

You Don't Know Jack

Kathryn H Ferguson

Reading newspapers on microfilm is a frustrating business. Sore eyes, a tired back, coughing neighbours and the inevitably mutinous photocopy function all add to the sheer bloody-mindedness of historical newshounds. It all becomes numbingly familiar: quack cures, Ladies' Auxiliary meetings, discount haberdashery, crime reports, political tomfoolery and society weddings. Inch after gritty inch of type, slowly grating away at patience and expectations. However, perseverance is occasionally rewarded. Such was the case on an otherwise unremarkable Tuesday last summer when, while searching for contemporary commentaries on turn-of-the-century soup kitchens, I discovered that on 23 May 1892, Jack the Ripper was hanged at Melbourne Gaol.

Caught entirely by surprise, I immediately, albeit somewhat guiltily, abandoned the soup kitchens and began scrambling to collect other newspaper reels from dates surrounding the execution. To be honest, I also had to go to the stacks and check on the details of the original Whitechapel murders.¹ In a few short hours I discovered that although the five Ripper murders had happened in the East End of London in 1888, in the autumn of 1892, from 5 March until the end of May, Melbourne was at the epicentre of a very brief but powerful flurry of astonishing newspaper reports describing the crimes, arrest, trial and execution of Frederick Bailey Deeming, a man widely touted, at the time, to be Jack the Ripper. As the reels of grainy microfilmed newsprint unwound, the story emerged piecemeal across various newspapers and over several weeks of reporting.

In mid-December of 1891, Frederick Bailey Deeming, calling himself Albert Oliver Williams, sailed from Liverpool to Melbourne with his newly wedded bride, Emily Lydia Mather, only four months after murdering his first wife and four children in Rainhill, a suburb about fourteen kilometres east of Liverpool.² He murdered Mather around Christmas Eve of that same year and buried her body beneath a hearthstone in their rental cottage in Windsor. Less than three weeks later he proposed marriage to Katherine Rounsefell, whom he had met aboard the *SS Adelaide* as he fled Melbourne for Sydney. Deeming would soon leave New South Wales to go to Perth, where he intended to get a job in a mining settlement, and set things in order for the arrival of his fiancé in the autumn. However, before Rounsefell could join her betrothed in Perth, the body of Emily Mather was discovered, on 3 March 1892. On 11 March 1892 Deeming was arrested in Southern Cross, 360 kilometres east of Perth, for the murder of his second wife. Just as Deeming was being extradited to Melbourne to face trial for the murder, both the English police and the Melbourne press began to wonder what had happened to his first wife and family in England. Consequently, the five bodies of his family in Rainhill were discovered; they had been murdered in August of 1891 and were buried beneath a hearthstone in their former rental accommodations at Dinham Villa. Frederick Bailey Deeming was charged with, stood trial and was executed for having 'feloniously, wilfully and of malice aforethought' killed and murdered his wife, Emily Lydia Deeming (née Mather), on or around 24

Backburning

December 1891.³ On the morning of 23 May 1892, a well-behaved crowd of over 10,000 stood outside of the gaol walls awaiting the news that Deeming was dead.

This story undeniably traces an ugly silhouette of misogyny and murderous violence, but possesses few, if any, other resemblances to the murders of five sex workers in the streets of East London. Unlike Jack the Ripper, Deeming killed more children than adult women, killed 'respectable' women, was married to both of the women he killed, practiced no post-mortem mutilation, and went to great lengths to hide the bodies of his victims. How did the highly improbable and logically untenable connection between Deeming and Jack the Ripper come into being? Indeed, why did that peculiar connection come into being some 17,000 kilometres and over three years distant from the English 'autumn of terror'?⁴ After all, as Carolyn Strange's historical research on the legal treatment of violence against women has revealed, many men who killed or attempted to kill their female intimates were quite often judged rather generously in Australia. The last decades of the nineteenth century in Australia were witness to a juridical 'domestic discount':

execution rates for men convicted of femicide and attempted femicide (both offences capital crimes in that period) were significantly lower than they were for men convicted of other capital offences.⁵

Men who killed their female domestic partners were not usually the stuff of which Australian monsters were made.

I discovered that it was the *Age*, a dominant and reputable Melbourne broadsheet among the city's 115 dailies and weeklies, that began, at least in print, what would become rampant speculation. On 5 March 1892, the *Age* reported that the recently discovered murder of Emily Mather was so outrageous that 'from the outset a suspicion of insanity is almost suggested, and a tinge of the ghastly horror of the Whitechapel murders is hinted'.⁶ The rumours, speculations, special reports, and macabre illustrations would spiral rapidly outward from the *Age*'s 'hint' until even distant North American papers felt impelled to announce, in very large typeface, 'THINK HIM THE RIPPER', 'HE'S JACK THE RIPPER'.⁷ Back in Australia, J B Williams voiced a common opinion when he sent a letter to the police passionately arguing that Deeming and the Ripper were one and the same:

None but a most deliberate and heartless villain could have perpetrated those terrible murders upon the poor outcasts in London. Such a monster would appear to have been found in Deeming. And surely there can be only one such accomplished villain on the face of the earth.⁸

At every turn of the case there was a line of reasoning, an inference, a logic, an argument or 'proof' confirming that Deeming was, despite all evidence to the contrary, Jack the Ripper.

