

AN INCLUSIVE  
CONGREGATION  
MINISTERING TO  
MULTICULTURAL  
TORONTO

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Get ready for some great  
Summer Reading!

# Good News ON BLOOR

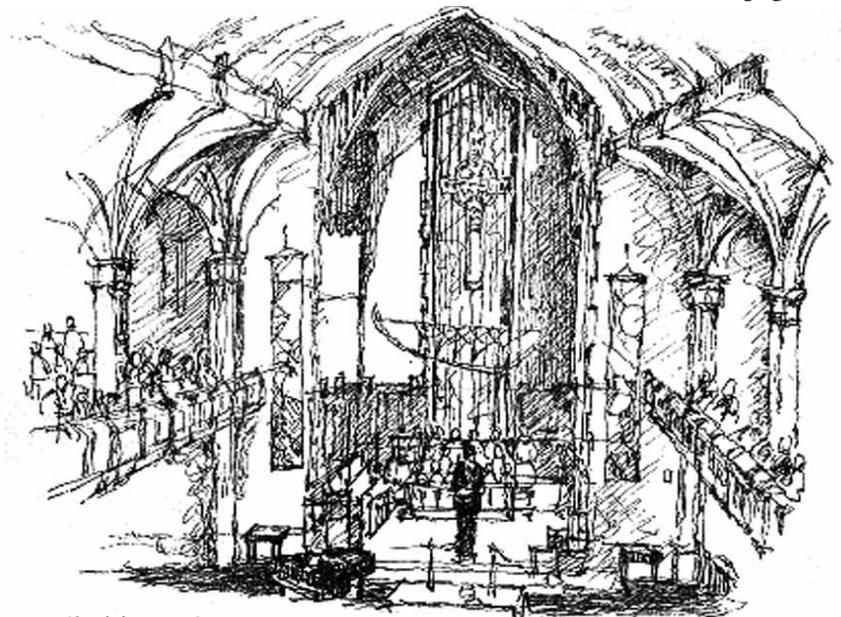
## *Bishop John Shelby Spong*

by Bridget Hough

This was one of the few occasions when one could really feel that liberal Christianity has a hope for survival. Bloor Street's April 15 service was packed to the rafters. People came from far and wide: folks who identified themselves as ex-Anglicans, ex-evangelicals, agnostics and atheists, as well as United Church members from across southern Ontario.

They came because John Shelby Spong, a (retired) senior Episcopal Bishop in good standing, is renowned for his supposedly controversial theology. Although he was brought up in a rigid segregated congregation in the deep South, the Bible Belt of the USA, his faith and his scholarship have led him to a belief system that is convinced that the Bible and the traditional wording of, for instance, the Episcopalian Apostles Creed, are not intended to be taken literally. They are human constructs, results of the historical context of the times when they were written. The judgmental, prescribing, punishing God that many Christians still believe in, is a constrained figure of human description. But "God" is beyond human description, bigger, better and more loving than humans can possibly conceive of.

*(continued on page 2))*



Sketch by Peter Gang Liu

(continued from page 1)

His address was peppered with scholarly facts, apt anecdotes and occasional quips, many at the expense of the current US administration. He even took on Richard Dawkins, whose recent book *The God Delusion* caused such a stir. He agrees with Dawkins' thesis that religion is a prime cause of hate and violence, but disagrees with the conclusion that therefore there is no God.



Book Signing:  
Bishop John Spong  
with Chuck B.  
Photo by Harold  
Durnford



Bishop Spong with Rev. Ann Morewood & Rev. David Allan Photo by Harold Durnford

He was a splendid speaker holding the congregation's rapt attention. Luckily his address was recorded and CDs are available. Also recommended are Bishop Spong's books: *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism: A Bishop Rethinks the Meaning of Scripture*. 1992. *Here I Stand: My Struggle for a Christianity of Integrity, Love and Equality*. 2001. *The Sins of Scripture: Exposing the Bible's Texts of Hate to Reveal the God of Love*. 2005.

## B L O O R P E O P L E

**Congratulations to Rod Burris & Tomas Recomono** who were married at Bloor St. on April 22.

**Congratulations to Michael Hilliard & Rosemary Cooke** who were married at Bloor St. on May 19.

**Happy Anniversary** wishes to **Mimi & Don Gillies** who will be married 50 years on July 6. They are celebrating with a trip to Newfoundland.

