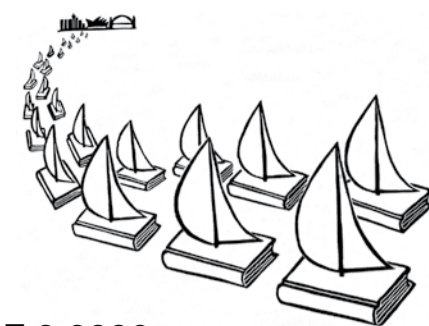


# Festival News

Newsletter of the Sydney Writers' Festival

ISSUE 3 2006



Produced by the UTS Journalism Program Area



www.festivalnews.uts.edu.au

## Cartoonist's crafty work will eclipse political ego

Bonny Symons-Brown

Political cartoonists Will Dyson and Bill Leak test the theory that the pen is mightier than the sword. Yesterday at the Sydney Mint, Bill Leak, daily editorial cartoonist at *The Australian*, and Ross McMullin, biographer of the famous war cartoonist Will Dyson, told how a cartoonist's crafty work can even eclipse a Prime Minister's ego.

Bill Leak said politicians have been known to call the paper to protest about his cartoons while some ring wanting to buy his originals.

While a political cartoonist's work can be "dicey", he said *The Australian's* editor-in-chief Chris Mitchell has a "just go for it" philosophy.

He said it helps, too, that one in-house lawyer at *The Australian* has been known to approve dangerous material on the basis that "it's too bloody funny" not to print!

"We all self-censor. Everybody self-censors whether journalist or cartoonist but I have not got much of a feel for it.

"If I've really got one that I think is pushing the envelope

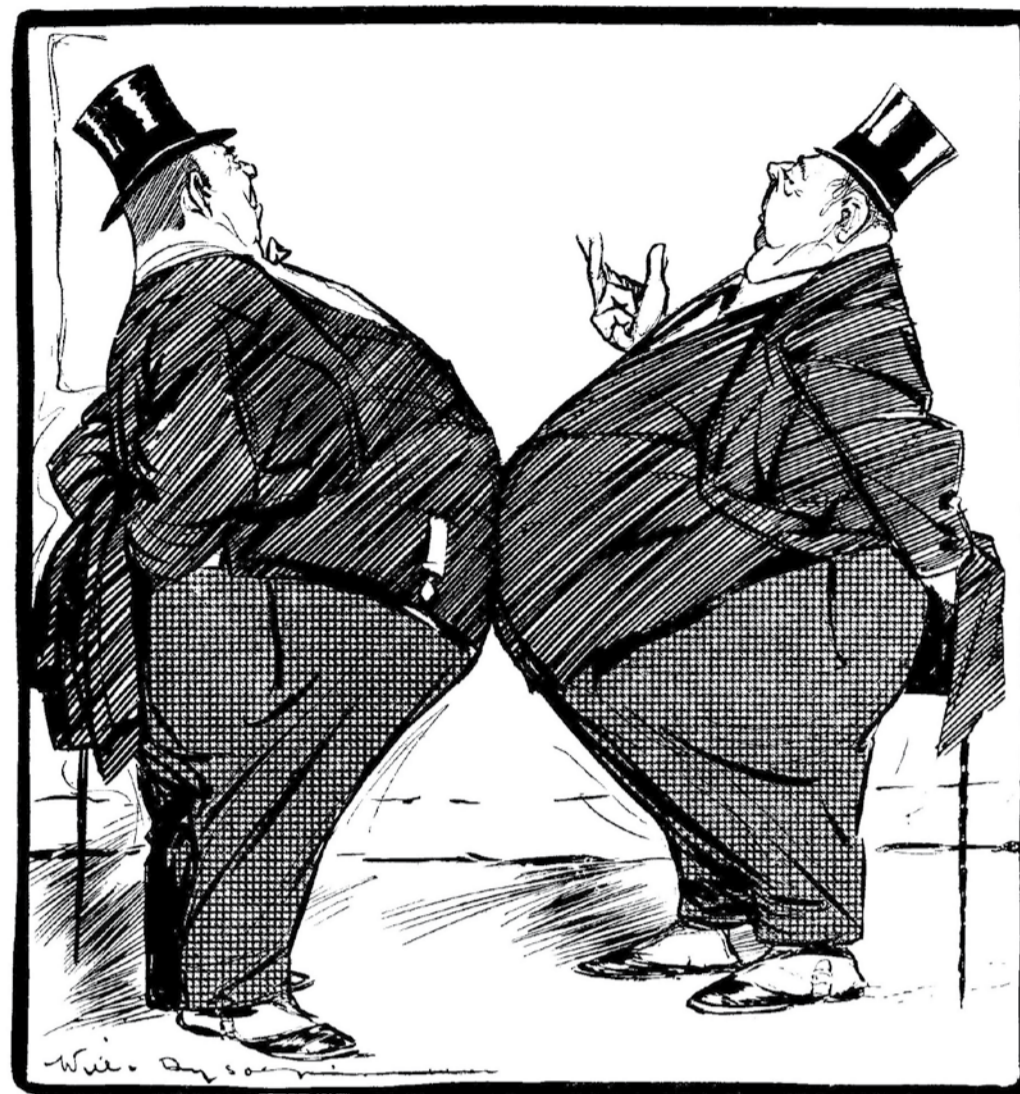
just that little bit too far, I will do another two sketches that are so disgusting, so obscene, so utterly unforgivable that by the time I get to the one I want in the paper, the editor's going 'oh oh, that one's ok!'"

The situation was the same a century ago. Ross McMullin said cartoonist Will Dyson's work was at its best under a sympathetic editor when "The [London] Daily Herald gave Dyson editorial freedom and encouraged him to go for the jugular".

"Editorial interference was Dyson's most unpalatable vexation," he said.

"Directions about cartoon themes were abhorrent enough, while decrees to alter completed drawings were intolerable. Enforced amendments to captions and titles especially infuriated him," he said, adding that Dyson was often so appalled by the cartoons he was directed to produce he refused to sign them.

One such incident was a cartoon Dyson, who was a socialist, was directed to draw for the Melbourne Herald in 1927 viciously attacking the



Scribe

rights of striking Queensland rail workers. The irony was that Dyson's beloved Daily Herald started as a strike sheet. At the time, he regularly contributed his cartoons in support of the trade unions.

Ross McMullin said that during this period, "Dyson's cartoons were clever, inventive and sometimes vigorous but lacked the searing power."

However, the controversy over the bodyline cricket series of 1932-3 inspired his best. In one cartoon he drew an Australian cricketer pre-

sending his 'leg-theory' protest to the League of Nations Council as bemused international delegates look on. The caption read, "Tell em I'm 'ere clobber...it's urgent." He proudly signed it 'Will Dyson - Wagga Wagga'.

