

literary evening

Dhaka Toasts Novelist Peter Bradshaw

An exciting new voice in contemporary British fiction appears at an exclusive literary evening in city today

By Ziaul Karim

"You would have to be very po-faced not to find yourself giggling at regular intervals," writes David Robson in Sunday Telegraph about Peter Bradshaw's first novel *Lucky Baby Jesus* which is set in the "hip-cosmopolitan-contemporary" London and accommodates into its narrative space all the typicalities of its life -- the world of theatre, media, night-clubs, glamour -- where high brow culture is in a constant process of mixing with low culture.

Dhaka's literati, poets, fiction writers, editors, and journalists will greet Peter at the Aark Arts Literary Evening curated by Sudeep Sen, who himself has been hailed by the BBC Radio as being among the leading and "finest younger English-language poets in the interna-



Peter Bradshaw

tional literary scene."

"I was aware that Peter

Bradshaw was going to be in Dhaka on a personal visit. I had read his novel, *Lucky Baby Jesus*, with immense pleasure and had reviewed it. So I thought that it would be a great opportunity for him to meet and interact with writers in Bangladesh who write both in Bengali and English," says Sudeep Sen. Aark Arts is a quality literary publishing house based in London. Besides publishing, it is particularly interested in promoting contemporary literature and arts in England and South Asia.

"I was influenced in a way, like all young British writers, particularly male British writers, by Martin Amis," says Bradshaw. "He is a writer of black-comedy, which I am not. He has a big, dark, disturbing undercurrent in his comedy, very English and intensely engaged with the idea of responding to the city as an authentic and contemporary way of living, one that Martin Amis wanted to write about."

"I heard him using the phrase 'urban pastoral' about his books, that is to say, the everydayness and the gentleness of the city, in a way the innocence of what happens in the city. But it also gives some sense of the opposition, the antithesis, and that in a way is what *Lucky Baby Jesus* is about," remarks Bradshaw. "It is about the city, it is about what happens when you are a professional or an intellectual person in a city. It is also about the factors of irony and illusion that you have to deal with as a city person. There is a lot of irony in my book."

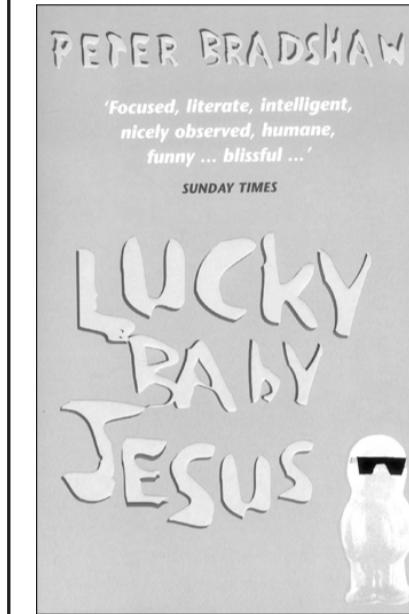
Currently, the film critic for The Guardian, Peter graduated with a PhD from Cambridge University in the 1980s. He became a media celebrity through his "stylised, acerbic, witty" columns for the Evening Standard for which he was "pursued through the High Court by the Tory MP Alan Clark" for his spoof column "Not Alan Clark's

Diaries." As well as writing for the Evening Standard, Modern Review, New Statesman, and London Review of Books, he has also written and performed on the BBC Radio 4 programme *For One Horrible Moment*. Most recently, he has written a sitcom with David Baddiel, in which he also stars in. It is scheduled to be screened on Sky One Television in a couple of weeks time.

The central characters of Bradshaw's novel -- Sean Cunningham, editor of the *Sodomite*, a radically conservative gay style magazine; his lover Catherine, a TV producer who adores Sean's public persona; Ysenda, Catherine's older sister -- inhabit and move in a contemporary London setting with their sexual crises and self-centred relationships. Sean has become rich and famous by his late-twenties. Newspapers and magazines are hungry for his opinions, mad for his provocative

views on the 'myth of the gay identity', the enigma of his private life, and his relationship with his widowed mother. Peter's prose is fast-paced with an everyday "conversational" style, laden with a Bradshawian wit.