**Happy Birthday** to **Helen Ricker** who will be 92 years old on July 19. Helen attends Sunday services regularly, and even congregational meetings!

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**Congratulations** to our Graduating Students:

**Adam Hanley** received his Master of Science degree in Medical Biophysics from the Univ. of Toronto at the March 'in absentia' convocation. The title of his thesis is "Genomic Location Analysis of Myc and Mnt". Adam is now continuing his studies at Emmanuel College.

**Carmen Palmer** graduated from Emmanuel with her Master of Divinity degree. She will begin the Doctor of Theology program at Emmanuel in the fall.

**Meredith Beales** received her Master of Arts degree from the Univ. of Toronto. Meredith was our Junior Class Church School teacher this past year.

**Emily Gordon** graduated from Mount Allison Univ. in Sackville, NB with her Bachelor of Arts' degree in Honours English with a Latin minor. Emily will be flying across the country this summer to begin her Master's degree at Simon Fraser Univ. in Vancouver. Her specialty program in English will be Print Culture.

**Ian Ward** graduated from Concordia Univ. in Montreal with a Bachelor of Arts' degree with a major in Journalism and a minor in the Human Environment. He is applying for internships with sustainable development initiatives in Africa.

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# WELCOME ALYDIA

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by Liz Tinker

Since November 2006 our Joint Search Committee (JSC) has been busy searching for candidates for our two ministerial positions. After a thorough search (including vetting 23 applications, observing candidates in their current pastoral charges and interviewing 6 short-listed candidates) the JSC was able to unanimously recommend Alydia Smith as their choice for Minister of Christian Development, Community Life, Pastoral Care and Worship.

Alydia has a BA in Music History and is currently working on Masters Degrees

in Divinity and Pastoral Counseling. For the last two years she has worked as a minister at Kew Beach United Church with a focus on Outreach Co-ordination and Christian Education. She has also been active in the National Church on several initiatives including the "Journey of Black Peoples" and "Emerging Spirit". In recommending Alydia, the JSC not only recognized her wealth of experience, but also her intelligence, energy and warmth.

At a special meeting on April 22, 2007, the congregation voted to call Alydia as one of our new ministers.

Subject to Presbytery confirmation, Alydia will start her work at Bloor Street on July 2, 2007. The JSC was going to recommend a second candidate to the congregation at the April meeting but this candidate withdrew at the last minute for personal reasons. Consequently, while the JSC continues to search for a second candidate, Church Council is working on plans to ensure the needs of the congregation are met if the second minister is not in place when our temporary ministers, Ann Morwood and Gary Redcliffe, leave.

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## The Church in *Ethiopia* by Jean and Bob Hilliard

In March, as Bob was walking to the Black Lion Hospital in Addis Ababa, the man in front of him suddenly stopped, turned, made an elaborate sign of the cross, bowed and walked on. Most strange Bob thought, until he looked left and saw Holy Trinity Cathedral. Christianity and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church are very important in the lives of many Ethiopians including Bob's pediatrician colleagues. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has a long history and tradition going back to the first centuries after Christ. Tradition says that the Queen of Sheba visited Jerusalem and her son by King Solomon, Menelik, took the Ark of the Covenant to Axum in Ethiopia where it is hidden in an ancient church. In Acts, we read how Philip baptized an Ethiopian official of the royal treasury. The Ethiopian church is a very traditional and authentic church, very different from other missionary founded churches where we have worshiped in Africa. The Ethiopian church has its own Bible with additional books and stories of Mary and the saints which are not in our tradition. It was Lent when we were in Addis Ababa so all fasted from morning to 3:00 pm and refrained from meat and dairy



products. Church services are long and in the Ge'ez, an ancient language. Jean attended a three hour mass in St. Mary's Mausoleum with chanting and prayers. She stood, on a leaning stick, during the entire mass. Together we attended early morning prayers in Lalibela in a small church carved out of solid rock in the 13th century. The stone floors are smooth and indented from the bare feet of worshippers over the centuries.

## Church School *Closes with Picnic* by Richard Chambers

The Church School will close out the year with games and a picnic lunch on the morning of Sunday, June 17 at the park at Huron and Louther Streets, near the church. In looking back over the year, the intergenerational Palm Sunday service was a real highlight. Many thanks to everyone who participated, and especially to Randi Helmers for her patient organizing. Special thanks to Alcris Limongi, Joan Irwin, Janelle Artis, Bob Hilliard and Meredith Beales for their faithful leadership each and every Sunday. Children can look forward to the new Harry Potter book coming out this summer, but in the meantime will also have the use of their own Bibles that were distributed to Church School students in early May.