Staggered by the incredible flood of stories that appeared in both the tabloid and conservative press about what seemingly 'everyone knew', I began to wonder how so much political authority was given to the strange nexus of facts and fantasies that came together to forge the impossible connections that re-named, re-identified and re-produced Deeming as Jack the Ripper. The problem with that line of questioning was that I had gotten ahead of myself. I was not even certain how the original Jack the Ripper came to be named, identified and produced. When I

Kathryn H Ferguson

began searching for the information that I wanted about the origins of London's Jack the Ripper, I knew that movies, books, plays and articles had been written about the Whitechapel murders, but I had no idea that an entire study of 'Ripperology' had developed, nor that it had, over the years, produced such a huge and diverse cannon of 'Ripperature'.⁹ The proliferation of various and contradictory theories, explanations, solutions, revelations and indictments had made the written study of Jack the Ripper, as L Perry Curtis notes, 'one of the fastest-growing light industries of the late-twentieth-century publishing world'.¹⁰

Among various and sometimes strange theories of Fenians, Masons, royalty, artists and medical men, I found Ted Remington's level-headed academic article. In it, Remington agrees with Donald Rumbelow, Stewart Evans and Kenneth Skinner, among others, in his assertion that the name of Jack the Ripper was not taken by the murderer himself but 'was almost certainly an invention of a newspaper'.¹¹ Remington is referring to the questionable provenance of what has become known as the 'Dear Boss' letter; the first published letter purporting to be from the individual responsible for the first two Whitechapel murders, and which was signed 'Jack the Ripper', dated 25 September, and postmarked 27 September 1888. The letter, sent to the Central News Agency in London and passed onto the police only after numerous reporters knew of its contents, is suspected by Remington to be a journalistic fabrication guaranteed to boost newspaper sales. The name was a rhetorical coup, journalistic or otherwise, that gave something of a publicly coherent identity to a paradoxically well-known yet unknown dramatic character that George Bernard Shaw facetiously called 'some independent genius'.¹² It provided the world with a powerful shorthand term for speaking about the unknown perpetrator of the Whitechapel murders, but it got them no closer to solving the mystery of the identity of the murderer. Jack the Ripper was any empty metonym, a signifier that pointed to no one and to everyone.¹³

Judith Walkowitz has pointed out that one of the greatest anxieties surrounding the Whitechapel murders was that Jack the Ripper could be anyone and could be anywhere.¹⁴ The fact that the individual responsible for the Whitechapel murders was never caught left the category and the identity of 'Jack the Ripper' simultaneously vacant and filled with protean presences. Indeed, as Remington suggests, it is the singular force of the name, the newly forged category that signified nothing and yet signified everything, that gave the Whitechapel murders much of their durability: 'The epithet "Jack the Ripper" bears as much responsibility for the continual interest in this series of crimes as any other single factor'.¹⁵ The free-floating fragmentary nature of the appellation made it available for diverse and idiomatic appropriation, even years later in another hemisphere, when Frederick Deeming would find himself being loudly, repeatedly and sometimes violently named as Jack the Ripper.

The story of Frederick Deeming murdering Emily Mather could have been told and understood from any number of perspectives and through any number of violent tropes. In fact, discovering that parallels were drawn with both purely fictional characters and pseudoscientific theories took some of the conviction out of my suspicion that it was the subjective tractability of the Ripper image that had made it so powerful. For example, the *Melbourne Evening Standard* branded Deeming a 'Bluebeard',¹⁶ but a month later was seemingly equally convinced that

Backburning

if the readers of the *Standard* were to 'grant that he [Deeming] is a vampire and motive is at once apparent'.¹⁷ In keeping with contemporaneous theories of the atavistic 'born criminal', the *Bulletin* chose more natural and practically minded analogies, arguing that just as it was senseless to 'descant on the wickedness of the shark or the ethical callousness of the tiger' it was pointless to revile Deeming for what he was: 'a revival in our own age of the savage, the conscienceless and non-ethical man of some remote age far aear'.¹⁸ However, from reading these accounts alongside reports asserting that Deeming was the Ripper, I soon realised that the ready-to-hand polymorphous image of the Jack the Ripper was an almost ideal combination the imaginary mutability of a sensational fictional villain with the satisfying forensic closure of scientific rationalisation. The sobriquet was a metonymic distillation that carried myriad details that had been already amalgamated in 1888 with the Whitechapel murders. Jack the Ripper was a recently created embodiment of urban violence, misogyny, danger and disorder; an imperfect but powerful symbol of the modern city open to subjective projections and objective interpretations. Deeming as the Ripper, however, was even more satisfying; Deeming was safely under the control of the authorities. Deeming's story carried the titillating frisson of excitement, but the danger he posed to society was naught.

Graeme Davison and David Dunstan offer another possible clue to the appropriation of the very fluid Ripper moniker in the Deeming case with their observation that, in the last half of the nineteenth century, Melbourne, particularly the city's least salubrious aspects, were often written about and understood specifically in relationship to London:

It was natural that in trying to understand their immature capitals that Australians should have returned to that universally acknowledged standard of civilisation, the 'world's metropolis' ... The visions of writers like Dickens and Mayhew became the lenses through which the colonial city-dwellers viewed their own urban landscapes.¹⁹

