



# LITERALLY SPEAKING

Issue no.2 • FREE Edited by Glenn Carmichael & Sara-Jane Arbury

Sunday 10th October 1999

## TODAY'S HIGHLIGHTS

•

**Brian Patten**

Everyman,  
10.30-11.30pm

•

**Tom Sharpe**

Everyman, 2-3pm

•

**Patrick Moore**

Town Hall, 4-5pm

•

**The Poets Laureate**

Everyman, 6-7pm

## Well, that just about wraps it up for God.

By ADAM HOROVITZ

Ludovic Kennedy, octogenarian buzzard look-alike and fierce intellectual, yesterday lent his weight to the cause of making atheism respectable. In front of a large audience in the Pillar Rooms, he began by objecting strongly to being likened to a lost sheep by hymns, priests and the like.

Reading from his book *All in the Mind: Farewell to God*, Kennedy combined personal memoir with scathing attacks on organised religion and gods in general. He claimed that all these are the creation of mankind and that "...the Bible is hearsay upon hearsay." This could be considered heresy, but Kennedy was quick to call in quotes from useful allies; consider this from

David Jenkins, former Bishop of Durham:

"Nothing in the New Testament could be regarded as certain."

Christian friends have, he said, insisted that he consider himself an agnostic. However, this would allow an element of doubt which Kennedy clearly does not have. He quoted Hilaire Belloc in his defense: "Still cling on to Nurse / for fear of finding something worse."

This witty, scientific and caustic reading was made complete by Kennedy's ironic parting line, wherein he thanked us for coming and suggested "God bless you all." I'm sure he will.

Ludovic Kennedy is a member of the British Euthanasia Society.



Portrait of Ludovic Kennedy by Heather Spears

## Time Travels

By RACHEL MONK

Hundreds of shoppers were surprised by a two metre high walking watch as they strolled along the promenade on Saturday. *The Big Watch* is the inspiration of visual artist, writer and performer David Petts who has taken this year's theme of Time out onto the streets.

Confused expressions soon turned to smiles as people engaged with David and his giant blank-faced pocket watch upon which passers-by were asked to write phrases or words that related to certain times of the day. The chosen expressions ranged from the ludicrous to heartfelt emotion as children, business people, shoppers and students gradually filled the space. A security man chose "kick off time" at the position of 3

o'clock whilst 4 o'clock represented chocolate cake for a child. Japanese script translated as "time for tea please ladies and gentlemen" and "here we go again" struck a chord for a work-weary commuter at 5 am.

Certain sentences expressed the mood of the local people such as Shay from Cheltenham who wrote "Never ask for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for no man" whereas Syd from Stroud felt "it's not my time yet" was appropriate at five minutes to midnight.

David was thrilled with the response from the public and hopes that more people will be able to see the finished piece at a Festival venue soon. And for one lady a certain myth has been dispelled, "It's strange to see a clock walking, I thought time is supposed to fly!"

## Learning the ropes

By EDWIN SINGLETON

For those of you who missed Eric Newby at The Everyman...

Critics call him one of Britain's best loved travel writers and, having read *Learning the Ropes*, I can see why. Told primarily by way of annotated black and white photographs, it concerns itself with Newby's account of life on board one of the last great sailing ships - the voyage being from Belfast to Australia during 1938 and 1939. As well as giving a short account of his experiences onboard, Newby also details the history of the ship, the *Moshulu*, providing background information on the nature of maritime trading in the early 1900's.

The story charts the ship's last commercial voyage, starting with Newby's

first tentative steps onboard: "the future looked bleak gastronomically speaking." What follows is a chronicle, of climbing the rigging, looking after the pigs and even being hit by a tornado. Newby describes his developing relationship with his shipmates, most of whom spoke little or no English.

I found myself drawn back to *Learning the Ropes*; re-reading it, wanting to know more about Newby's adventures. The book is genuinely interesting from both an historical and personal point of view. If you haven't discovered Newby yet, then *Learning the Ropes* is a great way to start. An exciting and engrossing read - I would recommend it to both devoted 'Newbians' and newcomers alike.