The evening also co-features Shamsur Rahman, the giant of contemporary Bengali poetry; Kaiser Haq, a fine voice in post-colonial poetry; Fakrul Alam who has translated Jibanananda Das to much critical acclaim; Hayat Saif, a distinguished voice in modern Bengali poetry; among others. In addition, selected contributors from the inaugural issue of *Six Seasons Review*, an international magazine of arts and letters, and its publisher Mohiuddin Ahmed of UPL, will also participate at what promises to be, an unique and intellectually stirring literary evening.



Lucky Baby Jesus

An Extract

By Peter Bradshaw

The following is an [edited] extract from the book. Sean (the hero) and his friend Wayne (a successful young actor) are hanging out at the Parliament Hill Lido, the open-air swimming pool in Hampstead, North London on a very hot day. They have arranged to meet two women there: Ysenda and Catherine, two sisters. Sean is secretly in love with Catherine, the younger of the two

Wayne inaugurated a languid discussion of what women did that was heart-breakingly beautiful without being overtly sexy. Sean nominated chewing the inside of their lip while they were concentrating on something, which because it artlessly redirected the viewer's attention to their lips, it made you feel warm and protective.

Sean suddenly had another idea. I think it's what they do with their swimming costumes.

'And what's that?' 'Well, when they walk towards the water, with one hooked forefinger they pull out the material that's been riding up their bottom.'

'And that's supposed to be a good thing, an attractive thing? You're kidding.'

'No, no, no,' said Sean. It's the unthinkingness of the gesture that's important; it's the knowledge that they would be...chagrined to know that anyone else had noticed it...and yet also the fact that it makes no difference to how you feel about them.' 'How you feel about them? And how's that?' 'You love them.'

Ysenda and Catherine arrived, having not yet changed into swimming costumes, or more probably wearing normal clothes over them, but sporting an arch expression of amusement which indicated that they might well have heard every word of the preceding conversation. Wayne and Sean reflexively reviewed it, and satisfied themselves that there was nothing in the transcript to shame them. Here Sean was, face-to-face with Catherine for the first time since that

disastrous meeting. Important to get it back onto the right footing. 'Cath, Catherine. How, how are you?' 'I'm fine,' she said, with a slow and easy smile. 'I think your reading matter looks a bit heavy for poolside.'

Sean did not have the slightest clue what she meant.

'Nietzsche,' she said.

'Yes well, cool guy,' said Sean, 'cool moustache, cuddled horses...' He was babbling.

I would have thought Alan Hollinghurst was more appropriate. We're just off to get some *Volvic*. See you in a minute.' They left. Sean exhaled heavily, mouth closed, flaring his nostrils.

Very funny. Oh great. With that supercilious remark, Catherine has just shafted the entire afternoon. I'm so upset. I'm not even sure I even like her that much any more.' 'Will you stop it?' sighed Wayne. 'She was probably just nervous. It just slipped out. Just give this a chance.' 'I'm going swimming.' Sean stalked over to the side of the pool, and assumed the ungainly 'dive' position, bending at the knees, arms straight out, diagonally away from the body, palms facing backwards, looking like Thunderbird One. Then he straightened, and with some dignity walked back to where Wayne was lying, removed his sweater, his T-shirt, and his expensive watch, and laid them out on the towel. Then he went back and assumed the dive position once again, and entered the pool.

Sean did a couple of widths with a laborious anthology of strokes: crawl, breast stroke, crawl, drowning, breast stroke again, and then an unlovely

mixture of treading water and doggie-paddle which brought Sean ingloriously across as 14-year-old girls in sleek black one-piece suits overtook him as effortlessly as if they had been attached by a piece of taut elastic to the far side. But once he was there, once clinging to the sturdy aluminium strut of the steps, the real Lido experience could begin. He immersed his head under the surface, where the sound of the pool was immediately replaced by the strange sonic rush of underwater silence.

