



LITERALLY SPEAKING

The Cheltenham Festival of Literature's Daily Journal

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•
Gordon Banks

Cheltenham Town
Football Club
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8 - 9.45pm

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Brian Patten

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And much more...

To book tickets for Cheltenham
Festival of Literature, call
01242 227979 or visit
www.cheltenhamfestivals.co.uk

All human life is here

By JON ANDRIESEN

With over 200 events in 25 venues, the 2002 Cheltenham Festival of Literature confirms (if indeed this is necessary) its position as the 'mother of all Festivals'.

Under the umbrella of the Festival



To order a brochure for
Cheltenham Festival of
Literature, call the Brochure
Hotline on 01242 237377

theme, 'What does it mean to be human?' Director Sarah Smyth has invited two Guest Directors to preside over a series of weekend discussions. Biographer Richard Holmes aims to explore the 'human bridge' built between biographies and their subjects, whilst novelist Justin Cartwright examines 'how consciousness has both become the subject of literature and lies behind the impulse to create and enjoy art'.

Doris Lessing, Richard Ford, A S Byatt and Arundhati Roy are amongst the literary heavyweights due to enter the Spa town and thinkers, politicians and historians are well represented by the likes of Tony Benn, Germaine Greer and Eric Hobsbawm.

Elsewhere, multifaceted Michael Palin hotfoots it back from the desert to tell the tale of his latest epic journey across the vast Sahara and author-turned-celebrity Will Self shows he still has a literary outlook with *Dorian*, his reworking of Wilde's most

famous 'picture' book.

Cricket fans will want to catch Mike Atherton and Jonathan Agnew (who promise not to conceal anything as the dust settles between them), whilst World Cup winning ex-footballer Gordon Banks ensures his audience is in safe hands.

Write Away has an extensive array of workshops for aspiring scribes of all styles and genres. Whether you're starting your new novel, penning your poetry or typing for television, Write Away offers the short course to success.

You will also find exhibitions of visual art at the Town Hall throughout the Festival with Ralph Steadman's *The Balletic Art of Gavin Twinge* and Eve Arnold's *Film Journal*, which includes many of her legendary shots from Marilyn Monroe to Marlene Dietrich.

Why not discover what it means to be human and enjoy the vast offering of events at your fingertips...

A very Jolly Green Giant speaks

By ADAM HOROVITZ

The campaigning environmentalist and splutteringly enthusiastic icon of eighties and early nineties television, David Bellamy, will be brimming over with zeal at this year's Cheltenham Festival of Literature when he comes to promote his new autobiography *Jolly Green Giant*.

Bellamy has lost none of the vim and fire that made him so popular with children and adults alike. He has been campaigning for years to ally environmentalists and consumers and believes that 'we are at last winning in that struggle.'

'The press love to find fault with Britain (environmentally),' he claims when I ask him about the recent spate of British fridge mountains, 'but they



forget that European countries often ignore the rules we try to respect.'

Bellamy is a strong proponent of that pillar of Establishment environmental politics, Prince Charles, and believes that he would make a good King. He's a little less enthusiastic about Auntie Beeb, however. When asked if he's likely to make any more

programmes for television, he tells me 'That's up to the BBC. Other campaigning presenters like Robin Page and Julian Pettifer have also disappeared off the screen.'

Given the power, Bellamy would want to reform the Common Agricultural and Fisheries Policies 'to stop over-grazing, over-fishing and over-enrichment of our soil and water.' Add to this the fact that his environmental outlook was partly informed by the children's books of Arthur Ransome and you have to wonder how such a reasonable man could be kept from our screens.

Look out for *Literally Speaking's*
Personified Poetry Competition
on Page 4. The closing date is
Wednesday October 16th 2002

Faction Woman

BY DANIEL HAHN

Say what you like about Fay Weldon (and you name it, someone's said it about her) she is not a woman afraid to speak her mind. Which



makes her latest book, the autobiographical *Auto da Fay*, all the more surprising – it's a very benign, surprisingly mellow book, with none of the controversy one has come to expect of its author. So why did she do it?

