

LITERALLY SPEAKING

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TODAY'S HIGHLIGHTS

Jack Mapanje & Femi Oyeode

Ottakar's 2.30 - 3.30pm

•
Clare Short

Town Hall 4 - 5pm

•
The Cheltenham Man Booker Prize

Everyman 8.45 - 10.30pm

•
Wild and Free

Town Hall 9.45pm - late

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Applying science

BY PETER WYTON

Such portraiture of Robert Hooke as I have seen - and which, on Lisa Jardine's authority, I now know to be highly questionable - shows a man well named, at least in the proboscis department. During a long life, he poked that nose into almost every aspect of scientific and technical study imaginable. He saw a lot further than the end of it, inventing, designing and constructing all manner of things. He had it thoroughly put out of joint by Newton, Wren, Boyle and a host of other luminaries whose reputations largely depend on the genius of this quite remarkable man. He is only now beginning to receive - in the wider world - the respect in which he has long



been held within scholastic circles.

In Lisa Jardine, he has a doughty champion. Speaking totally without notes and with the enthusiasm and verve of a super-academic Lulu, she used her presentation time as a verbal trampoline. Bouncing from amusing anecdote to technical description to triumphant debunking of one myth after another, Jardine never for a moment blinded her audience with science or left them struggling in the wake of an appealingly erratic course. She steered through the life and work of the inventor of the universal joint, the iris diaphragm, the anchor escapement and the balance spring - not to mention authoring the first definitive theory of combustion. All this, plus a lecture on the evils of chocolate!

Only kidding?

BY REBEKAH CANE

The second weekend of Book It!, the children's part of the Festival, promises to pick up where last weekend finished, with a host of favourites for kids of all ages.

Today you can sample the sumptuous poetry of Roger McGough, John Agard and Grace Nichols, tumble around with *Topsy and Tim*, catch up on the latest Redwall sagas of Brian Jacques, or witness the Wisdom and Wonder of modern fairytales with Adele Geras and friends.

Sunday sees the most welcome return of the pleasantly prolific Jaqueline Wilson and - the man who captures her imagination - artist Nick Sharratt. You can dress up and dance with Angelina Ballerina, find great things to make with *The Rainy Day Book* or discover *Amazing Machines* with Tony Mitten and his flashing fire engines. Finally, award-winning authors Jamila Gavin and Carlo Gebler join Linda Newberry, author of *The Shell House*, to round off another fabulous Book It!

Tight-trousered philanthropist

BY AVRIL STAPLE

Everything is globalised except democracy and our consent, said George Monbiot in his talk at the Everyman last night. He went on to explain that the world's politics were exclusively controlled by world powers such as the UN and the World Bank and that the World Trade Agreement was subject to piracy favouring multinationals. Global issues, such as disarmament and poverty, need to be addressed at a global level.

General assembly is not proportional he said, suggesting that votes be given according to the level of democratisation of the state. Monbiot argued for better mediation and called for new strategies to be employed for radical change. He suggested a democratically elected world government that would hold other organisations to account; this would give India 17 times more votes than the UK. If we



do not agree to this, we reveal ourselves to be undemocratic.

Harry Dexter White suggested that interest not only be paid on the trade deficit but also on surplus; an idea that the American government, unsurprisingly, found unacceptable. Monbiot takes this idea to another level, suggesting that poor countries collectively default on their payments to the World Bank to gain an effective response.

Calling George Bush 'a moron' and accusing Blair of 'coat-tailing', he said: 'We have it already in our hands to change the course of history.' Cultural and linguistic barriers have been taken down by improved transport and communications: these are the tools of the revolution, he asserted.

Monbiot paced the stage like a caged lion. He spoke confidently on his subject and remains optimistic. Thank goodness.

Spilling the beans

BY EMILY KOCH

'Here we are, in terribly civilised Cheltenham, having a tea party - it's terribly lovely', said David Freeman at yesterday's Cheltenham Tea Party event. With sunlight streaming in through The Daffodil's pellucid windows, the audience enjoyed a caffeinated refreshment and a selection of cakes, as Freeman was joined by Roy Moxham and Antony Wild to discuss the finer points of tea and coffee.

