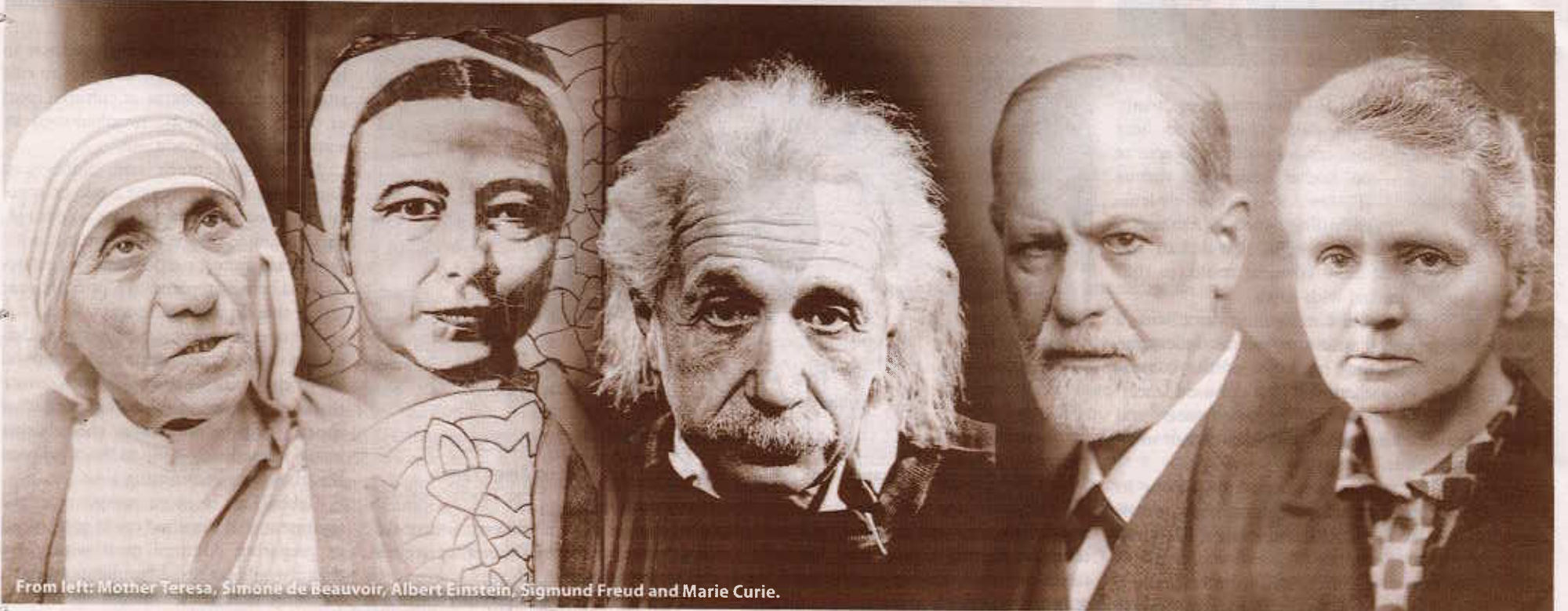


ARTS & LIFESTYLE

Arts & lifestyle editor **Jessica Abelsohn**
jabelsohn@jewishnews.net.au

From left: Mother Teresa, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud and Marie Curie.

The GIANTS OF HISTORY

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to sit down with Sigmund Freud to see how his mind ticked, to understand who he really was and why? That's the premise behind Bernard Marin's book, *People Who Have Changed the World*. **Jessica Abelsohn** spoke to the author about the imagined interviews delving into some of the greatest minds ever.

BIOGRAPHY and historical fiction have always been my great literary loves. Therefore, it only stands to reason that at some point, I would merge the two genres in a single book."

These are the opening words of Bernard Marin's new book, *People Who Have Changed the World*, allowing readers a glimpse into what the author believes interviews with some of history's greatest minds would be like. The difference, though, is that instead of talking to these individuals about their incredible achievements, the interviews delve into their lives as people – their personalities, passions and foibles.