'There just seems to come a time in life when you think you should do something like this, when there seem to be things worth recording, and you don't want them to be forgotten,' she says.

This book has had the added benefit of making her fiction-writing seem so much easier ('you discover it's rather restful to write a novel...'); she has found too that it's easier to make fiction plausible. As she says in the book: 'Write the truth and no one believes you: it's too alarming. So you might as well make it up.'

Auto da Fay explores this boundary between fiction and non-fiction, not only by helping readers of her novels

to trace the people and places that influenced her and which appear in the work, disguised to a greater or lesser degree, but also in that there is little difference between the two forms: 'In a way you are just writing another novel, only this one is about yourself.'

As a girl, young Fay bemoaned the lack of literary heroines to identify with; she attributes their emergence in later twentieth-century fiction to 'women being able to earn a living.'

But this advance has not been without its downside. The creation of two emancipated sexes, no longer interdependent, has led to a fall in the number of marriages and to a sharply falling population. 'As soon as sex and procreation are separated out, sex becomes frivolous, or at least not serious, not mysterious, and marriage is going to lose its grip,' she explains. 'It's a disaster!'

It's a view that in itself is almost old-fashioned and sentimental, which is a surprise – she is famously controversial and notoriously 'argumentative' (to quote her). The woman I meet (sitting among the packing-boxes in the Hampstead house she is about to leave) is mild of manner, smiles generously and laughs a great deal.

And as I stop the recorder and prepare to go, she jokes 'If you'd rather, you can always just make it up.' But as she well knows, I couldn't possibly – the truth, as ever, is far more interesting, if also totally unlikely...

Tony Benn: a life in print

BY JON ANDRIESSEN

Not since Samuel Pepys has a collection of diaries been so heartily relished as that of Tony Benn. Benn comes to the Festival this year to release the next instalment, *Free at Last* – 'a more human book than the others,' he says.

Benn is certainly a man of many parts; politician, writer, campaigner, father and grandfather. So how important is being a diarist? 'I'm really an archivist,' he claims, 'and the diary is the spinal cord,' a small part of what he calls, 'a very comprehensive research system,' consisting of the speeches, press cuttings, notes, musings and minutes of an extensive political, public and private life.

For Benn, politics and political ideas are central and he berates the image-conscious age we now live in. 'The trouble with political coverage is that it's all about politicians and not about politics. I don't go a lot for charisma, really. I think charisma is a bit...' (he pauses), 'overdone.'

Known for his strenuous cam-

paing, Benn does admit to having made mistakes. He remembers Eisenhower espousing 'atoms for peace' and subsequently supporting the construction of nuclear power stations.

'I thought,' says Benn, 'that this was the classical case of swords into ploughshares, but it wasn't safe, it wasn't cheap and it wasn't peaceful. As it turned out, our civil power stations would be used to make plutonium for bombs. It was a total mistake.'

For someone who has long supported human rights, Benn is very interested in the Festival theme, 'What does it mean to be human?'

'It must mean,' he says, 'accepting



responsibility for what you do. You cannot say you were just obeying orders.' Tolerance of others alone is not enough. He believes we should try to understand those whose lives differ from our own.

'We should understand

and respect other people's opinions, not just say, 'well, he's a nutter but I'll live with it.'

Jeff Noon and the death of science fiction

BY JON ANDRIESSEN

Novelist Jeff Noon makes his first appearance at the Festival in a discussion on the work of the late Angela Carter. *Literally Speaking* caught up with Jeff in cyberspace for a Q and A interview via email.

Q: You have described your work as 'Avant Pulp'. What does this mean? How does it differ from standard post-modernist techniques?

A: I quite gleefully applied the label Avant Pulp to my own work of a particular period. I was interested at the time in applying some of the formal experiments of modernist literature to a populist content. The tag line I used

was *Ulysses* rewritten by Chandler, or *The Big Sleep* by Joyce. That was the theory, anyway. I guess it was old-style post-modernism, as opposed to the later rococo phase we're now trapped within.

