

August 2025

Kia ora koutou,

In the next few newsletters, we'll take the opportunity for each of our committee to say 'hello' to you, our members, and introduce ourselves.

Kia ora,

My name is Alex. I have been a committee member of the Athenaeum Library & Mechanics Institute since 2022. Previously, I was a founding trustee of the Dunedin Writers and Readers Festival and had the privilege of chairing the festival until 2021. I am delighted to continue contributing to Dunedin's vibrant literary community through my involvement with this beautiful library.

Professionally, I work as a family and criminal lawyer, and I am also a passionate photographer. I am currently developing a photography portfolio that seeks to interpret poems through visual imagery

Alex Bligh

### What's Happening

We hosted two events this month. The Layers of Identity reading was on the 21<sup>st</sup>. We heard from many talented young writers. You can check out their podcast here:



[oar.org.nz/shows/layers-of-identity/](https://oar.org.nz/shows/layers-of-identity/)

On Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> we hosted the National Poetry Day. There was a huge turnout, especially for the youth section. The evening was wrapped up with a reading from the new poet Laureate Robert Sullivan.



Wonderful to hear so many local poets share their mahi and to celebrate this day here in the library.

### Book Review

Enter Ghost  
Isabella Hammad

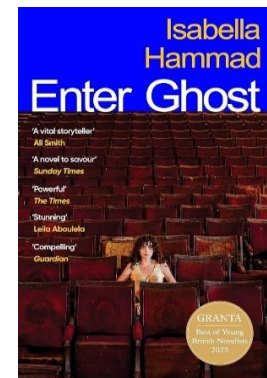
Published in 2024, this is Hammad's third novel. She has a unique grasp on writing and employs different techniques, such as script, which compliments this multi layered story.

Sonia is a 38-year-old actor escaping an affair with a theatre director in London to visit her family's

homeland. After meeting her sister's friend Marian, Sonia gets roped into an Arabic production of Hamlet in the West Bank.

This book is a great blend of the personal and political, as we witness the exhausting day-to-day struggles of Palestinians. The descriptions of places and people are immersive and poetic without being too much with lines such as:

*Their very gestures showed how they had grown to fit each other, like the stiff braiding of a vine.*



Once the reader gets past the initial world building, the story is full of gentle acknowledgements and observations. An intelligent read that is deeply rewarding.

Now more than ever it is essential to be reading Palestinian writers and engaging with their culture.

When discussing Palestine, Sonia's sister Haneen reflects –

*This place revealed something about the whole world.*