*Editor's note: A big thank you to Richard who worked with Randi organizing the Palm Sunday Service and who also filled the role of Church School Co-ordinator this past year.*



*Palm Sunday: Church School soldiers with guest dancer Photo by Harold Durnford*



## Nurse's Corner by Nancy Gordon, Parish Nurse

Recently I came across an article by Lois Lenz which talks about the food additive MSG. She refers to a book written by John Erb, a research associate at the University of Waterloo, titled *The Slow Poisoning of America*. After doing much research, Erb states that scientists who need obese rats for experiments, induce obesity with the use of MSG. He further states that many studies link MSG not only to obesity, but also to diabetes, migraines, headaches, autism, ADHD, and even Alzheimer's. Since 1969, researchers have known that **MSG causes gross obesity**. Its ever-expanding use by the food industry causes great concern in the medical profession

because MSG over-stimulates brain cell activity. It is neither a necessary additive, nor a harmless flavour enhancer like common table salt. MSG actually tricks your brain into thinking the food you are eating tastes good. Manufacturers can therefore use inferior ingredients to make a mediocre product seem tastier. Is there actually any real chicken in that can of "chicken broth"? Frequently it is hard to tell if MSG has been added to foods. The label may even state "No MSG" but in fact have it. Beware – MSG is present if the following are listed: Hydrolyzed Vegetable Protein, Plant Protein Extract, Sodium Caseinate,

# Spring *Sundays*

## *60 Wedding Anniversary Celebrations*

*Photos: Angus Müller*



# How Much *Should I Give?* by Brian Fox

Our annual financial commitments are vital to ensuring that our mission and ministry are nourished, but how much should we give? Just as there is no typical “Bloor Streeter”, there is no typical annual stewardship gift. Bloor Street United Church is blessed with wonderful people including those who live on fixed incomes and those with rising incomes, some who are unemployed and some who are able to retire early, those who are established professionals and those new to careers and new to Toronto.

- We may want to compare our stewardship commitments to our other discretionary spending such as entertainment or travel.
- Inflation resulted in a 20% increase in our costs over the past 10 years. Has your gift to your church increased 20% over the past 10 years?
- Stewardship gifts at BSUC range from under \$100 to over \$10,000 per year. The average annual donation for the Local budget was \$956 last year. Over 90% of Local givings come from households giving more than \$500, and the average gift of such households was \$1,768.
- Our target for 2008 is to raise congregational givings to the local budget by 10%.

PERCENTAGE GIVING TABLE				
Annual Income	Monthly Income	Monthly commitment in dollars		
		3%	5%	Tithe
\$100,000	\$8,333.33	\$250.00	\$416.67	\$833.33
\$85,000	\$7,083.33	\$212.50	\$354.17	\$708.33
\$72,800	\$6,066.67	\$182.00	\$303.33	\$606.67
\$62,000	\$5,166.67	\$155.00	\$258.33	\$516.67
\$46,800	\$3,900.00	\$117.00	\$195.00	\$390.00
\$36,400	\$3,033.33	\$91.00	\$151.67	\$303.33
\$26,000	\$2,166.67	\$65.00	\$108.33	\$216.67

GIFTS TO LOCAL BY GIVINGS RANGE - 2006				
Annual Range	Number of Givers	Total in Segment	Percent of Total	Average Gift
\$1 - \$99	61	\$2,087	1%	\$34
\$100 - \$499	70	\$17,157	7%	\$245
\$500 - \$999	43	\$30,107	13%	\$700
\$1,000 - \$4,999	65	\$135,892	58%	\$2,091
\$5,000 +	7	\$49,864	21%	\$7,123
<b>Total:</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>235,107</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>956</b>

# Water Walk *Experience* by Sean Coombes

The drumming at the ceremony was great, although I now know why some Europeans were terrified of the natives. The first time they started to yell and beat their drum the noise scared me half to death. During the ceremony a man came round holding an abalone shell that had smoke drifting from it. He brought it to everyone so they could smudge themselves. Smudging is used to clear the mind by letting the smoke waft over you. After that there were several speeches. Then the drummers all smoked a pipe that I believe had the same purpose as the smudging. After we had eaten, the native group went down to the lake, dipped their bucket in the lake and carrying the bucket, started their walk around Lake Erie. They are

walking to raise awareness about keeping our water clean. This started several years ago and now Lake Erie is the last of the Great Lakes they haven't walked around. This all took place in Fort Erie, Ontario. The woman who started this is Josephine Mandamin. The people walking with her are: Melvina Flamand, Violet Caibaosai, Hilda Gang, and Eraka Sims. They started walking in 2003 and have walked annually ever since. Just so you know, this is a women's water walk.