But was there any traceable link at all between Jack the Ripper and Deeming other than underlying presuppositions that cities like London and Melbourne harboured many unknown and potentially deadly strangers, were pocked with treacherous precincts, and that both urban hazards were particularly dangerous for women? Mather's murder did not set any new precedents of urban violence against women in Melbourne and should not have required the importation of an English explanation. She was certainly not the first woman murdered in Melbourne — that dubious honour already belonged to Eliza Finnessy, who had been killed almost forty years earlier in 1853. Australia had certainly seen its fair share of trials and scandals sensationalised in the press,²⁰ and in 1891 the State of Victoria had carried out nine hangings. There were other crimes — Australian crimes, Melbournian crimes — that had already established a much more specific context for the public spectacle of the trial and hanging of Deeming. Australia had bushrangers, larrikins, a convict taint and its own list of dastardly delinquents. In 1884, as Chris McConville points out, Melbourne had even known a brief and widely sensationalised terror of garrotting, when men would be throttled from behind and robbed of their valuables.²¹ Melbourne was also well known around the English-reading world as the notorious venue of Fergus Hume's 1886 *The*

Kathryn H Ferguson

Mystery of a Hansom Cab, which would prove to be the best-selling crime novel of the nineteenth century. Hume's Melbourne murder mystery was so successful that it had even inspired its own English parody in the extravagantly named 1888 *The Mystery of a Wheelbarrow; or, Gaboriau Gaborooed: An Idealistic Story of a Great and Rising Colony: a Blood-Curdling Romance*. However, despite real and fictional, sensational and lacklustre local precedents, for some reason it was the spurious link with Jack the Ripper that overwhelmingly eclipsed other connections, references, tropes and allusions in the Deeming case.

Since I could not find any clear and specific link between Deeming and the Ripper, and since I had learned that the Ripper moniker had been invented by the London press in 1888, I began to wonder if there might be a specific journalistic history or logic to Deeming being named as the Ripper. I concurred with urban historian H J Dyos's assessment that journalism is:

the best lens we have for a close-up of the Victorian city, of its disconnections, intimacies, conflicts, aberrations, incidents — of its whole symbiotic continuum and style ...²²

I was already well convinced that newspapers of any age are an excellent source of anecdotes and events that were not always weighty enough to make it into the history books or academic journals. These stories of Jack the Ripper in Melbourne were certainly not part of the city's official history of the 1890s, or at least a part I had heard anything about. *Fin-de-siècle* Melbourne was about women struggling for the vote, severe economic depression, a stolen parliamentary mace, anticipating confederation, an increasingly restless labour force, rogue barmaids and impassioned wowsers. Outrageous stories about 'THE FIN DE SIECLE ASSASIN', and 'the worst criminal that this [nineteenth] century has produced',²³ it would seem, were something historians did not talk about.²⁴ Were these stories, then, simply fanciful cockers best left to the mire of their own purple ignominy, or are they part of a different history, an equally important history that does not so much stand against the official histories as stand alongside them?

In *Society Must be Defended*, Michel Foucault discusses knowledges that are 'disqualified as nonconceptual knowledges ... hierarchically inferior knowledges, knowledges that are below the required level of erudition or scientificity' as 'subjugated knowledges'. Foucault is very clear on the point that this sort of knowledge is 'what people know at a local level' and that the 'factual accuracy of these knowledges does not hinder or enhance their effectiveness'.²⁵ But does this apply to anything as nonfactual, nonconceptual or insufficiently erudite as newspaper reports that exceeded even the spurious suggestion that Frederick Bailey Deeming was Jack the Ripper to advocate, even more sensationally, that Deeming was, in fact, a vampire?²⁶

I was fascinated with the strange stories, but rather appalled at my own fascination. After all, as Frank Luther Mott contends, sensationalist stories, such as those in my Jack-the-Ripper-in-Melbourne collection, go too far in appealing to our 'fundamental and primitive human desires'.²⁷ Edwin and Michael Emery similarly disparage sensationalism for its 'emphasis on emotion for its own sake'.²⁸ Jurgen Habermas also denounced the journalistic blurring of rational news stories with emotionally entertaining stories:

Backburning

The integration of the once separate domains of journalism and literature ... brings about a peculiar shifting of reality — even a conflation of different levels of reality. Under the common denominator of so-called human interest emerges the mixtum compositum of a pleasant and at the same time convenient subject for entertainment that, instead of doing justice to reality, has a tendency to present a substitute more palatable for consumption and more likely to give rise to an impersonal indulgence in stimulating relaxation than to a public use by reason.²⁹

Thus, the quick but ultimately unsatisfying solution would have been to file the whole Jack the Ripper event as a late and rather hackneyed fabrication of ropey ‘new journalism’, indicative of little more than the emotionally manipulative and hoodwinking lengths to which the press would go to sell papers: a quirky footnote at best.

However, despite the wisdom of traditional historians of journalism and social philosophers, I wondered if it might be more productive to take into consideration Matthew Arnold’s 1887 assessment of new journalism and its emphasis on human interest and emotion:

full of ability, novelty, variety, sensation, sympathy, generous instincts; its one fault is that it is feather brained ... Well, the democracy, with abundance of life, movement, sympathy, good instincts, is disposed to be like this journalism feather-brained.³⁰

Arnold, who is credited with coining the term ‘new journalism’ to describe the admixture of human interest pieces, odd stories, interviews and scandals that marked the late nineteenth-century press industry’s expansionist efforts to sell papers to the widest possible audience, emphasises the two-way connection between newspapers and the public. Refusing to see the popular press, no matter how seedy, as somehow separate from society, Arnold insists upon a recognition that newspapers, no matter what their level of sophistication or sensationalism, are a part of a society and, at least in some important ways, reflect that society. Or, as Marshall McLuhan would more broadly phrase it almost 100 years later:

