

July 2026

Kia ora koutou,

As you might know I'm covering for Holly, who has sensibly escaped the cold, to the northern hemisphere. Imagine my surprise when I woke up to snow on my first official day and had to make a call on whether to open the library!

New acquisitions this month have included a couple of smart green armchairs so please come in for a relaxing browse and stay a while.

Next month we have another of our very popular writing workshops this time with Emma Wood, on writing children's books. The session will be on September the 16th 5-7pm and we are now taking bookings. If you would like to attend, please email: gray.ec@gmail.com

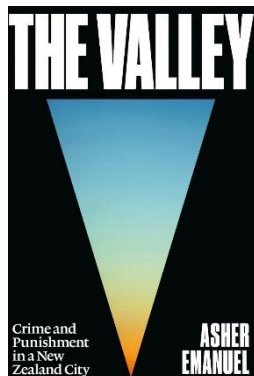
Please remember our National Poetry Day event Tumanako: words of Hope, on the 28th of September 7pm. With readings by Fiona Farrell, David Eggleton, Sue Wooton, Emma Neale, Louise Wallace and more as well as music by local artists.

Saskia

What's Happening

Coming up at the library on September the 17th we are excited to announce a talk with Asher Emmanuel, in association with Bridget Williams books. Emmanuel's much lauded book *The Valley* provides an intimate look into New Zealand's criminal justice system. Asher will be in

conversation with Yasmin Olsen from the faculty of law at Otago University. *The Valley* will be available to purchase on the night.



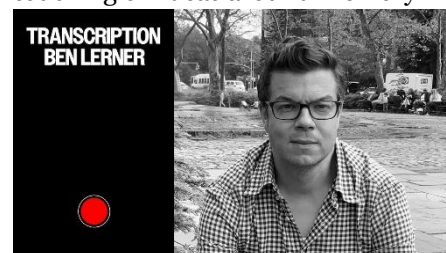
Book Review

Ben Lerner
Transcription

Ben Lerner's 2026 autofiction novel *Transcription* opens with a familiar 21st century mishap. About to set off to interview his old professor, the narrator accidentally drops his phone in the hotel sink, thereby breaking his intended recording device. On arrival at his subjects' house, he makes a muddled decision to hide the fact he will no longer be able to record the interview. This opening series of events provides the catalyst for Lerner to revisit a theme explored in previous writing; the reverberations of slippages in translation of all kinds. The book is divided into 3 sections, headed under the names of hotels, each with a loose association with what follows. If the first two sections start to feel a little dry, the third section anchors the book when it takes an unexpectedly intimate and tender turn. The language softens as the narrators' voice switches to that of the professor's son as he relates his family

troubles, primarily those concerning his daughter's F.T.T (failure to thrive) and his tense relationship with his father.

Transcription is less of a conventional narrative than a string of carefully observed life moments. Lerner's show rather than tell approach, has meant some reviewers have characterised the book as slight while others call it a masterpiece. My assessment was that it packed in a lot to ponder within its slim 130 pages, touching on ideas around memory



and incongruity, technology and the real, the myriad ways knowledge is passed down, presence in absence and the way we use devices/vices of all kinds as a buffer to mediate our experience of intimacy.

The Ware collection, of Leopold Blaschka's glass models of plants, housed at the Harvard Museum, pops up a few times as a significant touchstone. The Models are objects so fragile that they sense all movement, and visitors must whisper when viewing them. A letter from Blaschka to Mary Ware on the last page of the novel, might just be the final key to unravelling Lerner's maze of associations.

The lack of conventional story will mean this novel is not for everyone but if you're a Rachel Cusk fan or don't mind some philosophical musings this might be for you.

Saskia