(Shannon Neufeldt, Sean (age 13) and I went with a group from KAIROS to join in the opening ceremonies for this year's *Mother Earth Water Walk*. - Heather Hilliard)

# Quick Sketches *(formerly News in a Nutshell)*

## THE ANNUAL REPORT:

**PROGRAMME**, presented at the May 29 congregational meeting, is available from the church office.

## BISHOP JOHN SPONG'S SERMON

given on April 15 at Bloor St. Church is available on CD from the Information Table after the service in McClure Hall or from the church office.

## GETTING READY FOR THE

**FRINGE!** Did you know that there is a fifth season in Toronto? Yes, it is the season of the Fringe. The Toronto Fringe Festival is an annual event, featuring uncensored plays taking place in various theatres in Toronto. The festival takes

place during the first two weeks of July but the season begins much earlier, sometimes in February, when all those theatre companies begin looking for rehearsal space. While the beginning of the season is tentative and hard to define there is no doubt that by early May Toronto is in the season of the Fringe. This year, as in others, Bloor Street Church is able to accommodate several companies rehearsing plays for the festival. Playwrights, actors and designers often roam the halls in the evenings. So, as church activities are gearing down, have a thought for our tenants who are gearing up and getting ready for the Fringe *(Tina Edwards)*.



**GARDEN TOUR.** Celebrate God's creation through the gardens of members of Bloor Street Church. Proposed tour on the afternoon of Sunday, June 17. For more information, please contact Richard Chambers.



## GOOD NEWS TRAVELS

This issue of *Good News on Bloor* was finalized in Aberdeen, Scotland.

## Film Picks by Bill Davis



We have reached a time of year where the films worth seeing are being scheduled for next year's Academy Awards, which means a late autumn release. What will grace the screens of the movie theatres now are mostly movies for a teen-age male market.

Now is the time to catch up with the DVDs of the good ones you missed. In addition to those mentioned in the last "Film Picks" (*see the Easter issue of Good News*) here are some suggestions.

The "must see" is the **Lives of Others** – a German film that won the Academy Award for the best foreign film. It has not come out on DVD and is still playing at the Cumberland. It was mentioned extensively in Ann Morwood's Easter sermon. What more

recommendation could you wish?



For our own film group I intend to show **Volver** next followed by **Venus**. **Volver** is the most recent movie by Pedro Almodovar, a Spanish director known for lavish films with brilliant colours and dramatic plots. **Venus** features Peter O'Toole looking every bit his age and a cast of excellent British actors that explores aging, male/female relationships and generational boundaries in an entertaining but provocative way.



Desperate for a decent movie for the film group, I consulted the Internet to search for a quality movie. I chose

**Kramer vs. Kramer** because it seemed that it would translate well from 20 years ago. We had lots to talk about. Other films do not survive the passage of time so well. **Shane**, the great Western of my youth, seemed quite mundane when I saw it recently. **Marty**, which won an Oscar in 1955, was all right but did not "age well".

So here is a suggestion - google Wikipedia and search Academy Awards. Go to one of the lists of movies "won 6 awards" "had 10 or more nominations". Select one that fits your particular type of film or one you remember enjoying or one that has a favourite actor. See it with friends and save your theatre pass for later on when real films return to the theatres.

**Don't miss the  
Giant Yard & Book Sale!  
Saturday, June 9,  
10:00 am to 2:00 pm**

Tables in Courtyard & McClure Hall  
Used & New Goods  
from Bloor Streeters, the Community  
and Craftspeople

Book Sale in Basement  
Low-price Refreshments  
Children's Entertainment

Festive Atmosphere

Rain or Shine!

Tables Indoors if it Rains

Book a table with Kate Peterson at:  
kate@bloorstreetunited.org

**Vacation Bible Adventure!**

Calling all kids! Children ages 5 to 11 are warmly invited to join the Bloor Street Church Vacation Bible Adventure. Daily sessions from **9 a.m. – 12 noon** will be held during the week of **August 13-17** at the church. This event is open to both children in the church school and the community. With the able leadership of our own Carmen Palmer, children will explore friendship and fun through Bible stories, song, crafts and games. Carmen is a veteran of children's programming having worked with several Scarborough churches last summer. Early bird registration is \$20 per child before Friday, July 20, or pay what you can. To reserve a spot please contact the church office at 416-924-7439 – all are welcome!