While cartoons have the power to unite a nation, as Dyson's did most profoundly with his Anzac series, they also have the power to divide.

Bill Leak said religion is the one subject that always provokes a big response from the public.

"It always surprises me how people who pride themselves on their love-based religion are the first ones who write to you and tell you they want to bash you tdo death" he said.

He then mused on what might come first - bashing death or heart death. He told the story of a 23-year-old cartoonist who was found dead at his desk. Heart attack. He believes it was bought on by stress. "They don't call them deadlines for nothing."



Will Dyson's famous cartoon 'Economic Darwinism' (left). Dyson biographer Ross McMullin and cartoonist Bill Leak (above). Leak's State of the Union cartoon (below) created much public debate.



## Fab four win youth writing award

Candice Chung

Imagine hosting an award without a winner. A single winner, that is. According to literary editor Susan Wyndham, the *Sydney Morning Herald's* Best Young Novelists Award is about "spotlighting a new crop of writers each year and acknowledging their achievements".

This year, 12 books were entered and four winners were chosen. To be considered for the award, the writers must be under 35 and have had their novels published in the last 12 months.

Interestingly, the two basic criteria of entry may well be the only common thread that runs between the four winners.

Subject matters of the winning novels range from the adventures of a private-eye femme fatale to a child's heart-wrenching experience of Nazi Germany.

The four winners are Stephanie Bishop (*The Singing*), Leigh Redhead (*Rubdown*), Tony Wilson (*Players*) and Markus Zusak (*The Book Thief*).

Before presenting the awards, Ms Wyndham stressed the importance of encouraging a younger generation of Australian writers.

"There is often not enough attention and very limited space to review first novels. For the average young writer, it can be very difficult," she said.

It was because of this the award was founded 10 years ago - to "give young novelists some space and an event to acknowledge their work".

Each of the 2006 winners had demonstrated a clear and original voice and, according



Young winners Stephanie Bishop, Markus Zusak, Tony Wilson and Leigh Redhead with SMH literary editor Susan Wyndham

to the judges, "an urgent desire to tell a story".

At 27, Stephanie Bishop is the youngest of the four. Described by Ms Wyndham as "a delicate novel of ideas and poetic language", her book *The Singing* explores the underbelly of love through an intimate examination of a relationship that slowly broke apart.

Leigh Redhead, author of *Rubdown*, won her award for her second book in a series of crime novels about a stripper turned private eye, Simone Kirsch.

Ms Redhead wrote from her own experience as a stripper and plans to write her next book drawing from her experience as an apprentice chef. *Rubdown* is a fast-paced story about sassy heroine Simone's investigation into a murder and her own provocative private life.

For ex-solicitor Tony Wilson, writing his first novel *Players* was about as far away from his former life of repossessing people's houses as he could imagine.

Tony is a breakfast radio presenter in Melbourne and the winner of the ABC documentary series *Race Around the World*.

"I haven't won an award since Best Player of the

finals in an under-16s football match," he joked.

His novel is about a former football star turned TV host who feigned having cancer to regain his popularity. Mr Wilson is also the author of

a children's book *Grannysaurus Rex*, which was published last year.

Markus Zusak, 30, is the author of *The Book Thief*. Set in 1939 Nazi Germany, *continued p 2*

## Coveted honour for Aboriginal elder



Dr Ruby Langford Ginibi, recipient of the Emeritus Writer's Award from the Australia Council for the Arts.

Ryan Gullock

Bundjalung elder Dr Ruby Langford Ginibi was presented yesterday with the prestigious Australia Council for the Arts Writer's Emeritus Award.

With \$50,000 prize money and traditions dating back to 1908, it is the richest and most established career achievement prize in Australian literature.

The award aims to recognise the achievements of Australian writers over the age of 65 who have made an outstanding contribution to the field and have created an acclaimed body of work.

The Council for the Arts CEO, Jennifer Bott, said the award recognised Dr Langford

## American comic set for a grouse time here

Chris Broadribb

American comedian Andy Borowitz was well prepared for his visit to Australia.

"I didn't want to do the typical American thing of just coming to Australia and not knowing anything about your culture, so I spent weeks doing research about Australia because I wanted to be able to speak your language," he told the audience in the Bangarra Theatre yesterday.

After studying TV ads, he decided to drink Foster's beer every day and call everyone "mate". He visited the Outback Restaurant to try authen-

tic Australian cuisine such as "blooming onions" and "kookaburra wings".

"To tell you the truth, I really came to Australia for the uranium. When I heard that they were giving away uranium to anybody who wanted it, I caught the next flight."

He had some concerns about airport security. "They've actually started profiling now for comedians," he said. "If you go through the X-ray machine in American airports, they have a sign up that says 'No explosives, no firearms, no jokes'."

Fortunately, he's a multi-talented author, producer, scriptwriter and actor.

"I do a little bit of acting," he said, and talked about the time an agent rang him to ask him to audition for a role in a movie with Julianne Moore.

"Now, I'm just assuming it's got to be some kind of a hot, steamy sex scene, because otherwise, you know, why call me?" He was disappointed to be asked to play the role of the "most boring person in the world" at a party instead.

He claimed that he could still become a big movie star, given the right script. "It would be kind of like a big Jerry Bruckheimer, Hollywood action film like *Armageddon*," he said. A woman is kidnapped by terrorists and imprisoned in a compound. "In the climatic scene, they



American comedian and satirist Andy Borowitz parodies the news on his website, *The Borowitz Report*.

parachute me into the compound, I start talking to the terrorists, they start getting a little drowsy..."

Mr Borowitz is one of the leading comics in the USA. He is well known for his political satire website [www.borowitzreport.com](http://www.borowitzreport.com). "Every day I report on things that haven't really happened in the world yet. I'm uncannily accurate," he said.

He has published a number of books, including *Who Moved My Soap? The CEO's Guide to Surviving in Prison*, *The Trillionaire Next Door: The Greedy Investor's Guide to Day Trading*, *Rationalizations to Live By*

*continued page 4*

# Frightening scenario for planet

Julia Holman

Veteran reporter Murray Sayle and ABC Science Show presenter Robyn Williams yesterday painted a stark picture of the earth's future.

"Unfortunately we've got to the situation in which the rock under our feet is not big enough to carry all of us," Mr Sayle said. "Something is going to reduce our numbers - this is the heart of the problem."

Mr Sayle was discussing his essay in the latest edition of the Griffith Review - *Overloading Emoh Ruo - The Rise of the Hydrocarbon Civilisation*, which reviewed increasing carbon emissions and highlighted the threats to future generations.

The audience was told global warming was a problem with no quick fix, no magic button, and with no likelihood of being taken seriously.

Mr Sayle said society one day would be very different if attitudes to climate change did not change; one where the air would be more dangerous, resources would run dry, and islands would be swallowed by the expanding oceans.