The great blue soup of the pool revealed itself: that secret vault with its mysterious sloping floor which twinklingly disclosed a lost 5p coin, a discarded rubber ankle band, a scrunched and semi-vegetable Band-Aid. From this great blue asymmetric fog did the swimmers questingly and slowly emerge, sentient amphibian forms all unaware of Sean's rapt and covert glance. He was the Jacques Cousteau of swimming pool eroticism. Boys did athletic and expressive racing turns while Sean watched, their great haunches tensed against the Lido's limit. Girls arrived and lingered while Sean surfaced, puffed and ostentatiously ran his fingers over his scalp, with the pre-occupied air of a businesslike 20-lengths man, concerned solely with cooling down. He would bob down again for some more swimming pool voyeurism, regarding a girl's seal-like beauty as she disappeared off into the azure mist. Many a time Sean made an afternoon of it right here, sometimes availing himself of a fag, a makeshift ashtray and a paperback on the ledge as the sun climbed up; a sip of mineral water here, a diagonal frag-

ment of *Fuse Bar* absent-mindedly detached from his teeth.

While Sean semi-emerged from the Hockney deep, his eyes peering along the surface of the water, like a sexually conflicted hippo, Ysenda and Catherine had returned and were settling down next to Wayne, having removed their clothes to reveal swimming costumes. Ysenda, unwisely, had chosen to avoid her habitual black and opted for a bikini in pastel colours. Catherine had on sleek black one-piece that was immeasurably sexier, something that Ysenda noted with shrewd annoyance. They settled down either side of Wayne and the empty towel space left by Sean; Catherine got the one immediately adjacent to Wayne, and Wayne shifted his body language so that he was marginally facing Catherine more, a nuance of body language that was not entirely lost even amidst the heat and the carnival Lido chatter.

Catherine was positioning herself face-down on the warm concrete slabs, a distinctively sensual Lido experience, and took down the armstraps of her swimming costume, though it could not have been to get a tan: all three of them were under one of the Lido's big parasols. She had a copy of *Vogue* she was flicking through, trying to find the big profile of Wayne that he'd said was in there somewhere. She propped herself up on her elbows slightly causing her breasts to swell up discreetly from the towel; Wayne noticed. Ysenda noticed him noticing.

After a few minutes, Sean came over. He was still dripping a little, carrying a massive four-litre bottle of Diet Coke.

TV GUIDE

PICK OF THE DAY



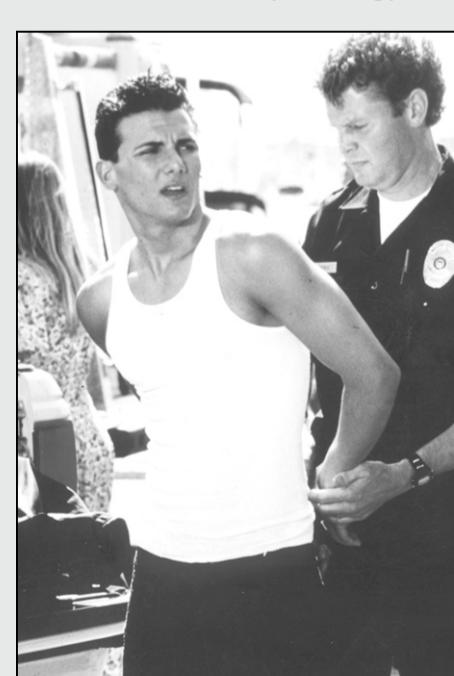
6:00 Kenneth Copeland Ministries

STAR PLUS

6:00 Tu Tu Main Main 6:30 STAR Geetmala 7:30 Hit Ya Fit 8:00 Chin Jharokha 9:30 Star Morning Show: 12:30 Hit Ya Fit 1:00 TSN 1:30 Tanha 2:00 Meri Saheli 2:30 Saans 3:00 Shagun 3:30 Siski 4:00 Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi 4:30 Cine Jharokha 5:00 Hit Ya Fit 5:30 Love My India 6:00 Small Wonder 6:30 Fox Kids 7:30 Kahani Ghar Ghar Ki 8:00 Tu Tu Main Main 8:30 Kabhi Kabhie Mere Ghar Mein Bhuchal Aata Hai 9:00 Kora Kagaz 9:30 Kaun Banega Crorepati 10:30 Kahaani Ghar Ghar Ki 11:00 Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi 11:30 Aaj Ki Baat 12:00 Shagun 12:30 Telebranda 1:00 Kahaani Ghar Ghar Ki 1:30 Star Movie Show 4:30 Kyunki Saas Bi Kabhi Bahu Thi 5:00 Saans 5:30 Meri Saheli

