



Dual tragedy tantalises

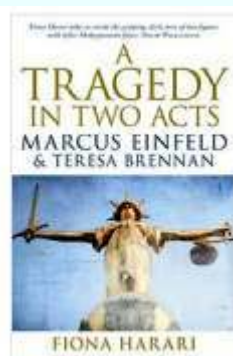
NON-FICTION

A TRAGEDY IN TWO ACTS: Marcus Einfeld and Teresa Brennan. By Fiona Harari. Victory Books. 226pp. \$34.99.

Reviewer: SHELLEY McINNIS

This is a riveting book about a high-profile Federal Court judge and the flamboyant, but dead, female academic brought to life by his claim that she was driving his speeding car in Mosman one Sunday afternoon in January 2006. If you have ever wondered about the mysterious expatriate Australian academic falsely nominated by Marcus Einfeld, then this book by award-winning journalist Fiona Harari will intrigue you. In it Harari, who has written for television shows such as Andrew Denton's *Enough Rope*, scours the evidence and interviews familiars to paint comprehensive and compelling portraits of the two subjects at the centre of this melodrama.

Harari notes that the large and exotic life of the female academic involved in the speeding-fine drama has been overshadowed by that of Marcus Einfeld. Her book corrects this perceived injustice by being scrupulously even-handed about the space devoted to each subject. Early chapters are divided into "Marcus" and "Teresa" sections, and later chapters alternate in focus. The latter chapters of the book focus more on Einfeld because, unfortunately, Professor Teresa Brennan, of Florida Atlantic University, died in early February of 2003 of injuries sustained in a hit-and-run vehicle accident in the early hours of the morning of December 10, 2002.



One of the least flattering things about Einfeld to emerge from Harari's account is that several weeks after the Florida-based humanities professor died he nominated the good old friend he knew to be dead as the driver of his vehicle for yet another speeding ticket. His habit of lying appears to have been as well established as his habit of speeding, and it is a relief to learn later in the book that the ex-judge no longer drives a motor vehicle. To be fair, both subjects of this book were accomplished liars, and Harari tells us that some of Brennan's friends have suggested that she may well have admired the chutzpah of the impossibly handsome and tall man who had once solved a legal problem for her mother and dated her cousin.

Of the two characters elaborated in this book, Brennan is the more psychologically complex. The talented but tormented woman appears to have been psychotic at times, though her dramatic and unresolved end leaves open the possibility that her lifelong apprehension of danger was well founded. In her mid-20s she'd received death threats for the same Victoria Street activism that resulted in the death of Juanita Nielsen. Brennan fled Australia, pursued by what she believed was the devil incarnate. No one saw him stalking her in Europe, but then in Ocean City, Maryland, she was severely beaten and also, possibly, raped. When she was run over,