"I don't think anyone will be surprised when I say that the unsustainable cannot be very long sustained. Something's gotta give, and there's a long list of things that are 'going to give' - we're going to run out of oil, coal, uranium, air, and water," he said.

Mr Sayle said the level of greenhouse emissions had increased from 300 parts per million in 1900 to nearly 380 parts per million in 2006. This



Murray Sayle with his guard dog Carlotta

number is already 27 per cent higher than the peak recorded 650,000 years ago in deep ocean cores.

Robyn Williams said the ramifications of the increase in carbon dioxide were "a bit like smoking cigarettes - the famous side-effect is cancer of the lungs, but there are more than 50 other problems that could happen".

"There is now published evidence to show that the consequences of carbon dioxide increase is that the oceans become more acid and the result of that is two-fold," he said.

"In the first instance, by the end of this century we will probably have reduced bar-

rier and coral reefs by 30 per cent. The other consequence is that the shellfish will start dissolving because of the ocean's acidity."

The quadrupling of the world's population over the past 100 years was seen as a key cause of increasing carbon emissions.

"The factors which are meant to keep the human population in some relation to the available resources - famine, war, pestilence, death - all let us down," he said.

"In the 20th century - supposedly the most violent we've ever seen - the population has still managed to grow from 1.5 billion to 6.5 billion, despite

wars, Holocausts, bird flu and Hiroshima."

The increasing population - which the United Nations believes will top 9.5 billion before stabilising - means fossil fuels use is unlikely to reduce.

In some of the world's cities, carbon emissions make the simple task of breathing dangerous.

"When you go to China the air is so foul that babies are dying at a faster rate than they are from dirty water," said Mr Williams.

But Mr Sayle said the poisonous air in some cities was not a problem that could be fixed easily.

"It would be great if we

could all live like Thomas Jefferson suggested - in a country estate where we could all read thick leather-bound books and be masters of our own dominion. But there is only one problem with this way of living - it involves slavery," he said.

"In our hydrocarbon civilisation we have replaced slaves with coal."

Both believed the public has not registered the threat climate change posed to future societies.

"We all feel great interest in our children, a fair interest in our grandchildren, and no interest whatever in the following generations," said Mr Sayle.

"There are many things we should do to address climate change, but I'll tell you what we will do - bugger all."

Mr Sayle mentioned that farmers now used fertiliser instead of relying solely on the natural breakdown of plants through the nitrogen cycle to produce their harvests.

"What are fertilisers made of? Oil and other chemicals. You're trading what appears to be a solution for yet another mind-bending problem," he said.

Mr Sayle said people will ignore the planet's constantly rising temperature in the hope the problem could be fixed.

"We're all looking for a radical solution, but there are no radical solutions to this human predicament," he said.

"There has never been a solution found to any human problem and this will be the case for climate change."



Edmund White offers tell-all confession without any apology.

## Writer explores the plurality of the self

Reginald Domingo

"One of the rules that you lay down in this book, and it's a book full of useful rules, is that no blondes should ever wear Speedos. Can you explain?" asked David Marr.

"Well, I can't remember writing that. I guess I thought it was redundant or something..." replied Edmund White.

"You mean, they shouldn't wear anything?"

"Maybe that's the best, yeah."

So began Edmund White's revealing, insightful and often hilarious conversation with David Marr last night at the Sydney Theatre.

Edmund White spoke candidly about his life as it is revealed in his latest autobiography, *My Lives*. What it was like growing up gay in 1950s America, his experiences with gay sex and the obstacles he encountered as a young gay writer.

It was a tell-all confession, but without any apologies, just like his book.

"One exercise of the book was not to justify myself, because it seems to me so many autobiographies are rather annoying that way. Here, this person has all these ghastly faults but he doesn't acknowledge them himself. Better I do it than somebody else."

Edmund White is the author of several critically-acclaimed books, including *The Burning Library* and *The Married Man*, but he is best known for his trilogy of semi-autobiographical novels: *A Boy's Own Story*, *The Beautiful Room is Empty*, and *The Farewell Symphony*. An excellent achievement for a writer who had trouble getting started.

"When I first started submitting gay fiction in the '60s, it always got turned down," he said.

And thankfully, things have changed.

"I think a number of things happened," he said. "The main thing was the beginning of gay liberation in 1969 and that suddenly gays reclassified themselves as no longer being a form of mental illness but as a minority group." (Mr White himself endured years of psychotherapy. One chapter in his autobiography is called 'My Shrinks', which is dedicated entirely to his large cast of psychotherapists.)

"Suddenly, all that changed and we felt that we were normalised. And what happened is that all these institutions

came into place, like gay literary magazines and gay bookshops and visible gay readers.

"And so those of us who were of that generation of gay writing, in the late 70s, we weren't apologising for a gay life to appeal to the straight reader, but we were addressing other gay readers, other gay people. So that was something brand new."

And it's a landscape that's continually evolving, one that is blurring the lines between gay fiction, and fiction with heterosexual themes. "I think many of the younger [gay] writers are what we might call 'post gay', like Michael Cunningham or those much younger, who are quick to identify themselves as gay, if anybody cares."

"But what they're really up to is writing novels about people in general. Maybe there might be one or two gay characters but it's not their theme or the world they're exploring necessarily."

And it isn't just gay fiction that's changing. The overall art of writing is also on a significant shift.

"American writing has become very simplified in the last three decades. They've gone from long, complicated, florid writing to pretty much writing basic English," he said. "And that move towards

minimalism has affected absolutely everybody including John Updike and me. Nobody's immune to that general cultural drift."

Mr White also spoke about the nature of writing about sex. In *My Lives*, one chapter is entitled 'My Hustlers', which chronicles his adventures in the clandestine world of paid sex. Here, Mr White has sought to express himself as openly and as honestly as possible.

"There's an awful lot of prudishness in American writing. I'm judging *Granta's* contest of the 20 best writers under 35 and they're mostly about exoticism, about going to Borneo or something, and dealing with culture. But there's very little sex. Most people shy away from sex scenes. I love to write them."

Edmund White has also written a biography on French author Jean Genet, the experience of which is explored in *My Lives*, in a chapter entitled 'My Genet'. Other chapters include 'My Europe', 'My Master', 'My Blonds' and 'My Friends'.

"This whole book is meant to suggest that people are more complicated and less unified than they would like to think. Even the title *My Lives*, is trying to suggest there's a plurality to the self."

## Aboriginal elder wins coveted award

continued from page 1

Langford Ginibi's groundbreaking *Don't Take Your Love to Town* can testify to the power of her stories in giving readers insight into the unique experiences of Aboriginal women."

Josie Emery, director of literature at the Australia Council spoke with *Festival News* about the effect Dr Langford Ginibi's writing has had on Australian society. "We look for writers whose work has effectively helped change society, and her work demonstrably does," she said.

