38.99

Dogs. Where would we be without a waggy tail and a panting tongue in the neighbourhood. And they all have a story. Ruth Shaw runs three little bookshops in Manapōuri in the South Island. She writes about the dogs that she runs into around her neighbourhood. She first wrote about her shops in *The Bookseller at the End of the World*.

Now she muses about the many dogs who visit them, usually with an owner but not always, the working dogs, the lap dogs, and the first bookshop dog, Hunza. And she writes about working with troubled teenagers as a youth worker.

Hunza is the star, a German Shepherd named after Hunza Pie (yes there's a recipe). He saves a young boy and his mother from an abusive situation, gets stolen, and is often the listening ear to disturbed children who can't talk to another human. You may need tissues.

— Linda Thompson



believes it can draw them closer.

When Sophie's mother-in-law-to-be takes her wedding dress shopping Sophie is drawn to the sales assistant, Cara, in the first boutique they visit.

The two meet up, attend exhibitions and parties together but theirs is not a relationship.

Between the uncertainty of that and her future at MOMA Sophie's life is complex muddle.

Elsewhere Blair's debut novel has met with acclaim. Sadly not from this reviewer.

Maybe it's a generation thing but I found Sophie self-obsessed and frustratingly indecisive while the narrative took a long time to go nowhere in particular.

— Jill Nicholas