## Dibdin Now and Zen

BY MARY FAUSET  
& BARBARA FAUSET

The city of Oxford has yet another claim to fame! Not only is it the city of Inspector Morse but Michael Dibdin's Aurelio Zen was also conceived there during an exceedingly cold winter. Dibdin relived this experience as he completed his latest novel, *Blood Rain*. He was staying in a flat in Rome where "central heating was an optional extra." The option had not been taken up.

Dibdin expressed the importance to him of a sense of place in a novel. He has to go there, live there and know how it feels to inhabit the place he will fictionalise. Italian culture in particular gives his work this necessary third dimension and the chance to pretend he is not living in Seattle.

Dibdin shares with his readers an inability to picture Aurelio Zen. He says nobody really knows what they look like and he writes Zen from the

inside. He feels tied to the character by a fatalistic attitude, believing that life is basically a mess - we have to make the best of it and try to be decent. Aurelio Zen strives to be decent, yet things at times have a tendency to go horribly wrong.

According to Dibdin, the success of a novel does not rely on its factual accuracy and he admits to making up a vast proportion of his details. *Blood Rain* is apparently red sand picked up in the Sahara that falls from the sky - it leaves a fine mist over everything.



## Word Power

BY NISHA KUMAR

In this controversial discussion, the issue of whether journalism is fiction was taken one step further. Can fiction match fact? The 'Journalist', the 'Novelist' and the 'Controversialist' battled head to head.

Time played a part in this debate. Elizabethan England was clearly Shakespeare's time, as was the 19th Century Dickens'. This century cannot be dedicated to anyone - there's an explosion in genres.

After WWII change occurred - the reality of the Holocaust needed to be told. 'Bridge fiction' was created by pioneers like Orwell. The argument that fiction is more telling than fact was summarised by Bradbury - "the novelist is more truthful because s/he states that they are telling lies." At the end of the day, too much writing bears relation to real life. "The reason we write is to hide behind the truth - through writing a greater truth comes out."

## Sci-Fi with the gloves off

BY ALAN MADDRELL

Canadian William Gibson made an appearance at the Everyman, his last in a British tour. As a self-confessed SF writer there is a tendency to see him as a fantasist. However, he sees himself increasingly as a collator of modern phenomena who synthesises these phenomena into literary form. Yet he does not seek to impose order on the world.

He talked about his loose plot forms, and the nature of the novel-writing process as essentially non-rational. As such, he's always strayed away from follow-ups, but his new book *All Tomorrow's Parties* has inadvertently arrived and completed a random trilogy including *Virtual Light* and *Idoru*. Some of the loose ends are followed to conclusions.

In an age of exponential change, Gibson argued, straight naturalistic fiction must in many ways resemble what was once known as science fic-



tion, simply to represent our surroundings. Consequently, actual science fiction is a near impossibility to write. He engaged in a considered examination of technology in culture; for example, "most social change now is a direct result of technological advances." He drew on examples as varied as the disintegration of the Mexican middle class to the "capital-

ism with the gloves off" of modern Russia.

He is, as ever, engaged with the latest technological advances and has noted with interest the emergence of e-mail over interactive television in this country. We may rest assured that William Gibson is still cutting edge, as well as highly articulate, perceptive and original.

## The Stoat

Alan Titchmarsh overheard in the Writers' Room: "It's a love scene if you describe the act. It's a sex scene if you name the parts."

Whereupon Libby Purves piped up, "What if you give them funny little pet names?"

Selina Hastings and Elizabeth Jane Howard bared all yesterday morning on the main stage, revealing that they had both shared a passion for saucy literature since childhood.

More on the hearing-aid conspiracy. Sir Robin Day's old mucker Ludovic Kennedy was also unable to hear this morning, thus avoiding awkward (and long-winded) questions from Christians after his speech on the joys of atheism.

Saturday night, where were you? Poetry dropped into the Festival via the unlikely substituted "Substitutes" live at Peppers. Mr Motion would have been proud to have experienced a remarkable rendition of Dylan's "Most likely..." Pure poetry through guitars.

### THE TEAM

SUB EDITORS:  
Adam Horovitz, Alan Maddrell.

STAFF JOURNALISTS:  
Nisha Kumar, Mary Fauset.

ROVING REPORTER:  
Jon Andriessen.