During her acceptance speech, Dr Langford Ginibi emphasised the serious nature of her work, but also allowed her sense of humour to shine. "Laughter is our survival mechanism," she said. "If we don't laugh, we'll cry."

The author of four non-fiction books, Dr Langford Ginibi also has written many poems, essays and short stories.

Her major works include her acclaimed first book, *Don't Take Your Love to Town*, a

pioneering account of the struggles faced by Aboriginal women. It was this book that earned her the 1998 Australian Human Rights Award for Literature and Other Writing. Dr Langford Ginibi also was the winner of last year's Special Award at the Premier's Literary Awards.

Dr Langford Ginibi thanked the Australia Council for her award and spoke of what the funding she has received in the past has meant. "Without the help and funding, I wouldn't have been able to go back to my home to research and write four books," she said.

This research is perhaps most evident in Dr Langford Ginibi's third book, *My Bundjalung People*, the story of her return to her home on the north coast of NSW to reunite with her extended family.

Yesterday's award saw Dr Langford Ginibi join an eminent group of Australian writers who have received the award, including Vince Serventy, Judith Wright McKinney, and Dr Margaret Scott.

## Festival News

Festival News has been written by journalism students from the Journalism Program Area, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences at the University of Technology, Sydney

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## Fab four win award

continued from page 1

the story centres around a young girl named Liesel who steals books to learn to read. It is narrated by the voice of Death.

Asked why he chose novel writing over other forms of writing, Mr Zusak joked: "I don't think I am capable of writing non-fiction because lying is a lot more fun."

"Actually, the most beautiful thing that I remember when I was a teenager was reading a book and not noticing the pages turning. And it was a novel. That was moment when I said 'this is what I want to do with my life'."

Leigh Redhead said that although she had also loved fiction since was a child, she has met many people who do not read fiction "because it's not true". However, she feels that fiction can possess certain truths that may not be found in non-fiction.

"I think fiction writers have more scope to get to the heart of things," she said, adding that she opted for fiction because "I get to kill off people that I don't like!"

At the end of the award night, the winners shared their tips with aspiring writers and unanimously agreed that it is important to have faith in one's work.

"If the story is beautiful, if it is personal, it is worth telling," Markus Zusak said. He explained that what a writer needs to know is how to make a story work in its own right.

"I know people always say that 'you'll never get published' but it's not as dire as people think," Leigh Redhead said.

All four winners emphasised the importance of the business of writing rather than the business of getting published. Most particularly, Tony Wilson advised "finish your manuscript".

"Just set aside four hours a day and you can have your work finished within a year."

## Noeline's lively life on and off the stage



Victoria Nicolls, Denise Roberts and Noeline Brown celebrate the Ensemble Theatre's 30th birthday.

Kym Agius

There was a general consensus among the seniors who came to see Noeline Brown yesterday. The good old days were funny.

After a half a century of acting on Australia's stage and small screen, Ms Brown knows how to tell a good yarn.

There were disappearing exotic birds, cooped-up housewives and a girl's night out gone wrong.

Ms Brown's debut book, *Noeline Long-term memoir*, tells of her show business career and is an extraordinary social history of Sydney and Australia.

"I was writing a huge book about Sydney and certainly about growing up at the end of the '30s, and the things that happen to us as children, who were brought up without anything," she said. No one had a car in her childhood street in Stanmore. The only car that visited was the landlord's, when he came to collect the rent.

At five, she suffered scarlet fever and was isolated in hospital for six weeks from

her family. "I was removed from my mum, as you were back then."

When Ms Brown was asked to write her memoir everything came flooding out. "The book became this massive thing that I had to cut down to 80,000 words. I think it is about 130,000...[deadpan]: so it is a pretty easy read - don't be frightened."

The dinner parties of TV star Graham Kennedy's were memorable events. Mr Kennedy and Ms Brown formed a friendship on his popular television show *Blankety Blanks*.

Ms Brown said the show made her a household name. "Maybe it's a household name, well, I never had to say, 'here is my identification' if I want to sign a check," she said.

Ms Brown said Mr Kennedy was a perfectionist in everything he did. "If he had you around for dinner he would rehearse the dinner, if he went to your place for dinner he would rehearse driving there," she said.



# When it pays to judge a book by its cover

Ryan Gullock

An author's words make a good book. But what is often overlooked is the importance of a great book design.

The works of Australia's top book designers were showcased at the 54th Annual Australian Book Design Awards at the Powerhouse Museum. This was the second time the Awards were held as part of the Writers' Festival program.

The Book Design Awards aim to recognise the often

unsung talent of designers, whose abilities allow them to interpret a book's content and reflect that in the cover and internal design.

The Australian Publishers' Association, organisers of the awards, hope the event will promote wider acknowledgement of the role of design in a book's success.

Book Design Awards Manager, Dee Read, said buying decisions often were influ-

enced by a book's design, even before the contents were considered.

"While it is widely accepted we all choose books based on book reviews and recommendations, there is a large group of consumers we call 'browsers' who have no set purchase in mind when they step into a book shop or library," she said.

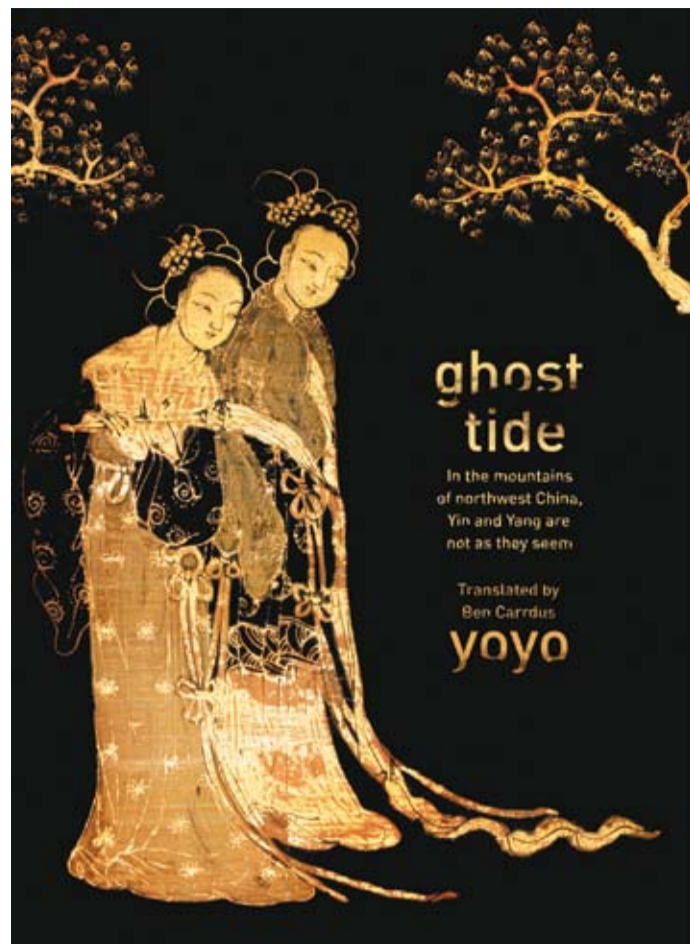
"Targeting this group is where the book design really plays an influential part."