There was a constant debate over which was better, with Moxham declaring that 'tea is the most popular drink in the world' and Wild fighting back with 'coffee is a highly valuable commodity, second only to oil'. Their conversation was full of interesting facts of which few members of the audience were aware, although we are, as a nation, obsessed by these two beverages.

The obviously important issues of Fair

Trade and the impacts of globalisation were discussed. Moxham highlighted the fact that workers on a tea plantation are paid around 15p a day, and Wild confirmed that prospects were not much better for those working in the early stages of coffee production.

Those of you who regularly frequent Starbucks may also be interested to know that your tall cappuccino costs about one US cent to produce - half a percent of the price you pay. Those of you who are not members of today's Starbucks society, especially those of you who refrain because you

prefer a nice cup of tea, may be interested to learn that 'Tea Bars' are on their way. This is according to Moxham, who informed us that they have already arrived in California, and 'what happens in California today will happen in Cheltenham tomorrow'. Perhaps we'll also soon have a muscle-bound Austrian mayor.

The representatives of a nation of tea and coffee lovers were treated to a relaxed and enjoyable afternoon.





Travelling light

BY JON ANDRIESEN

Almost indefinable genres are perhaps the best description of the latest works of William Fiennes, Geoff Dyer and Martin Buckley, although their publishers - possibly fearing they wouldn't find shelf space - are happy to call them 'travel' books.

We were treated to some excellent readings from the trio, followed by some acute observations on travel in modern times. Dyer prefers to disassociate from the narrative 'I in *Yoga For People Who Can't Be Bothered To Do It*, whilst Fiennes defended himself against accusations of elaborate object description: 'I just love the way some things eventually look like other things,' he said.

Martin seemed a little eager to keep the strike and even stifled Buckley a couple of times just when he had something to say, but perhaps the best of this event came following a question on whether we had lost our sense of wonderment. 'Tom Stoppard and Salman Rushdie,' remembered Fiennes, 'used to meet up and mark sunsets out of ten for tastelessness.' Cynicism aside, there's a wonderful world out there and thanks to writers like these we don't have to travel far to see it.

Blake's heaven

BY RITA SMITH

A large crowd came to watch the performance of *Things My Mother Never Told Me*, a scripted adaptation of Blake Morrison's book. The performance was moving and witty, told through the letters between Morrison's parents before they married and Morrison's often comical interjections, which saw him wondering how he was ever born in the first place.

Even though the ending of the story was evident, given his presence here tonight, the audience was held in suspense. The dramatisation focused on the typical war-time relationship made problematic by the differences in religion, nationality, distance, and parental influence that he was completely oblivious to.

The audience was taken on a journey, alongside Morrison, into his mother's past that he only came to discover after she died. The show conjured little details about their lives; the seemingly endless list of names for Morrison's mother, and how annoyed she became when her husband-to-be tried to make her 'practise cooking'. It asked how much we really know about our parents 'before they were our parents' and was very enjoyable indeed.

Painter man

BY ALAN MADDRELL

If you have ever read Andrew Graham-Dixon's column in *The Sunday Telegraph's* magazine, you will be acquainted with his free-roaming passion for a wide variety of paintings. His column, collected in a recent illustrated volume, settles on a different subject each week, dictated by such curious occasions as National Sandwich Week.

This leads Graham-Dixon to indulge his eclectic tastes - from Gainsborough's painting of his two daughters which captures a snapshot of rapidly fading youth, to Patrick Caulfield's 1970s image of a fish and a ham sandwich. The latter led to an amusingly-told anecdote involving the new British embassy in Riad and a Jewish delicatessen. It was in these moments of irreverent spontaneity that Graham-Dixon came alive.