In a culture like ours, long accustomed to splitting and dividing all things as a means of control, it is sometimes a bit of a shock to be reminded that, in operational and practical fact, the medium is the message. This is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium — that is, of any extension of ourselves — result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology.³¹

Admitting that my file of Jack-the-Ripper-in-Melbourne stories was sensationalist, largely illogical, full of contradictions and *non-sequiturs*, then, did not necessarily mean that they had to be thrown on the academic scrap heap, even if those stories were part of a media spectacle that included the most improbably far-fetched characters of vampires, Bluebeard and Jack the Ripper.³² The stories had indeed been produced to shock, titillate and, ultimately, to sell papers, but those intended effects had a specific audience in mind, an audience that was somehow related and able to relate to the stories that were emerging.

The stories of Jack the Ripper in Melbourne had a situationally and contextually specific history, and the stories needed to be weighted with a cultural currency sufficient to sell papers in an economically distressed Melbourne in

Kathryn H Ferguson

1892. Indeed, as J S O'Sullivan reports, the sensational story of Deeming bore so much promise as a lucrative event for the struggling press that:

three Melbourne newspapers that were on the point of effecting a merger (the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Evening Standard* and the *Herald*) delayed their merger until after Deeming's trial.³³

As Leonard Matters argued in 1929, 'if a journalist cannot sell anything else in London, he can always sell a story about "Jack the Ripper"'.³⁴ Even years after the murders in Whitechapel, stories of Jack the Ripper sold papers.

Stories of the Ripper were still appearing sporadically in the Victorian press years after the notorious Whitechapel murders. On 29 November 1890, for example, the Saturday supplement to the *St Arnaud Mercury* reported, under the heading 'Jack the Ripper Scare', that in London 'Superintendent Arnold and the most experienced detectives seem persuaded that another horrible crime is about to be enacted'. This article was complemented by a vivid report from Joseph Pulitzer's unapologetically sensationalist *New York World* telling the oft-repeated story of a woman who believed that Jack the Ripper had been her lodger. These accounts were immediately followed in the *Mercury* by an exposé on music-loving cows that informed readers 'that pigs are not the only animals who take a delight in musical sound'. The incongruous pairing of a violently urban Jack the Ripper with bucolic barnyard harmony suggests that by 1890 the Ripper murders had been relegated to peculiar human interest pieces in the Victorian press. Happily plump livestock, in a colony with a 1,782,881 cattle and 282,457 pigs spread over 36,013 farms, were undeniably important to the well-being of the wallets and waistlines of the colony.³⁵ However, in St Arnaud, approximately 200 kilometres northwest of Melbourne, the eccentricities of agriculture were secondary to the very practical and very profitable concerns of goldmining and the quarrying of Grampians freestone. Similarly, the unsolved Whitechapel murders may well have lingered in the periphery of the Victorian imagination, but the potential threat of the Ripper was largely unconnected with life as it was lived in the colony of Victoria. The 'horrible crime' was expected to occur in the decaying streets of London and was the business of the English. The Ripper was in the East End of London, and the lingering remnants of his story were little more than titillating imports from England and America. The Ripper was elsewhere.

Less than five months later, on 3 April 1891, the *Herald* was no longer using the 1888 Ripper killings in England as entertaining filler but, instead, suggesting that three recent murders in a Melbourne suburb might well provoke 'the suspicion that an individual of the Jack the Ripper type has been carrying on his horrible and bloody work in Collingwood'. The Ripper story had shifted from being a vaguely uneasy recollection or projection — something of a redolent cultural haunting of empire — to being suggestive of a very real and very present threat to the colonial city. Arguing that the most recent death was the third in a gruesome series of similar deaths in a little over a year, the article contends:

It is very remarkable that in the three cases under notice the three victims were women of doubtful character, that the injuries were inflicted on the same parts of their bodies, and that the fatal wounds were received in Collingwood and its vicinity.

Backburning

The three Collingwood murders under discussion were undeniably similar to the Ripper murders: women, probably semi-professional sex workers, were stabbed, abdominally mutilated and left to die on the streets of a lower-class suburb at night. However, it is important to note that the term 'serial killer' had not yet been coined,³⁶ and the *Herald's* columnist seems to be using the term 'Jack the Ripper' to designate a certain type of murderer, rather than the specific individual who had committed the Whitechapel killings. In this instance, Jack the Ripper has come to mean a specific sort of murderer and, arguably, one with a concomitantly specific choice of victims and venues. As Jack the Ripper is now largely accepted as the first modern serial killer, the designation of a suspected serial killer as a 'Jack the Ripper' type is accurate. Although assuring his readers that 'Experienced police officers and detectives have been struck by the singular coincidence of these three deaths ... and they now regard them with grave suspicion', the *Herald's* author admits that 'Whether the Jack the Ripper theory will hold water remains to be seen'.