Jill Brown, Senior Publisher and Editor at Random House Australia, also recognised the importance of book design as a marketing tool. Ms Brown, one of the award judges, said design was "one of the most important aspects" when marketing a book.

One designer who received much-deserved recognition for her work was Sandy Cull, named Book Designer of the Year for the second year running, for her work on *Italian Joy* by Carla Coulson. She also won the Best Designed Illustrated Book for the same book.

"Sandy's design is a complete work of art," Ms Read said. "This is a book we know people are buying just for the beautiful cover design alone to display on their coffee table."

For Ms Cull, the design for *Italian Joy* was a break from her usual style. "It took a very long time to come up with the design," she said, adding that while usually in the book de-



Natalie Winter won the Best Young Designer of the Year award for work including *Ghost Tide*.

sign industry, less is more, in the case of this book, "more is more".

The author's vision was of a "chaotic personal journey, just like Italy can be chaotic", she said. "When I surrendered to the chaos, colour and energy of downtown Florence, the style was easy."

Ms Reed commended all the designers who took part in this year. "The level of all entries was really high and we are pleased what the awards achieve for the book design industry," she said.

Overall, 530 books were reviewed by a panel of 14 judges. Radio and television personality and writer Steve Abbott presented 23 book design awards spanning more than 20 categories, including fiction and non-fiction, children's books, education and multi-media.

David Macintosh won two awards for the book *Rex* - Best

Designed Children's Cover of the Year and Best Designed Children's Picture Book.

The Best Young Designer of the Year was won by Natalie Winter for a body of work which included *Ghost Tide*. She also took out Best Designed Literary Fiction book.

Ellie Exarchos and Marina Messiha were joint winners for the Best Designed Young Adult Book. *Evil Genius* The Best Designed Literary Non-Fiction Book was won by Sharon McGrath for *My Life as a Father*.

For people interested in book design, Design This will be held at the Utzon Room, Sydney Opera House today at 1pm. A panel of creative designers will discuss what goes into designing art campaigns and arresting book covers.



Studio Round won the Best Designed Exhibition Catalogue or Book for John Young.



The Best Designed Cookbook award went to Frost Design.

## Creative solutions in troubled nation

Jessica Dooley

While 350 Australian troops were on the ground in Dili attempting to contain violence on the streets, three young Timorese writers were in Sydney explaining the importance of literature and the arts in developing a sense of nationhood.

The increasing bloodshed in East Timor caused strong interest and the young writers were questioned on their feelings about the arrival of Australian troops in Dili.

Speaking through an interpreter, Timorese poet Vonia Viera said that while an Australian presence would be welcomed in the region, it would also be met with a degree of scepticism.

"I personally feel that most Timorese who are receiving the Australian soldiers will be grateful and glad that there will be a presence," she said.



Milena Da Silva

"But I am highly suspicious that this is more about the other interests of the Australian Government, such as oil and other economic reasons. I'm scared that it is less about East Timor's security and more about Australia's security with oil."

Most of the discussion between Ms Viera, dramatist and screenwriter Milena Da Silva and artist, musician and writer



Melchior D. Fernandes.

Melchior D. Fernandes focused on the current problems faced by the world's youngest nation.

"As a new nation we are facing a lot of problems," Milena Da Silva explained,

"Poverty, the highest rate of infant and mother mortality, a bad education system, a traumatised people, crop failure and hunger in some regions, inadequate infrastructure, an

inadequately skilled workforce and many people who feel disillusioned."

There were practical difficulties also, including the issue of language. After being forced to speak Portuguese during colonisation, then being forced to speak Indonesian during the occupation, the East Timorese government decided against using the Timorese language of Tetum and made Portuguese the nation's official language once again.

Ms Da Silva resents this colonial influence and continues to write in Tetum.

"A lot of people say that Tetum doesn't have a good vocabulary or grammar but I feel like, this is my language and I want to use it," she said.

Now free to express her views, Ms Da Silva said that literature and the arts were ideal ways to help her nation deal with

the trauma it has been through.

She works with one of the only consistent theatre groups in East Timor, 'Bibi Bulak', travelling to perform for people who are so starved for entertainment that they will throw rocks at the stage as a way of pleading for a longer performance.

Ms Da Silva uses plays as a way to educate the Timorese population on health and social issues.

Particularly concerned about East Timor's infant mortality rate, she has written plays about postnatal care, an important initiative. She said many pregnant Timorese women carried scissors in the belief that they would ward off the evil spirits which caused miscarriage.

Young artists like Da Silva are offering creative, rather than violent outlets for a nation to process its trauma.

## Bringing secret abortions into the public arena

Alice Mulheron

It was "women's intuition" that resulted in Dr Jo Wainer deciding that it was time to publish stories of women's illegal abortion experiences that she had kept for two decades.

In conversation with journalist Anne Summers, the director of Gender and Medicine at Melbourne's Monash University and widow of Melbourne GP and abortion activist Dr Bertram Wainer discussed the motivation for finally telling the stories.

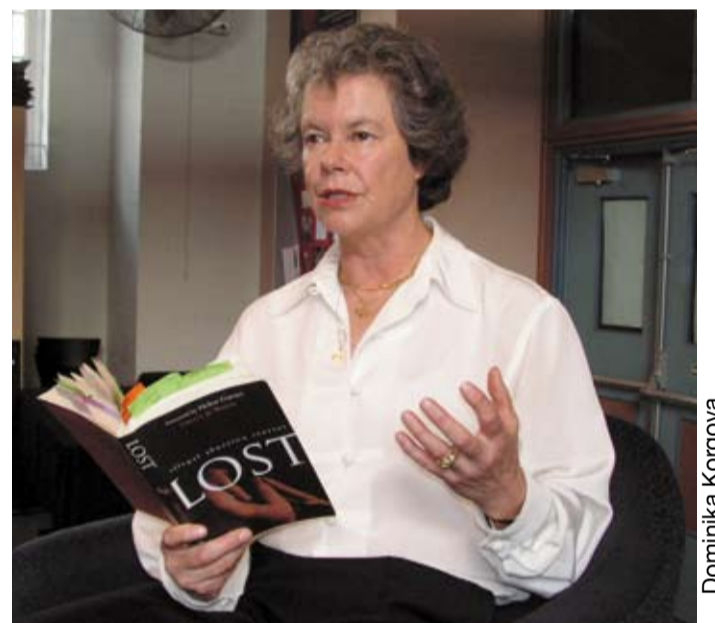
*Lost: Illegal Abortion Stories* is a collection of true stories of women's experiences of illegal abortions.