*Good News*  
**ON BLOOR**

is edited and published 4 times a year by the Communications Committee. All articles and photographs are copyright and may not be used without permission of the author or photographer. 250 words maximum is the standard length for unsolicited articles. Due to space limitations, submissions may be edited.

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**Deadline for the Fall/Advent Issue:  
Sunday, October 14**

Layout: Apropos Advertising Design (416) 483-3353

**COMING EVENTS**

**Saturday, June 9 from 10:00 am - 2:00 pm**

*Giant Yard & Book Sale*

**Sunday, June 10 at 10:30 am**

*Blessing of the Animals*

**Sunday, June 17 at 10:30**

*Anniversary of becoming an*

*Affirming Congregation*

*Garden Tour at 2:00 pm*

**Sunday, June 24**

**following the service**

*Speaker event hosted by*

Social Justice Committee

**Friday, September 14 at 7:30 pm**

*Reel Activism*

**Sunday, September 23**

**following the service**

*Speaker event hosted by*

Social Justice Committee

**Friday, October 12 at 7:30 pm**

*Reel Activism*

**Saturday Evening, October 20**

*Fundraising Talent Auction*

**Sunday, October 28**

**following the service**

*Speaker event hosted by*

Social Justice Committee

**Saturday Evening, November 3**

*Organ Concert*

**Sunday, November 4**

*120th Anniversary of Bloor Street Church*

**Summer Services:**

**Sundays, July 1 – 29 at 10:30 am**

Joint services with Trinity St. Paul's  
at BSUC

**Sundays, August 5 – 26 at 10:30 am**

Joint services with Trinity St. Paul's at  
Trinity St. Paul's

# Summer Reading

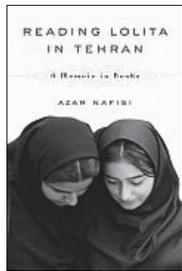


# for Enjoyment & Enlightenment

*Irene Hunter recommends:*

Having taken a course at Glendon last fall on Muslim Culture, I have been trying to read extra books on this topic.

## Reading Lolita in Tehran.



The author, Azar Nafisi, educated in the US, returned to Tehran to teach American Literature at the university. Eventually she

was expelled for refusing to wear a head scarf. For several years she continued to teach some of her top female students at her home. While discussing novels, the young women reveal how difficult their lives are under the Taliban. In 1997, the author returned to the USA where she wrote this memoir .

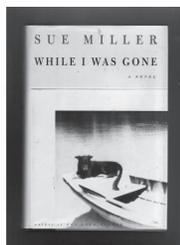
**The Sewing Circles of Herat**, a Personal Voyage through Afghanistan by Christina Lamb. An invitation to the wedding of Benazir Bhutto in Peshawar on the Afghan border first brought Lamb to the country and for two years she tracked the final stages of the mujahedeen victory over the Soviets. Then after the attack on the World Trade Centre, she returned as a foreign correspondent for Britain's *Sunday Telegraph*. She had received letters from a woman about her own age who, under the guise of sewing circles, was trying to teach other women and keep alive the literary traditions of their country. Lamb was named foreign correspondent of the year in 2002 for this book.

## Ahmad's War, Ahmad's Peace

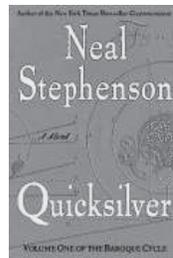
by Michael Goldfarb - subtitled **Surviving under Saddam, Dying in the New Iraq**. Goldfarb, a non imbedded American reporter hired Ahmad as his interpreter during the attack on Iraq. This is a fascinating account of the conflict and the growing friendship between the two men. Gradually both became disillusioned by the American role. Goldfarb leaves for the States but eventually returns to learn how Ahmad eventually paid with his life for befriending Americans.

**Portrait of a Turkish Family** by Irfan Orga was originally published in 1950 and reprinted in 1993 with a forward by the son, Artes Orga. This is a wonderful memoir of a prosperous family in Istanbul during World War I. The father is killed during the fighting and the family suffers great hardships in the ensuing years, but remain loyal to each other. Some eventually emigrate to Britain where the author became a successful writer. She also wrote numerous Turkish cook books.