Eleven months later, when the story of Mather's murder and Deeming's guilt were being discussed widely in Melbourne newspapers, there were no signs of such tentativeness or uncertainty. The press coverage condemned Deeming so unequivocally that on 22 April, a few days before Deeming's trial would begin, defense counsel requested a postponement of the trial, in part on the grounds that the prejudicial and sensationalist press coverage of the case would make it impossible for Deeming to receive a fair trial. Marshall Lyle, the lead counsel, submitted affidavits that cited inflammatory comments taken from the leading Melbourne newspapers. Lyle did not choose incredible or shocking headlines for his affidavits but chose instead less sensational articles that referred to Deeming as a cold-blooded murderer and a ruffian. Justice Hodges refused the request out-of-hand, arguing that if every trial were to be delayed by sensational press no one would ever stand in the defendant's box. Marshal Lyle withdrew from the case in protest, leaving Alfred Deakin, future prime minister of Australia, to lead Deeming's defence. With Lyle's complaint out of the way, the *Evening Standard* felt free to report on 26 April, just two days before the opening of Deeming's trial, their opinion that although there was no doubt of the accused's guilt in the murder of Emily Mather, the trial should not be rushed, as a hurried trial and execution would preclude the gathering of conclusive proof that Deeming was Jack the Ripper.

As Marie-Christine Leps has pointed out, the coverage given to the Ripper murders in England:

clearly illustrates how the press could use crime reports to produce a consensual position supportive of established power relations, while increasing circulation, and taking on the role of champion of truth and the just cause.³⁷

Darel Pink states it even more bluntly and broadly in his assessment of serial killers as sensationally represented in the news:

there is a deeply moral element to these articles ... this is not simply bad reporting; some would say that keeping people misinformed about how the world works serves a purpose.³⁸

Kathryn H Ferguson

Recognising that the Ripper in Melbourne newspaper stories were part of, and arguably served to enhance, a larger web of power and authority is an important point to keep in mind. Many of the Deeming stories do celebrate the efficiency of the police, who arrested Deeming less than a week after the murder of Emily Mather was discovered, and go on to commend the juridical processes which were to see him hanged.

In fact, there is a highly unusual, almost unanimous, agreement in the press that Deeming should be hanged. Even the *Bulletin* and the *Liberator*, which were against capital punishment as a matter of policy, made exceptions in this case. The efforts of the police and foregone conclusion that Deeming would hang are both recognised by young Harry Jones, who wrote to the commissioner of police on 19 March 1892, before Deeming came to trial:

I hope you will hang Williams [Deeming] in a place where all the school boys of Connors school can have a good view of him. I vote that each boy be allowed to stick a ladies [sic] hat pin in his thigh or kerosene him and set fire to him. I think our policemen deserve great praise for bringing the scoundrel to bay. I hope you will give them plenty of money for doing such good work.³⁹

Young Harry was not alone. Deeming had to be given extra police protection in Perth, Adelaide and St Kilda to prevent what the authorities feared might easily turn into a lynching. The inquest into Mather's death had to be held at the City Court in La Trobe Street because it was decided that the morgue, where inquests were usually held, was not secure enough should a large and irate crowd get out of control and become a violent mob. The police precautions did not overestimate the potential for violence around Deeming. Between Deeming's arrest in Western Australia and his trial in Victoria, the train carrying him was attacked repeatedly, and angry crowds gathered wherever he was expected to arrive. When Deeming was expected to arrive in Melbourne by rail (part of a complicated police ruse) the situation was no different:

The excited crowd that gathered about the railway station yesterday, and indulged in threats of lynching Deeming, the wife murderer, were greatly disappointed when they found their prospective victim did not arrive.⁴⁰

Colonial authority, the press, and populist enthusiasm were undeniably satisfied by, and mutually supportive of, the anticipated dislocation of Deeming's neck.

Although the vast majority of people in Melbourne were not involved in the would-be lynch mobs, when Deeming was executed a large but well-behaved crowd gathered at the Victoria Street wall of the gaol to mark the event. As a haggard-looking police inspector escorted the forty-five execution witnesses through the gates and into the street, a rumbling cheer rolled through the crowd. Deeming was dead. Soon after, the assembly quietly dispersed, disappointed that Deeming's unintelligible and barely audible last words did not include a final and conclusive confession that he was Jack the Ripper.

As Wendy Lesser has noted:

murder is an inherently frustrating subject because it keeps moving away, evading us. We want to ask the big questions: more than anything else, we want to get the answers to the big questions. Yet all we can get at, finally, are the details.⁴¹

Backburning

In the case of Deeming, tracing a line through the journalistic genealogy that he both inherited and inhabited leaves much unanswered amid an array of minutiae and monstrosities. Was Deeming responsible for the deaths of five sex workers in Whitechapel? No, he was in jail in Hull at the time of the murders. Did Deeming murder two women and four children? Almost certainly he did. Why did Deeming become so strongly identified with the Ripper? Colonial inheritances, and what exactly it meant to be a major metropolitan centre, came into play in the Deeming case, as did established notions and images of urban order and disorder. Jack the Ripper had become a predetermined, yet highly flexible, caricature of masculine urban violence against women. Mentioning the Ripper sold newspapers, even decades after the Whitechapel murders. Estimations of both the crime and the criminal in the press supported existing power relations, but the assurances of an execution also pandered to notions of vigilante justice and rough revenge. However, in the end, this inventory of very valid reasons still does not explain why, on that Tuesday last summer in the library, I stopped what I was doing to read about Jack the Ripper. Nor does it get me any closer to understanding what really happened on that Christmas Eve in 1891 when a woman was killed in a rented cottage in a quiet street in Windsor. In the end, after I had asked all these questions and knew all these details, I had to admit I still didn't know Jack.