"They were collected in 1985, and I've been holding them, sacred, for 20 years, waiting for it to be the right time both for me and for the publisher and for the community for these stories to be brought into the public arena", she said.

"It was actually in conversation with [the publisher] and the commissioning agent who said, 'this story's got to be done now'. It was her intuition, and I just knew that she was right", she said.

"And this was before [Health] Minister Tony Abbott had turned himself into my very best publicist."

Dr Wainer and her late husband had received a "deluge" of responses to an advertise-



Dr Jo Wainer, who waited two decades to tell the story of illegal abortions.

ment asking women to contribute their stories.

"Because Bert and I had put our lives on the line to make sure that women didn't have to undergo the sorts of experiences that are described in here, they told us with raw, graphic, uncensored detail of their experiences," said Dr Wainer.

"So there's a credibility to this."

"And I think why I feel so proud of the stories, is that I know the value of the contemporary voice."

"The intention of this book is to inform public policy, so

never again can they get up in Parliament and have a discussion about women's lives that is uninformed by those stories."

The title *Lost* was chosen "because these are the voices that aren't present when people have discussions about how we set the rules and how we make the laws," Dr Wainer said.

She described the dangerous methods of abortion that were performed in the days before it was decriminalised, experiences which Ms Summers said "plenty of women in this room, myself included, who went through this experience...will never forget".

Dr Wainer said not all the stories in the book were "all grim horror".

"It's absolutely uplifting, the courage, the determination, the sheer willpower, the 'this is my life and I will take it into my hands' [attitude] of these women'. I just love them for that. And their ingenuity, their bravery, all of that comes through."

Urging the audience to make submissions to a Senate inquiry examining the funding of religious organisations to provide counselling to women seeking abortions, Dr Wainer said the recent re-ignition of the abortion debate must be taken "extremely seriously".

"There is an element in Canberra that is extremely hostile to women's autonomy and they're getting their energy from the United States," she said.

## Lies and deception of the Iraq invasion

Allison Yee

It's difficult to find a person without an opinion on the Iraq war, but faced with the experienced panel of Australian weapons inspector Rod Barton, Iraqi activist Haifa Zangana and American political journalist Mark Danner, it is clear these are opinions that matter.

Addressing an audience eager to gain an insight from these insiders, the elements of secrecy and deception used to initiate the war were revealed.

Mr Barton, a senior specialist adviser to the Iraq Survey Group which hunted for weapons of mass destruction in June 2003, described how the decision by the American government

to enter the war was made well before any reasons were found.

"The [American] policy got well ahead of the intelligence. The weapons of mass destruction were just an excuse. The idea was for America to move in, Iraq would be very grateful...and American influence would extend from Iraq outwards."

Speaking from an American perspective, Mr Danner agreed, saying the methods of deception by the American government had become well known.

"A small group of American government was determined to have this war," he said. "They decided the pre-text...they decided the rea-



Haifa Zangana belives US forces should leave Iraq immediately.

sions would be weapons of mass destruction, partly because they wanted to get international approval through the United Nations."

A London-based Iraqi, Ms Zangana spoke of the humili-

ation and silencing of Iraqi citizens, where despite common knowledge in Iraq of the human rights abuses occurring at Abu Ghraib a year before it became a global scandal, nothing was done.

"The whole world has to wait until the confirmation is coming from a Western source. We are not to be believed because we are the occupied, not the occupiers."

Further fuelling the anti-war sentiment stirring the audience, Ms Zangana gave a rarely heard voice to Iraqi women and the worsening standard of life under American occupation.

She said before the war, Iraqi women enjoyed high levels of education and a relative freedom of movement. But overwhelming levels of violence in the streets had ended it.

"The American and the British, they confused Ira-

qi women with Afghani women, I think, when they were claiming to liberate them and give them more freedom," said Ms Zangana.

"Iraqi women are going backwards regarding education. Fifty percent of all girls are not attending schools because most families prefer not to send them any more, for fear of kidnap or being killed."

The question of the occupation and the implications of future resolution of war and extrication of foreign troops were also at the forefront of discussion and produced divided opinions.

As an Iraqi, Ms Zangana said American troops needed to leave Iraq immediately.

"Iraqis are not going to accept occupation, so the sooner we get rid of them, the better, because we are not having a civil war yet. We are on the verge of a civil war unless we get rid of the troops. We are not going to have peace at all."

However Mr Danner disagreed, saying that the nature of the Iraq war had changed and such a simple solution was no longer available.

"The sad fact is that an overwhelming percentage of violence is being committed by Iraqis on Iraqis," he said. "There is a sectarian war going on, and it will perhaps grow more violent, grow more bloodier, when the Americans depart."



# Forces that shaped the state of NSW



Natalie Muller

As Australia evolved after the first colonies were established, each state and territory followed its own path.

However, as historian Beverly Kingston explained at the Caroline Simpson Memorial Lecture yesterday, New South Wales was set apart from the others, not only because of its abounding wealth in natural resources, but because of the diverse groups of people who came to shape the colony and eventually the nation.

These people and the distinct ways in which they interacted with their ideas, each other and their environments, sculpted political structures and economic policies that survive today.

To a packed room of history enthusiasts, Ms Kingston traced the causes and consequences of major turning points and conflicts in NSW's history.

Initially, there was some re-

sentment for NSW among the other colonies. It was known as the convict colony and was the biggest in terms of population and wealth.

Unlike other colonies such as Victoria, NSW was endowed with a rich supply of natural resources – the land, the timber, the minerals and water supply – which have underlain every development since 1788", Ms Kingston said.

"The other major resource, the people, all put their own two bob's worth into the NSW we know today."

These people, Ms Kingston said, were the convicts, the Aborigines, the native born, the Irish Catholics and the respectable class. Co-existing, they had to make ways to struggle, survive together and contribute.

The convicts wanted to end punishment and create better lives for themselves with the resources NSW afforded them.

"The clever ones did their best to melt away into the landscape and forget about their convict past," she said.

As settlement spread beyond Sydney and each man struggled to find a good deal for his family, the Aboriginal population struggled with displacement and dispossession. Many moved inland where they became workers, filling the open space and shortage of labour in rural NSW.

The 'native born' population (those born in NSW after colonisation), like the children of inter-racial marriages and the convicts, sought to hide their parentage.

"If they were to become respectable and do well, one of the first things was to hide their parentage and keep their history vague," she said. It was this group that became the driving force for independence, looking to the future and ending convict transportation.

This spirit of independence was stifled and suppressed by British affection that was strong among the respectable classes and spread, especially after World War 1.

The Irish Catholics initially faced discrimination, but by the 1830s they became capable of acquiring wealth and filling respectable government and administrative positions.