Q: You are due to be in Cheltenham as part of a discussion on Angela Carter. Is magic realism a big influence?

A: Not magic realism as such, but Jorge Luis Borges. He just seemed to get it right, with the short stories. Magic realism is a difficult genre to sustain over a full-length novel. Many



have tried, and certainly Angela Carter is one of the more successful. I love the idea that Borges had, of being too lazy to write novels, he would instead imagine novels, and then simply write about them. Because of this technique, his stories bristle with ideas, with sustained beauty.

Q: You have spoken out in the past about your frustrations with the science fiction tag. Should fiction be categorized at all?

A: We're now living in the future. Science fiction no longer has a role.

It's a dying genre. It will no doubt continue to live a zombie life, as pure escapism. In an ideal world, there would be no genres, or an infinite number, one for every book produced.

Q: Which writer would you most like to have seen reading at the Cheltenham Festival of Literature?

A: Gerald Manley Hopkins reading his poem, *The Windhover*. 'I caught this morning morning's minion, kingdom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn drawn falcon...' Followed by a computer's version of the same poem, put through a grammar checker, translated into French, German, and back into English.

Spreading the Word

BY REBEKAH CANE

Spreading the Word is the Education and Outreach Programme of the Literature Festival which gives schools, places of learning and the wider community the chance to participate in projects specifically intended to promote and sustain a lifelong interest in literature.

This year, Spreading the Word is offering secondary school groups the chance to immerse themselves in The Five Senses. Under the guidance of Slam! Productions, students will devise public performances exploring how our bodies relate to the world around them. Experience their visual,

tactile, aural, olfactory and tasty offerings throughout the week.

In Patient Poetry, poet and writer Brenda Read-Brown will be working with the patients and staff of Gloucestershire hospitals on a number of creative projects linked to the Festival theme, 'What does it mean to be human?'

Developing Creativity is a writing workshop aimed at English and Drama teachers, librarians and youth workers – those involved in engaging young people in creative work – with the intention of revisiting their own creative skills and providing fresh new inspiration.

Banks of England

BY JON ANDRIESEN

Gordon Banks was the 1966 World Cup winning England goalkeeper with a stature to match his status. He brings his autobiography *Banky*, to this year's Festival, so we thought we'd test his reflexes with a few well-placed questions.

So how far detached is the modern game from the one he played in? Gordon admits that these days he watches 'whatever games (he) can live, but mostly on TV. The game is quite a bit different today because it is played at a quicker pace. The players are profiled far more than in my time and the exposure they get makes them like film stars and gives them that sort of status.'

Banks' most famous save against Pele is a constant reminder of his abilities, but was it his best? 'I don't think I made a better save but I know I made some that were as good. People talk about one I made in the semi-final of the League Cup at West Ham. It was a penalty save from Geoff Hurst.

The Pele save was caught on camera and made in the World Cup, so to

a lot of people it was more special, I think.'

Only someone playing in a big game can truly know the rigours and stresses it brings. How did he manage to control the nerves and keep the concentration knowing one tiny mistake could cost a game? 'That's a difficult question, because I don't know how I kept my concentration. I only knew that I had to. When playing for England it was more difficult because there were times when I wasn't involved in the game for quite a long time and then suddenly I was brought into the action.'

And how did he feel when David Seaman was caught off his line in this year's World Cup? 'I couldn't put any blame on Dave Seaman because I know I would have stood in the same place. The position the player was standing in meant that Dave was ready to help his defence had it been put in the area most players would have placed it. When he tried his shot, Dave had to back peddle and it couldn't have dropped in a more difficult place for him to have dealt with.'



Voices taking off

BY REBEKAH CANE

'*voices off* is the part of the Festival that visits the places where human life gathers,' says Sara-Jane Arbury and as the director of this intrepid programme, she's staged events in just about everywhere it's possible to go in Cheltenham. Venues all around the town have entertained the daring delights of her authorial adventures and this year promises to be no exception.

'The Festival theme has opened up exciting possibilities to take literature into unexplored territory where people work, play, relax, travel and socialise,' she continues.