- 33 *Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Report Together With Minutes of Evidence Relating to the Proposed Construction of Buildings and Formation of Reservation at Canberra for the National Museum of Australian Zoology*, Government of the Commonwealth, 1927, p iv.
- 34 *ibid.*, p iii.
- 35 *ibid.*, p vi.
- 36 *ibid.*, p 1.
- 37 *ibid.*
- 38 Walter Burley-Griffin, *The Federal Capital: Report Explanatory of the Preliminary General Plan*, Government Printer, Melbourne, 1913, p 7.
- 39 *Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Report Relating to the Proposed Construction of Buildings for the Institute of Anatomy at Canberra*, Government Printer, Canberra, 1929, p 2.
- 40 Roe, *op. cit.*, p 141.
- 41 The Seventieth Annual Report of the Royal Zoological And Acclimatisation Society of Victoria for the Year 1932, p 10.
- 42 *South Australian Register*, 27 July 1900.
- 43 Clive Lord, 'Introduction' in D Colbron-Pearse, *The Beaumaris Zoo Guide*, The Corporation of Hobart, 1925, p 6. Crowther Library Collection.
- 44 The Seventy-First Annual Report of the Royal Zoological And Acclimatisation Society of Victoria for the Year 1934, p 8.
- 45 *ibid.*
- 46 *ibid.*, p 9.
- 47 The Chief Secretary of Victoria Hon. H S Bailey in Report of a Conference Convened by the Government of Victoria to discuss the Preservation and Protection of Native Fauna, 15–16 September 1936, p 32. La Trobe Library, Box 330, MS6626.
- 48 *ibid.*, p 1.
- 49 Correspondence between Pratt and MacKenzie, held in the Ambrose Pratt Collection, La Trobe Library.
- 50 Letter from Colin Mackenzie to Ambrose Pratt, 7 February 1934, La Trobe Library, Box 329/10, MS 6593.
- 51 Ambrose Pratt, *Elements of Constructive Economics*, La Trobe Library, Box 327/6, MS6548.
- 52 Ambrose Pratt, copy of a letter to the editor of the *Age*, December 1943, La Trobe Library, Box 327/4, MS6534.
- 53 Albert Sherbourne Le Souef, *A Modern View of Evolution: Something of Interest About Ourselves*, North Melbourne, WA Hamer, 1938, p 9. For a study of the elevation of evolutionary theory by the National Socialists in Germany see Arnold Arluke, 'Boundary work in Nazi Germany', *Regarding Animals*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1996, pp 132–66.
- 54 Tom Griffiths 'Introduction' in Griffiths and Robin (eds), *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies*, Melbourne University Press, 1997, p 3.

You Don't Know Jack
Kathryn H Ferguson

- 1 The five women generally accepted as the victims of Jack the Ripper are: Mary Ann (Polly) Nichols, killed Friday 31 August 1888; Annie Chapman, killed Saturday 8 September 1888; Elizabeth Stride, killed Sunday 30 September 1888; Catherine Eddowes, killed Sunday 30 September 1888; Mary Jane Kelly, killed Friday 9 November 1888. Although the murder of Mary Kelly happened just inside the boundaries of the City of London proper, the first four murders occurred in close proximity to Whitechapel Road. I have adopted the established convention of referring to the murders as the Whitechapel murders, which is consistent with contemporaneous references to the murders in the English press. For example, the *Times* would lament: 'Unhappily for all of us, the Whitechapel murderers and their victims are neighbours of every Londoner'. Quoted in Daniel Farson, *Jack the Ripper*, Sphere Books, London, 1973, p 100.
- 2 The victims of Deeming in Rainhill were his wife, Marie Deeming, and their four children, Bertha, Sydney, Francis and Marie.
- 3 Victorian Public Record Series 30 unit 966.