The respectable class was the most powerful. They were the administrators, land owners, wealthy immigrants, government officials, lawyers and business investors.

"These were also the people most interested in economic development and growth of capital," she said. "You could say they were hard-core supporters of the Free Trade Party in NSW and the economic rationalists of their day. They supported individualism and were strongly opposed to the protection of trade and of workers."

It was the wealth of natural resources in NSW that encouraged rapid economic development, and set it on a separate course to Victoria.

Without these preconditions to strengthen economic development, it is unlikely the Labor Party or the union movement would have emerged as strong a force as it did in NSW at the beginning of the 20th century, Ms Kingston said.

Victoria, unlucky with natural resources, maintained the economy by instead adopting a more careful and clever development program and approach to managing workers' rights.

"The hard line of the Free Trade Party and their opposition to unionism forced the NSW Labor Party and unions to take a much tougher stand," she said.

"You can see this conflict continuing all the way through the 20th century and you can see the consequences of it to-

day. John Howard can be seen as a true descendent of the Free Traders," she said.

At the time of Federation, instead of Free Trade economics and politics, the more careful protectionist approach, similar to that of Victoria, was adopted federally.

Globalisation and changing flows of trade and money in the late 20th century, said Ms Kingston, led to Australia's economy opening up to the rest of the world, conforming to policies of the Free Traders, and stamping out any force in the way.

"This would explain the huge move to the right in Australia and in NSW and also why the Labor Party seems to have lost sight of its origins," she said.

Beverly Kingston's latest book, *The History of New South Wales* was launched earlier this week by former NSW Premier Bob Carr.

## Grenville faces her fears in bush

Alex Brennan

Author Kate Grenville spent a night camped alone in the Dharug National Park on the Hawkesbury River to understand the fears of early settlers.

"There is something about the Australian bush that makes you feel watched," Ms Grenville said. Although she knew there was "nobody out there" it was different for the settlers.

"They would have felt watched and they knew for sure that there were people out there," she said. "People with spears that could kill them."

Ms Grenville was discussing the research that went into her acclaimed novel, *The Secret River*, awarded the Commonwealth Literary Prize

in Britain, the Christina Stead Prize for Fiction and the Community Relations Commission Award at the 2006 NSW Premier's Literary Awards earlier this week.

She told Andrea Stretton and an audience of 400 at the Sydney Dance Company Studio the book took 20 drafts and five years to write. From camping in the Hawkesbury River bush to spending time in the Kimberley with indigenous Australians and poring over transcripts in the Mitchell Library, the audience gained an insight into what it took to write history as fiction.

Her research left her with far more understanding of Aus-

tralia's colonial past, she said.

"I was bowled over at the amount and extent and duration of violence on the frontier," she said.

Set in the early 19th century, *The Secret River* tells the story of William Thornhill, a British convict sent to the Australian penal colony who claims land on the Hawkesbury River and struggles with the issue of coexisting with the Aboriginal inhabitants.

"I was dealing with an area of history that was very emotionally potent...I was conscious that I was moving in a very highly charged area," said Ms Grenville.

The first half of the book

is based very closely around Ms Grenville's ancestors. Her great-great grandfather, Solomon Wiseman, was the first ferryman to settle in the area now known as Wiseman's Ferry. The sandstone house he built there is now the local pub.

"At every moment when I came up against a kind of unknown, I could let go. I had a real story to go back to, and I could not have written it without that," she said.

Her connection with the story came from painstaking research. To depict the accurate language of the illiterate rough early settlers - one of the hardest challenges she faced - she researched 18th

century Cockney and read original Old Bailey transcripts. The shorthand translations provided the turns of phrase she needed.

She described her night's camping as necessary to understanding fear. "The kind of fear I felt then was really essential to what I was doing".

Ms Grenville's novel makes a bold statement about our colonial past, current indigenous issues and migration.

"Writing this book I really tried to empathise with the migrant experience - where you are committed to the new place but your heart will always, at some level, be in the old place," she said.



NSW Premier's Literary Award winners Kate Grenville and Dr Tim Flannery discuss their work.

## Champion of the Aboriginal cause

Kim Balmanno

Henry Reynolds has rewritten Australia's history books by eliminating the myths and half-truths surrounding first contact between Europeans and Aborigines and the years that followed.

He also took his first appearance at the Sydney Writers' Festival to set the record straight about himself.

Contrary to popular belief, Professor Reynolds did not make up the term 'terra nullius'. "It was being used by Australia's top international lawyers, such as James Crawford, before my book *Law of the Land* came out in 1982," he said.

But he did make the term mainstream and help establish the idea of terra nullius: "land without owners", which is now commonly used in debates of land rights for Aboriginal people.

Terms such as "uninhabited and deserted" may have been used by Joseph Banks, said Professor Reynolds, when he reported back to England on the state in which he found Australia. They also were terms found in William Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws Law of

England written in 1785.

"Existing law continues until it's changed," said Professor Reynolds, and his determination and passion has helped to change some Australian laws.

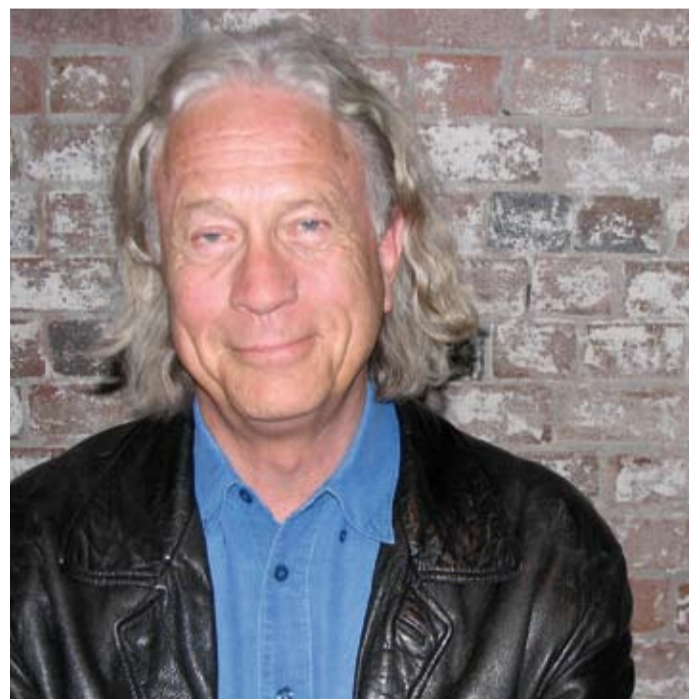
He was a friend of Eddy Mabo. "I was the first to explain that you didn't own your land and that you have a good case to take to the courts. I was the person who lit that spark." But he said: "I think Mabo would have gone the way it did whether I'd written the book or not."

The Wik case, however, was very different.

"My hunch regarding pastoralist's land was fundamental to it." He sees that as a great achievement. "In a law case you get an immediate sense that you have achieved something whereas writing books, your words go out there in the world and 98% of the readers you never meet."