STAR MOVIES

8:00 Comedy: My Science Project PG 10:00 Comedy: Kiss Me Goodbye PG 12:00 Comedy: Twin Town 15 2:00 Midday Movie: Spy Hard



4:00 Sci-Fi: Not Like Us 15 6:00 Action: Night Hunter 15 8:00



5:30 Picnic (Manoj Kumar, Kalpana)

AXN
6:00 Big Sky II/Heart of the Matter 7:00 World Most Amazing Video II 8:00 Space Warship Yamamoto Yoko/Flame of Recca 9:00 5:1 a m Dunk/Samurai X 10:00 Charlie's Angels I/Hellride 11:00 World Most Amazing Video II 12:00 Farscape II/Mind the Baby 1:00 Movie: Fan & Irlie 3:00 Who Dares Wins/Cyberteam in Akihabara 4:00 Flame of Recca/Slam Dunk 5:00 Samurai X/Who Dares Wins 6:00 Heart of Courage/Heart of Courage 7:00 Pensacola III/Tip of the Spear 8:00 Movie: Guncrazy 10:00 Charlie's Angels I/Hellride 11:00 Pensacola

III/Tip of the Spear 12:00 Movie: Guncrazy 2:00 Big Sky II/Heart of the Matter 3:00 Silk Stalkings V/Lonely Hunter



Thriller: Money Talks 15 10:00 Extreme CU 10:30 Hollywood Action Night: Hoodlum 1:00 Movie With Style: True Blue 1996 3:00 Action: Night Hunter 5:00 Sci-Fi: Not Like Us 15

STAR GOLD

8:30 Bollywood News 9:00 Smadhi 12:00 Geet Bahar 12:30 Mere Humsafar 3:30 Bollywood News 4:00 Trilok Sundari 7:00 Geet Bahar 7:30 Mangal Masti Daal Mein Kaala 10:30 Bollywood News 11:00 Picnic 12:30 Picnic (Manoj Kumar, Kalpana) 2:00 Geet Bahar 2:30 Trilok Sundari (Madhavi, Narshima Raju)

Recommendations

Pleasure of Life

Pleasure of Life is a group exhibition, a part of Chobi Mela, the 1st Festival of Photography in Asia, which started on December 19 at the Indian Cultural Centre.

This exhibition is the final product of World Press Photo's series of three seminars held annually at Pathshala since 1998. Along with Bangladeshi photographers, there were groups from Bosnia Herzegovina, Peru and Zimbabwe. Through the intensive process of analysis and editing, argument and review, what finally stands is a complex and distinctive collection of photo stories, images and words that expresses each individual photographer's search for Life.

The exhibition will remain open from 10:00a.m - 6:00p.m. everyday till January 3, 2001.

Mine, Yours, His/Her's

An exhibition titled Mine, Yours, His/Her's of creative interactive paintings by Omar Zafar was inaugurated at the Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts on December 20. The exhibition was jointly inaugurated by Abdus Samad Azad, Minister for Foreign Affairs and George Papandreou, Foreign Minister of Greece.

The exhibition has reopened after the Eid holidays on December 31 and will continue from 12 to 8p.m. till January 9.

World Press Retrospective 2000

Chobi Mela, the First Festival of Photography in Asia was formally opened on December 15 at Bangladesh National Museum with the inauguration of the retrospective exhibition of the World Press Photo Foundation, featuring the most significant press photographs taken over the last forty-five years. Many of these photographs have become icons in world history. This exhibition is being held at Bangladesh National Museum gallery and will remain open everyday from 11:00a.m 5:00p.m. till January 5, 2001.