So expect to find poets giving their words a platform at Cheltenham Spa and Toddington railway stations, a poetry juke-box in Pittville Park and the Recreation Centre, as well as a Festival Pub Quiz to test the bookworm in you. And that's not all...

Words At Work features five industrious authors taking up residence in businesses and writing a poem about their experiences; the fruits of their labours revealed in a series of free daily readings, while for those who

enjoy their home comforts, Living Room Literature offers the unique opportunity to book a duo of authors to entertain family and friends in lounges around Cheltenham. All the fun of the Festival from your own armchair!

New venues for *voices off* this year include Pittville Campus Students' Union Bar for a spot-on prose event with striking young writers and Cheltenham Town Football Club, who play host to the mighty talent of

Gordon Banks. A night of haunted happenings in the Prestbury House Hotel sees charismatic performers, featuring sinister storyteller Michael Dacre and vampire queen of verse Rosie Lugosi, create a haven of horror.

An opportunity for the public to add their voices to *voices off* rounds off the revels as Reader-in-Residence Patrick Gale throws down the theme for the Festival Challenge: write a poem or mini-saga based on the topic he sets and you can perform it on the last day of the Festival.

'It really is a packed programme for *voices off* this year,' says Sara-Jane. 'Literature is literally let loose to roam around Cheltenham.'

What could be better?



Reading matters

BY JON ANDRIESEN

As well as celebrating writers, the Festival aims to highlight that other essential element in literature, the reader. Prolific novelist Patrick Gale takes on the mantle of Reader-in-Residence, ready to discuss books you have loved and to hopefully introduce you to some you've never met.

Reading is very important to Patrick, who still remembers the first book he read. '*Ferdinand*,' he says, 'an adorable Puffin about a Spanish bull far too fey to do much beyond smell flowers - and will whoever took my copy of *Ferdinand* give it back soon. Please?'

As Reader-in-Residence he's aware that much of his work is simply preaching to the converted, but how does he go about creating new bookworms out of those more apathetic?

'Probably by getting them to dig back in their memories to the last time a book stirred them up,' he says. 'So much of reading is habitual - like those crucial ten minutes before you fall asleep at night - but so is watching television.'

Patrick will also be introducing people to *Which Book*, a new on-line library database aimed at matching new books to your current reading habits. 'If enough richness of opinion and reaction can be fed into the database,' he says, 'it could provide a brilliant alternative to a harassed librarian or marketing-led bookseller. I cherish booksellers who have read widely enough to be able to say, 'If you liked this then you'll love this,' but they're increasingly rare.'

Be sure to catch up with Patrick in his Book Clubs, programmed throughout the Festival.

A look at Book It!

BY JANE CHURCHILL

This promises to be a bumper festival of goodies, with 67 events across all ages.

The first weekend's highlights include a welcome return for one of the nation's best-loved authors, Michael Morpurgo. There's a unique opportunity to hear Meg Cabot - over on a whirlwind tour of the UK - talking about the remarkable *Princess Diaries* phenomenon and to experience *Terrible Times* with the outrageous Philip Ardagh. There's also the chance for the little ones to join in the fun with *Maisy*, *Brum*, *Preston Pig* and *Julia Donaldson's* own brand of wacky humour and songs as she tells stories about *Gruffalos*, *Witches* and *Giants*.

Second weekend highlights include



a visit from Scotland's Mairi Hedderwick. Kjartan Poskitt's *Murderous Maths* which will have everyone hooked on mathematical curiosities and Paul Stewart and Chris Riddell will talk about their weird and wonderful *Edge Chronicles*. There'll be fun with *Spot*, *Clifford* and *Mona the Vampire* and a chance to find out all about cartooning with joke-book genius John Byrne.

This year's family events include 50th anniversary celebrations for *My Naughty Little Sister* and a look at

epic adventures and mythical lands with Peter Dickinson, Robin McKinley and Julie Bertagna. There's a prize-winning line-up of Jamila Gavin, David Almond and Canada's top children's writer, Kenneth Oppel talking about how childhood influenced their writing

and an exciting panel discussion about illustration with Ralph Steadman, Chris Riddell, Michael Rosen and Nicolette Jones, one of a series of debates held around the country engineered by the Children's Laureate, Anne Fine.