Professor Reynolds said his writings came out of his teaching. "He taught Australian History and Politics at high schools and universities in Queensland and Tasmania."

He wanted to give his students a "broad understanding



Henry Reynolds reveals a family secret

of humankind; of history on this continent including the long history of Aborigines".

On re-reading *The Other Side of the Frontier* Professor Reynolds found it to be balanced and "not black-armed history at all".

Something that came out of that book was that when Aboriginal people mixed with Europeans, they reacted in

complex and intelligent ways.

"They were intelligent subjects," he said. This was very different to what had been previously written in history books, where the image was of native people "thought too primitive to deserve respect".

He said that the loss of such diversity of language and knowledge was a great human tragedy.

Henry Reynolds has written 14 books. At the beginning of his career he found the most influential historians were Manning Clark and Geoffrey Blainey.

When fellow historian, Ross Fitzgerald, asked if he thought of himself as Aboriginal, he revealed there was a family secret he discovered 10 years ago.

He said he was a "person of mixed descent" and discussed the ancestry of his paternal grandmother in his book *Nowhere People*.

"She clearly decided she would pass as a European," he said. "She didn't speak of her past and there was no memorabilia. She cut herself off to become a white person."

"I think that had an affect on my family, particularly on my father."

He believes through attempting to chart her genealogy that his grandmother, who was born in 1882, was probably from NSW before she moved with her children to Tasmania.

Professor Reynolds said that when his Aboriginal friends heard the story they said "you've found your way home".

## Digging deep in world hunt for precious stones

Sarah Crawford

Victoria Finlay's *Buried Treasure: Travels through the Jewellery Box* is more to do with travel, adventure and love of precious stones than geology.

Each chapter tells the story of a gem - from the softest, amber, to the hardest naturally-occurring substance on earth, diamond.

The book, which took three years to write, tells of Ms Finlay's 14 journeys throughout the world in her quest to discover the hidden stories behind jewels.

She travelled far to find her stories - Sri Lanka, the ruby mines of Burma, the remotest part of Siberia. "It does seem that gems don't like to be found in the most convenient places and as a journalist and traveller, that's music to my ears," she said.

Ms Finlay's first book, published in 2002, *Colour: Travel through the Paintbox*, examined the colours of the rainbow. She travelled the world to research how humans try to replicate them through paint or dye.

The inspiration for her book on gems came when she was researching the book on colour. Ms Finlay travelled to Afghanistan to visit the mines of Lapis, which produced the blue paint used in some of Michelangelo's paintings.

Grateful to Abdullah, her interpreter on that journey, she asked if there was anything she could send him from her home in Hong Kong. He asked for a book about gems as there were many stones in Afghanistan and he wanted to be able to recognise them.

She searched the bookshops of Hong Kong for the best book to send and found herself intrigued. "I thought that I knew a bit about gem stones and I was really astonished by some of the extraordinary stories, stories of history and beliefs, such as the common belief in the Middle Ages that sapphire could make you invisible."

In the chapter on pearls Ms Finlay tells of Julius Caesar's passion for the precious gem. In 55 BC Caesar attempted to invade Briton and failed. One of his main reasons for the invasion was because Briton had the most beautiful fresh water pearls in the Roman Empire.

These pearls, found in rivers in Scotland, tra-

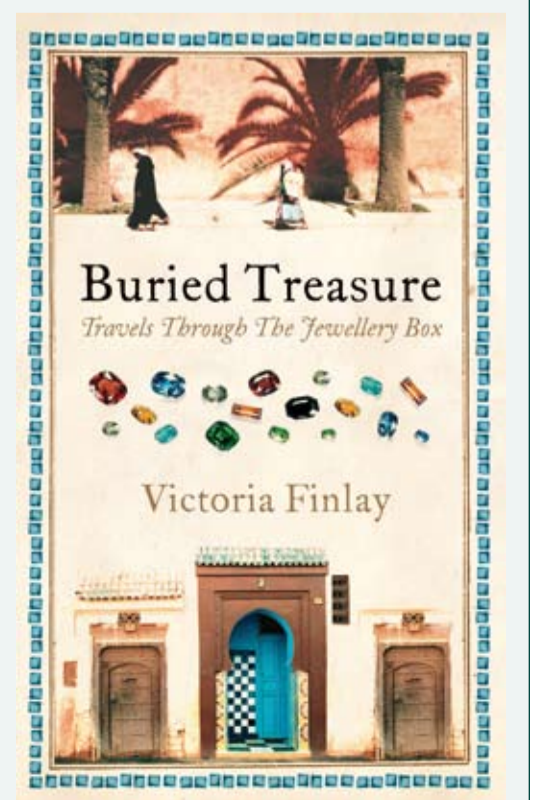
ditionally have been fished by Gaelic travellers until the practice was banned in 1998. They would sell their pearls for the price of a few whiskies.

Ms Finlay was impressed by their intimate knowledge of the practice. One said to her: "Show me the pearl and I'll tell you the river."

The stories she uncovered can make the reader value gems in a different way.

One example was cultured pearls. Ms Finlay said they were created by putting a small object in the sexual organs of oysters, so they produce a substance to coat the foreign object to protect themselves. This substance builds up until it eventually becomes a pearl.

Half the oysters die from the ordeal, while the rest take three months to recover. "It's a painful business and I think wearing pearls, it is important to know there has been quite a sacrifice," she said.



## American comic set for a grouse time Down Under

continued from page

and the recently released The Borowitz Report: *The Big Book of Shockers*, which contains some of the best articles from his website.

"I actually think to call President Bush a disaster is a massive understatement," he said, quoting Mr Bush's popularity as 29 per cent. "The most recent polls show that Americans have more confidence in

the job that bird flu is doing as a pandemic than President Bush is doing as president.

"I hate that term, too, 'the war on terror', because it doesn't make any sense. I mean, you can have a war on terrorists, or terrorism, but I'm pretty sure you can't declare war on a human emotion," he said. "If we get rid of terror, what's next? Shyness?"

He likened his government to a tired TV show. "I think if the Bush administration were a TV show, we're, like, in the 13th season of Friends right now, where they're all, like, 50, but they're still living in the same apartment."

He suggested Condoleezza Rice as the next American president. "I think the person who runs for president in the

Republican Party in 2008 will be whoever is not currently incarcerated," he said. "She has a chance of still being a free woman at that point."

He mentioned some cultural issues that Australia has in common with America: McDonald's is out of control, infomercials are a big industry, hotel room porn is shrouded in shame and telemarketers

are annoying. "The day you can get a telemarketer to hang up on you is a sweet, sweet day," he said.

An audience member helpfully told him that the word "grouse" meant "awesome" and he added this to his vocabulary. "You've all been grouse to me," he said.