Notes to pp 54–56

- 4 The first use of the phrase ‘autumn of terror’ that I can locate is Tom A Cullen, *Autumn of Terror: Jack the Ripper; his Crimes and Times*, Bodley Head, London, 1965. Judith Walkowitz cites its usage to Arthur Harding, quoted in Raphael Samuel (ed.), *East End Underworld: Chapters in the Life of Arthur Harding*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1981, p 110. Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992, pp 192, 304.
- 5 Carolyn Strange, ‘Masculinities, intimate femicide and the death penalty in Australia, 1890–1920’, *British Journal of Criminology*, vol 43, no 2, 2003, p 310. Although Stephen Knight’s assertion that the police files on Jack the Ripper demonstrate that ‘lunatics, sexual maniacs, and woman-haters were almost two a penny’ is somewhat overstated, it reinforces the fact that men killing women was not as shocking as it should have been. Stephen Knight, *Jack the Ripper: The Final Solution*, Grenada, Sydney, 1980, p 225. Ted Remington offers the suggestion that it was the class and profession of the victims murdered in Whitechapel, rather than the fact that they were women, that created the furor: ‘Had the killer vented his rage against aristocratic ladies, shopkeepers’ wives, or even children, it is doubtful he would have achieved the same notoriety as he did’. Ted Remington, ‘Dear Boss: Hoax as popular communal narrative in the case of the Jack the Ripper letters’, *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*, vol 10, no 3, 2004, p 213.
- 6 Mather’s murder was, without question, horrific. On around Christmas Eve of 1891, Mather’s head had been hit and cut three times, and her throat had been slashed twice. Her body, dressed in a linen chemise and singlet, was then cemented into a very shallow and very small grave beneath the bedroom hearthstone. Her body had rested there for three hot Australian summer months before the smell of decomposition led the cottage’s landlord to its discovery on 3 March 1892. My citing of the origins of the Jack the Ripper connection to 5 March precedes J S O’Sullivan’s by some two weeks and places it in a different state entirely. O’Sullivan notes that ‘This rumour had originated in Perth shortly after his incarceration in the Waterside lockup’ because ‘a Perth correspondent of an Adelaide paper had falsely reported that Deeming had confessed in the Waterside Lockup [in Perth, on 18 March 1892] to two of the Jack the Ripper Murders ... Once started, the rumour gained many advocates in England and Australia’. J S O’Sullivan, *A Most Unique Ruffian: The Trial of F B Deeming*, Melbourne, 1892, F W Cheshire, Melbourne, 1968, p 109 and 57. Another alleged confession to being Jack the Ripper would appear in Melbourne’s *Argus*, 26 March 1892.
- 7 *St Louis Republic*, 8 April 1892, p 1; *Manitoba Daily Free Press*, 9 April 1892, p 1.
- 8 Victorian Public Record Series 937 Unit 511.
- 9 Listing the numerous works written about Jack the Ripper would be impractical here, so I refer my readers to the bibliographic compilation of Paul Begg, Martin Fido and Keith Skinner, *The Jack the Ripper A to Z*, Headline Book Publishing, London, 1991, pp 50–2. For an overview of the Ripper case, I would suggest Philip Sugden, *The Complete History of Jack the Ripper*, Carroll & Graf, New York, 2002.
- 10 L Perry Curtis, *Jack the Ripper and the London Press*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2001, p 1.
- 11 Remington, op. cit., p 201. Stewart P. Evans and Keith Skinner, *Jack the Ripper: Letters from Hell*, Sutton Publishing, Stroud, 2001. Donald Rumbelow, *The Complete Jack the Ripper*, Penguin, London, 1988. Stephen Knight is not quite as definite with his assertions, and is content to name the sender of the letter to be ‘an unknown crank’. Knight, op. cit., p 53.
- 12 *Star*, 24 September 1888, p 1.
- 13 In 1888 contemporary theories of the Ripper held him to be a male homosexual, a woman, Jewish, socialist, Fenian, a slum-dweller, a businessman, a sailor, a policeman, a doctor, a butcher, royalty, a vengeful syphilitic, a religious fanatic, American or, according to one helpful theorist who had obviously been influenced by either Darwin or Poe, a great big monkey. Rumbelow, op. cit., pp 108–9.
- 14 Walkowitz, op. cit., pp 2–4.
- 15 Remington, op. cit., p 201.
- 16 *Melbourne Evening Standard*, 19 March 1892, p 1.
- 17 *Melbourne Evening Standard*, 20 April 1892, p 1.
- 18 *Sydney Bulletin*, April 1892. Cesare Lombroso’s pseudoscientific theories of the criminal personality popularised the archetypal image of the atavistic and epileptic criminal, who was

- identifiable by various physical ‘stigmata’, in his 1876 *Uomo Delinquente*. Stephen Jay Gould points out that Lombroso’s theory was not just a vague proclamation that crime is hereditary — such claims were common enough in his time — but a specific evolutionary theory based upon anthropometric data. Criminals are evolutionary throwbacks in our midst. Germs of an ancestral past lie dormant in our hereditary. In some unfortunate individuals the past comes to life again. These people are driven to act as a normal ape or savage would. Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1996, p 153.
- 19 Graeme Davison and David Dunstan, “‘This Moral Pandemonium’: Images of low life’ in Graeme Davison, David Dunstan and Chris McConville (eds), *The Outcasts of Melbourne: Essays in Social History*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1985, p 30.
 - 20 See, for example, George Blaikie, *Great Australian Scandals*, Rigby, Melbourne, 1979; Kirsten McKenzie, *Scandal in the Colonies*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2004; Alan Sharpe, *Crimes that Shocked Australia*, Currawong Press, Milson’s Pond, 1982;
 - 21 Chris McConville, ‘From “Criminal Class” to “Underworld”’ in Graeme Davison, David Dunstan and Chris McConville (eds), *The Outcasts of Melbourne: Essays in Social History*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1985, p 82.
 - 22 H J Dyos, *Exploring the Urban Past: Essays in Urban History*, eds David Cannadine and David Reeder, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982, p 10.
 - 23 *Evening Standard*, 19 March 1892; *New York Times*, 20 May 1892, p 4. The New York Times alone would produce over fifty articles on the Deeming case.
 - 24 Here it must be noted that Deeming has indeed been the topic of historians’ work, most notably J S O’Sullivan’s work noted above, but the story does not figure in the canonical history of Melbourne. For various other, and less reliable, accounts of the story through time see: Anonymous, *Biography of Frederick Bayley Deeming: A Romance of Crime*, Port Melbourne Tribune Printing and Publishing, Melbourne, 1892; Anonymous, *The Criminal of the Century: A Complete History of the Career of Frederick Bailey Deeming, alias Albert Williams, alias Baron Swanston ... : The Perpetrator of the Windsor and Rainhill Murders*, Australian Mining Standard Office, Sydney, 1892; Anonymous, *The Life of Deeming: The Murderer of Women and Children*, Williams, Melbourne, 1892; Anonymous, *The Windsor and Rainhill Murders*, Walker May, Melbourne, 1892; Frank Clune, *‘The Demon’ Killer: The Career of Deeming, Satanic Murderer*, Invincible Press, Sydney, 1948; Michel Lawrence, *They Hanged in Melbourne*, Swell Productions, 197?; Alan Sharpe, ‘Damnable Deeming Esquire’ in *Crimes that Shocked Australia*, Currawong Press, Milson’s Point, 1982, pp 100–7.
 - 25 Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, trans David Macey, Picador, New York, 2003, p 7.
 - 26 *Evening Standard*, 20 April 1892, p 1.
 - 27 Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism: A History of Newspapers in the United States through 250 Years*, Macmillan, New York, 1962, p 442.
 - 28 Edwin and Michael Emery, *The Press and America*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1988, p 119.
 - 29 Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Berger, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1989, p 171.
 - 30 Quoted in Alan Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press in England 1855–1914*, Rowman and Littlefield, London, 1976, p 118.
 - 31 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, McGraw Hill, New York, 1964, p 7.
 - 32 On 14 March, 1892, the Melbourne *Herald*, p 1, used the headline ‘A MODERN BLUEBEARD?’ to open their article on Deeming. On 19 March 1892, the Melbourne *Evening Standard*, p 5, followed suit with the headline ‘ALBERT BLUEBEARD WILLIAMS’. Bluebeard is a character created by Charles Perrault and later adopted by the Brothers Grimm. A nobleman who marries several women, kills them, and then hides their bodies in a locked room seemed to be a close parallel to Deeming.
 - 33 O’Sullivan, op. cit., p 109.
 - 34 Leonard Matters, *The Mystery of Jack the Ripper*, Hutchinson, London, 1929, p 16. Indeed, the recent best-selling success of Patricia Cornwell’s *Portrait of a Killer* suggests that the mystery has maintained its saleability. Patricia Cornwell, *Portrait of a Killer: Jack the Ripper Case*