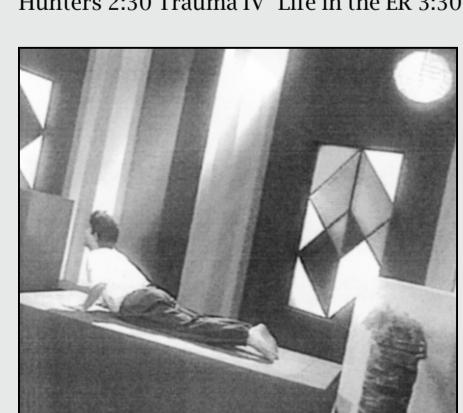
EKUSHEY TV
12:00 Ekushey News Headlines 12:05 Ajker Potrikay 12:15 Bangla Movie: Shakkat 2:40 Drishti 3:00 Ekushey News Headlines 3:05 Drama Series: Koyekjon Oporadhi 3:30



Amader Kotha 4:00 Chitrogeeti 4:30 Expedition to the Animal Kingdom 5:00 Circus Circus 5:30 Drishti 5:50 Ajker Potrikay 6:00 Ekushey News Headlines 6:05 Classic Cartoons 6:30 Charidike 7:02 To Be Confirmed 7:30 Ekushey News 8:00 Drama Serial: Nei Kono Thikana 8:30 Drama Series 9:00 Drama: Opare Niloy 10:00 BTV News 10:20 Mukto Khobar 11:00 Ekushey Late Night News 11:15 Ekushey Classic 12:00 Ekushey News Headlines

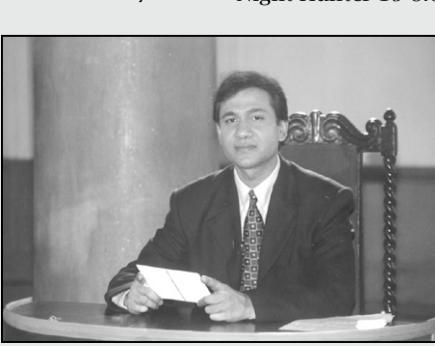
DISCOVERY CHANNEL

6:30 Animal Survivors 7:00 ESPU 7:30 Outer Bounds I & II 8:00 Without Warning 18:30 Lonely Planet IV 9:30 Beyond 2000 10:00 Next Step 10:30 Go For It! 11:30 Intimate Escapes 12:00 Wild Discovery 1:30 Medical Detectives 1:20 Medical Detectives 1:30 Lifeline 3:30 Animal Survivors 4:00 ESPU 4:30 Outer Bounds I & II 5:00 Without Warning I 5:30 Lonely Planet V 6:30 Let's Dance/Three's No Food Like My Food 7:00 Real Kids, Real Adventures 7:30 Wild Discovery 8:30 Hunters 9:30 Trauma IV Life in the ER 10:30 On the Inside 11:30 Discovery Profile Series 12:30 Wild Discovery 1:30 Hunters 2:30 Trauma IV Life in the ER 3:00



South Asia 1:30 World Business Today 2:00 World News 2:30 Q&A 3:00 World News Europe 3:30 CNN Newsroom

BBC WORLD
6:00 BBC News 6:30 World Business Report 7:00 BBC News 7:30 Asia Today Inc. World Business Report 8:00 BBC News 8:30 Asia Today Inc. World Business Report 9:00 BBC News 9:30 Asia Today Inc. World Business Report 10:00 BBC News 10:30 Hardtalk 11:00 BBC News 11:30 Holiday 12:00 BBC News 12:30 Mastermind India 1:00 BBC News 1:30 Hardtalk 2:00 BBC News 2:30 Earth Report 3:00 BBC News 3:30 Hardtalk 4:00 BBC News 4:30 Click Online 5:00 BBC News 5:30 Earth Report 6:00 BBC News 6:30 Mastermind India 7:00 BBC News 7:15 World Business Report 7:30 Holiday 8:00



JAG 9:00 STAR News Asia 9:30 The Pretender 10:30 NYPD Blue 11:30 Friends 12:00 STAR News 12:30 JAG 1:30 The Pretender 2:30 NYPD Blue 3:30 JAG 4:30 The Pretender 5:30 Creflo Dollar Daily