Two new novelists I discovered this year were the American Sue Miller: **While I was Gone, Lost in the Forest, The Distinguished Guest** and English novelist Salley Vickers: **Mr. Golightly's Holiday, Instances of the Number 3**. Both have websites which provide discussion questions for book clubs.



*Emily Gordon suggests:*



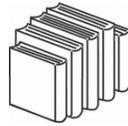
I have recently read **Quicksilver** by Neal Stephenson. The book is not a light read, but I found it very interesting. It is set at the time of

Newton and Leibniz, and explores natural philosophy (the numerous important discoveries of the time) and politics, as well as the interaction between the two men.

For an African American Literature course I took last semester, I read some very interesting books. These include Gloria Naylor's **Mama Day**, which looks at the figure of the conjure woman and traditional magic in a modernized world. Wesley Brown's **Darktown Strutters** revolves around minstrel shows about the time of the American Civil War, creating a complex tension between laughter and violence.

Finally, Ralph Ellison's **Invisible Man** is not a book for the faint of heart. Long and full of allusions ("signifyin'"), the novel follows the life of an African-American youth as he negotiates both white and black conceptions of colour and identity. If you're looking for something a little shorter, Ursula K. Le Guin's **The Lathe of Heaven** is an enjoyable science fiction novel that explores the question of what might happen if a person's dreams could change reality.

# ...More Summer Reading



*Don Nicol suggests:*

It's time to make summer reading plans, and I have three books to suggest.

## **UTOpia: towards a new Toronto.**

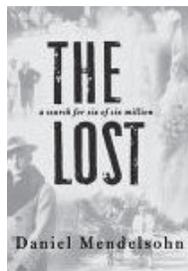
Thirty-four Torontonians laud, lambast and lead the charge for change. It's a collection of brief essays by people who are passionate and frank about ways our city can appreciate all of its variety, history, and "intimacies". There's a large folded map by cartographer Andrew Alfred-Duggan that's a treasure.

**Accordion Crimes** by E. Annie Proulx opens in 1890 in Sicily and crisscrosses the United States over a hundred year period as various immigrants – Mexicans, Africans, Poles, Germans, Norwegians, Irish, Basques and Quebecois - work their way across racist American culture at the cost of their identity, language and traditional culture. Necessarily, historic figures mingle and converse with invented characters; and real events have been slightly or greatly fictionalized. It's a romp.

**Dadaism** by Dietmar Elger - Uta Grosenick (Ed) - shocked me, rocked me and made me burst out laughing many, many times. The Dada movement lasted from 1916 till 1923 and was directed against the ideas of the bourgeoisie concerning life and art.

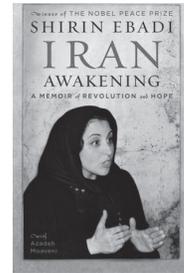
Taking no account of logic, morality or convention the Dadaists tried to create a provocative anti-art by putting together arbitrarily selected, individual items from a variety of different contexts. Beware.

*Ruth Mechanicus recommends:*



**The Lost: a Search for Six of the Six Million** by Daniel Mendelsohn. A classics professor is obsessed to find out what happened to six family members who disappeared in the Holocaust and visits three continents where he finds survivors who can finally tell him what happened. The book is beautifully written and interspersed with Biblical texts that are relevant to his quest. Highly recommended, although a long read.

**Riding the Iron Rooster** by Paul Theroux. Noted travel writer, Paul Theroux, took whatever trains were available in China and went wherever they took him. From the populous southern and eastern parts, to the sparsely populated northern (Inner Mongolian) part and the even sparser populated Silk Road area with its minority populations. A good insider look into China.



**Iran Awakening** by Shirin Ebadi. Autobiography by Iranian Nobel Prize winning human rights lawyer. A role model for any woman under extremely difficult circumstances.

**The Thirteenth Tale** by Diane Setterfield. Famous author finally tells all. The story is quite thrilling and it is hard to put the book down.

**The Waddi Tree** by Kerry McGinnis. The story of the son of an Australian pastoralist, who grows up on a poor farm but in a happy and close family, but has to go live with his uncle's family when his mother dies and his father goes to pieces. The boy struggles with his feelings of abandonment, but eventually becomes a convinced pastoralist himself, despite having lived through years of drought. He comes to terms with his family's history. A great insight into life in the Australian outback