For the first time this year we are holding a series of creative writing workshops for children and young adults with Paul Magrs on *Starting to Write*, poetry with Nikki-Siegen Smith and *Making a Book* with Vivian French and Chris Fisher.

Tim signs in

BY TIM PEARS

I am delighted to have been invited to be Writer-in-Residence for the Cheltenham Festival of Literature this year. The residency involves taking part in events at the Festival, but the bulk of the work will be teaching creative writing: at the Festival and with students in Gloucestershire.

People come to Creative Writing classes for a variety of reasons: to hone a manuscript before submitting it; to practice a hobby; to meet fellow writers; to learn to read well.

Whatever their reasons, I hope that there's one thing that every student can be given on such a course and that is to climb inside language. For me, writing can be devastatingly hard work, but there's always joy in it, and if a student can share that, then they can do with the experience whatever they will.

Competition

BY REBEKAH CANE

Literally Speaking is proud to launch The Cheltenham Personified Poetry Competition.

The competition is inspired by this year's Festival theme, 'What does it mean to be human?' and aims to induce the very best examples of personification in poetic form.

Simply put, we want human characteristics applied to non-human subjects in poems of 12 lines or less.

The winner and four runners-up will each receive a book donated by Hammicks Bookshops and the winning poem will be published in *Literally Speaking*.

Please send all entries and your contact details to: The Cheltenham Personified Poetry Competition, *Literally Speaking*, c/o Cheltenham Town Hall, Imperial Square, Cheltenham, GL50 1QA, or email them to stetpress@hotmail.com by Wednesday 16th October 2002.

A full list of the rules is also available from stetpress@hotmail.com. Please put the word 'Rules' in the subject line. Get writing and good luck!

Patten of tiny feet

BY ADAM HOROVITZ

This year's *Book It!* includes the welcome return to Cheltenham of two of Britain's best loved poets, in the impish and delightful shapes of Brian Patten and Roger McGough.

Stalwarts of the poetry scene since the sixties, their curious blend of insouciant wit and heart-rending innocence has lent itself well to writing for children.

Brian Patten, whose Blakean soulfulness and gentle anarchy has translated delightfully into books such as *Gargling With Jelly* and *The Blue and Green Ark*, claims that 'there is as much message in my writing for children as there is in *The Beano*.'

'I came late to writing for children,'

he says, 'and I find it quite exacting and challenging to do. A lot of it is rhyming, which needs to be technically exact. You can't slip up on the metre and scansion - you've got to get it right or it just looks shabby.'

'It's rather like doing sums. It concentrates your mind.'

This straightforward and tough-minded approach seems to work for Brian, however; children and adults alike respond to the well-ordered anarchy of his verse, under the surface of which lies a fantastically joyous approach in the face of all the

sadnesses life can throw at one.

'One thing that's really good,' he adds, 'is working with Roger with our kids writing. We've worked together a lot in the past and I think we complement each other.'



About us...

BY STET PRESS

Literally Speaking is Cheltenham Festival of Literature's daily News and Review journal.

Established in 1999 by Sara-Jane Arbury and Glenn Carmichael, it is now edited by Jon Andriessen and Adam Horovitz, with indefatigable assistance from Michael Chirgwin and Daniel Hahn.

The aim of *Literally Speaking* is to take an on-the-hoof and occasionally wry look at events taking place throughout the Literature Festival and review them on the spot. It's fast, it's furious, but ultimately it's fun.

We are also always on the lookout for people willing to write articles for *Literally Speaking*. We can offer a free ticket to the event in question, the chance to rub shoulders with your favourite author and an opportunity to improve your typing speed.

If you are interested in writing for us, send a sample of your work (no more than 250 words and no attachments) to stetpress@hotmail.com including contact details. Otherwise, see you in Cheltenham in October.