The problem with a talk with slides on interesting paintings - linked by no particular theme - is that it can become a dry lecture. However, Graham-Dixon, who

came to art relatively late, has a passion which he conveys engagingly. He capered around in the gloom that shrouded the Everyman, illustrating one point by jumping up on a small table.

Thankfully, this gloom allowed the event to focus on the slides. It is rare to have slides that effectively convey the texture or detail of a painting, and it is to the Everyman's credit that its efforts met with relative success. This really came to the fore when we were treated to a lengthy gaze at Van Gogh's Sunflowers. Deftly sidestepping cliché, Graham-Dixon helped us see what makes this painting special; it is a naked expression of joy and exuberant living.

Graham-Dixon mixed this with some extracts from Van Gogh's letters to do what the very best art critics can: revealing the passions of art with minimalist strokes, demystifying the elitist hegemony and bringing a populist art-form back to the people.



Stepping into the light

BY ADAM HOROVITZ

Lavinia Greenlaw's new book, *Minsk*, is about 'place - the places we contrive and the places we travel towards'. Her reading yesterday confirmed this; the poems, let loose, carry the listener into a playful world where the past, and childhood in particular, is a place to travel towards.

Not that it's a tangible destination, more 'l'esprit d'escalier' - the poetry of what you wish you'd said at the time. Greenlaw encapsulated this in her first poem, 'The Spirit of the Staircase' (a direct translation of the French) in which she remembers riding down staircases with her brother. Her language is tender and lovely: she and her brother were 'Young bees/with soft stripes and borderless nights'.

She trod a coolly lovely path through poems about Ergot, London Zoo and Minsk, the title poem, a place that she has never visited. It's a word 'like Samarkand or Casablanca,' she said. 'You can't hear it without feeling something.' The same is true of Greenlaw's verse.

Don Paterson, who shared the stage with Greenlaw, also read from his new book, *Landing Light*. He offered up a selection of joyous, tender poems celebrating his sons, a friend who claimed that she 'would never fall in love again' and a concrete poem for his guitar 'that's too good for me to play' (a lie; Paterson is an accomplished musician). It was with 'The Landing', written with Orpheus in mind, that word and audience coagulated in understanding, though. It encapsulated exactly Paterson's appeal and his power: 'No singer of the day or night/as lucky as I am/the dark my sounding-board, the light/my auditorium'.

This was a perfect close to the double-header poetry events sponsored by the Poetry Book Society; it's just a shame that a member of the audience asked Paterson if he could have a 'Cheltenham translation' of his penultimate poem, spoken in Scottish dialect. Paterson, bless him, obliged in brisk fashion, but nothing - not even a 'Cheltenham translation' - will dim the rough, glorious music of 'Zen Sang at Dayligaun' in its original dialect.



Woolf fills Callow's shoes

BY KATHRYN HARPER

Biography is sometimes a crude tool. Why not go back to the source and let the words speak for themselves? And then why not let a trained actor present them?

Gabriel Woolf, replacing Simon Callow, revived Dickens' voice through readings of his prodigious letters and excerpts of his novels. It was 1848 and a memory of working in a blacking factory was revived - one that led to the writing of *David Copperfield*. The selection of readings brought out the frantic pace of Dickens' activities - including establishing a home for fallen women and performing around Britain.

Woolf slipped effortlessly between the voices of the various characters. It wasn't always clear which characters were real and which imagined. Was this lack of separation deliberate? It was cold outside, warm inside and a little time travel seemed a good idea. It was all safe and pleasant - a little glow on a wintry eve.

The Stoat

Having left the frontline of politics himself, Martin Bell now asserts that 'the only real opposition Blair's got is Bremner, Bird and Fortune'. It might well be nice to have some genuinely funny jokers in charge.

George Monbiot, ever the environmentalist, elected to take the train to Cheltenham yesterday rather than receive a lift from a Festival driver - 'it's not green enough'. Unfortunately, George became stranded at Birmingham, almost missing his event completely. In the end, Monbiot got a cab.

THE TEAM

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