Notes to pp 60–66

- Closed*, G P Putnam's Sons, New York, 2002. However, there is some question if it was the fame of her subject or the author herself which was most effective in selling the volume.
- 35 Erle Bourke, *Victorian Yearbook: 1984*, Victorian Office, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Melbourne, 1984, pp 700, 698.
 - 36 Robert K Ressler working with the American Federal Bureau of Investigation would coin the term 'serial killer' in the mid-1970s.
 - 37 Marie-Christine Leps, *Apprehending the Criminal: The Production of Deviance in Nineteenth-Century Discourse*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1992, p 116.
 - 38 Darel Pink, 'Lawyers and serial killers' in Chris McCormick (ed.), *Constructing Danger: The Mis/Representation of Crime in the News*, Fernwood, Halifax, 1995, pp 192–3.
 - 39 Victorian Public Record Series 937 Unit 511.
 - 40 *New York Times*, 2 April, 1892, p 1.
 - 41 Wendy Lesser, *Pictures at an Execution*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1993, p 13.

'Having it all' or 'had enough'? Blaming Feminism in the Age and the Sydney Morning Herald, 1980–2004

Natasha Campo

- 1 *Age*, 23 July 2002, p 11.
- 2 I will be using the terms 'the women's liberation movement' and 'feminism' to refer to second-wave feminism in Australia.
- 3 P Hamilton, 'The knife edge: Debates about memory and history' in K Darian-Smith and P Hamilton (eds), *Memory and History in Twentieth Century Australia*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994, pp 13–26.
- 4 P Burke, 'History as social memory' in T Butler (ed.), *Memory: History, Culture and the Mind*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1980, p 98.
- 5 A Curthoys, "'Vietnam": Public memory of an anti-war movement' in Darian-Smith and Hamilton (eds), *Memory and History in Twentieth Century Australia*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994, pp 113–15.
- 6 This is Jerome Bruner's term; J Bruner, 'The narrative construction of reality', *Critical Inquiry*, vol 18, no 1, Autumn 1991, p 19.
- 7 B Attwood, 'Learning about the truth: The stolen generation's narrative' in B Attwood and F Magowan (eds), *Telling Stories: Indigenous History and Memory in Australia and New Zealand*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 2001, p 183.
- 8 *ibid.*, p 211.
- 9 *ibid.*, p 189.
- 10 *ibid.*, p 183.
- 11 M Lake, 'A question of time' in D McKnight (ed.), *Moving Left?: The Future of Socialism in Australia*, Pluto Press, Sydney, 1986.
- 12 D H Broom (ed.), *Unfinished Business: Social Justice for Women in Australia*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 1984, p xx.
- 13 For instance, Juliet Mitchell, Michele Barret and Mary O'Brien.
- 14 A Curthoys, 'The sexual division of labour: Theoretical arguments' in N Grieve and A Burns (eds), *Australian Women: New Feminist Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1986, pp 319–39; Lake, *op. cit.*
- 15 J J Matthews, 'Deconstructing the masculine universe: the case of women's work' in Women and Labour Publications Collective, *All Her Labours*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1984, p 15.
- 16 A Summers, *Ducks on the Pond: An Autobiography*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1999, pp 263–5.
- 17 S Magery, 'The Sex Discrimination Act 1984', *Australian Feminist Law Journal*, vol 20, June 2004, pp 127, 133.
- 18 M Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Feminism in Australia*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 1999, p 254.
- 19 Office of the Status of Women, *Selected Findings from Juggling Time: How Australian Families Use Time*, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra, 1991.
- 20 R Betterton (ed.), *Looking On: Images of Femininity in the Visual Arts and Media*, Pandora, London, 1987.
- 21 Lake, *Getting Equal*, *op. cit.*, pp 222–4.