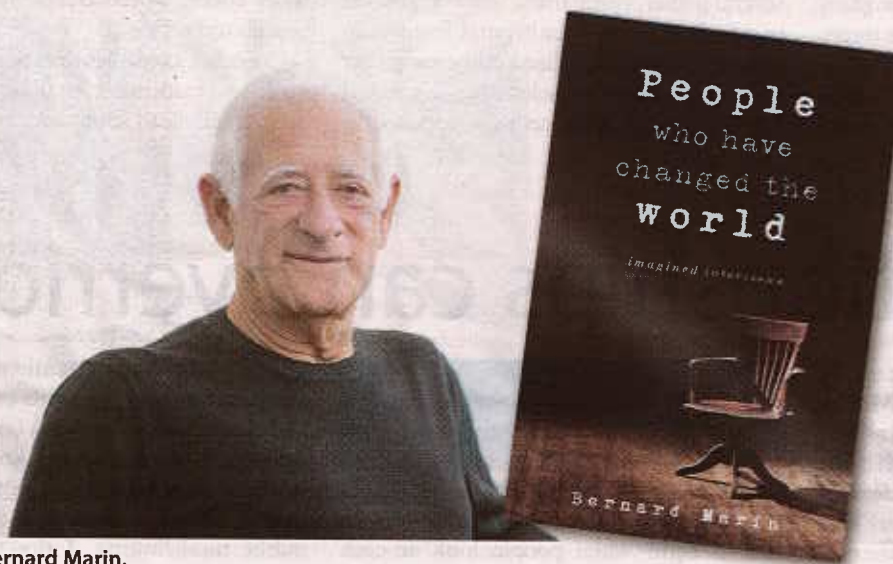
As he writes in the prologue: "I hope to both enlighten and entertain: enlighten by providing the reader with accurate insights into the personal characteristics, foibles and life stories of the historical figures featured in the book; entertain by delivering this information through a fictional interview format."

Marin's interviewees 'talk' to people like Albert Einstein, Marie Curie, Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa and more.

The people he chose to write about are simply those who intrigue the author himself.

"When I was at university, I had a fascination with these people. And so, I just thought it'd be really interesting to investigate some of [them]; not so much about what they did, but more about their lives as people," Marin told *The AJN*. "It can be pretty dry this stuff. So, I thought it might be interesting to have a mock interview."

In *People Who Have Changed the World*, which has been nominated for two NSW Premier's Literary Awards – Christina Stead Prize for Fiction and UTS Glenda



Bernard Marin.

Adams Award for New Writing – interviews are conducted by either fictional interviewers or actual historical figures who lived and worked in the same place and time of those who they are talking to.

"My choice of characters – both interviewers and interviewees – was personal: prominent figures in history who had long been a source of interest and fascination to me," Marin writes. "I can only hope that by the end of this book, my readers will share those sentiments."

Indeed, the sentiments are not always pleasant, as Marin alluded to.

"We've put these people on pedestals, but in fact, some of them didn't behave particularly well."

For example, not many people know that Albert Einstein and his first wife, Mileva, had a daughter out of wedlock, which was very scandalous at the time – "they were forced to give her up for adoption," Marin explained – or the fact that he had multiple lovers, one of whom was

suspected of being a Russian spy.

Another example Marin provides is Simone de Beauvoir who, while in a relationship with Jean-Paul Sartre, had an affair with a woman, who she then "passed on to Sartre after she'd finished with her", Marin revealed.

When choosing the shortlist of people Marin wanted to 'interview' in the book, the author explained that it all boiled down to his fascination with their lives.

"I remember reading Sigmund Freud's biography by Ernest Jones, which fascinated me, and then I also remember reading about John Maynard Keynes. He was at the Treaty of Versailles, and he actually predicted the Second World War. He was a member of the Bloomsbury Group, and he said that he believed the treaty was a deliberate recipe to bankrupt Germany and would cause a second world war because they would be unable to meet their commitments," he said. "That's a really interesting guy."

Marin explained that a lot of research went into writing the book, detailing hundreds of hours delving into the life stories of the subjects and those historical figures who act as interviewers. He rifled through both primary and secondary sources, documents and films, and even analysed the words his characters wrote themselves.

When explaining the amount of research that went into the book, Marin admitted that he genuinely enjoys it all – that's the love of biography and historical fiction in him. Even his writing process involves reading an interesting book before putting pen to paper, metaphorically speaking.

"I always read a chapter of a book, which I find sort of interesting or a book of the style of writing, which I love," he explained. "So, I usually read two or three pages to get me into the frame of mind. Then, I do my research, and then I go back and create the characters to convey the story. So, I've developed a bit of a technique which sort of all seems to work for me."

Ultimately, all Marin wants to do is share his fascination with these historical figures and show that while they were amazing people, they were also human.

"These people are great role models in many ways in terms of their research and their work. But in today's world, you'd like to think that other people are going to make significant contributions too. The interesting thing at the end of it all is that they're all just people. They have foibles, just like you and me. I think it gives us hope that at the end of the day, we can all make a contribution."

People Who Have Changed the World is published by Shawline Publishing Group, \$22.95 rrp.