



From top: The Swan Theatre; a Hunter pocket watch lost in the woods; John Evelyn, the author of Sylva; William Shakespeare; liquid temptation, and the artist Eric Gill



The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... My grandfather's Hunter pocket watch which fell out of my jacket during a ramble in the woods. I have searched the route about 20 times since. It was around 100 years old and had huge sentimental value.

The unending quest that drives you on... This changes with the seasons of my life. In my teens, it was to sleep with more girls than the other guys at school; in my 20s it was to be a R&B singer and to change the world with hippie magazines like Oz. My 30s and 40s were about making hundreds of millions of pounds. Since my 50s it has been about planting a forest, becoming a first class poet and giving money to charity.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Why resist? For me, temptation is life and I have a gargantuan appetite for everything. A friend of mine from the clergy was dying and I asked him what he regretted and he said: 'All the glasses of wine I chose not to drink.'

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Sylva by a 17th century writer called John Evelyn. It was the first serious book about forestry, published in 1664 by the Royal Society. I own three first editions of it.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... That's for me to know and for you to guess. Anyway, I have never been a fan of HG Wells.

The film you can watch time and time again... I loathe and detest movies and television and don't watch any. I do not have the time. George Lucas forced me to go to the premiere of The Empire Strikes Back because I was publishing the Star Wars magazines at the time. I hated it and was bored out of my mind.

The person who has influenced you most... My mother. She's 93 and hates being talked about in the Press. I have always described her as a prettier version of Margaret Thatcher – but without the soft bits in Lady T's character.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... William Shakespeare. He is my all-time literary hero. I would want to know what he was doing between the ages of 14 and 24. These are the lost years about which we know nothing.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... 'To thine own self be true', from Hamlet. I've tried to base my life on it, but wish I'd done better.



I hated The Empire Strikes Back and was bored out of my mind at its premiere. I detest all movies.

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a set of probing questions to get THE definitive answer. This week it's the turn of multimillionaire publisher and poet Felix Dennis

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Poetics. I write traditional verse and like studying the forms of poetry, but once I mention 'iambic pentameter' you are already falling asleep.

The prized possession you value above all others... My collection of drawings and wood blocks by Eric Gill, the brilliant calligrapher, letterer and sculptor. I have about 5,000 pieces, the biggest private collection of its kind.

The unqualified regret you wish you

could amend... That I did not begin writing poetry earlier. I started at 52, which was far too late.

The poem that touches your soul... John Dryden's The Secular Masque.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... People can say what they will about me. It is literally water off a duck's back. It's not that I don't care, it is worse than that – I don't even notice.

The event that altered the course of

your life and character... Growing up without a father. He left when I was two and I became the alpha male. I was the guy who got the spider out of the bath.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I've already done it... and that is the end of that conversation! [In a 2008 interview Dennis said he killed a man by pushing him off a cliff, but later retracted the statement, saying he'd been under the influence of alcohol and medication].

The song that means most to you... One Too Many Mornings by Bob Dylan. It was playing when I first went to bed with a girl, when I was 15.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Having my poetry read by the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, in 2006. Then they made me get up and read Shakespeare. The audience was in tears of laughter and emotion and we got a standing ovation.

The saddest time that shook your world... The first death of a lifelong friend about 12 years ago. It shook me because it was the first intimation of mortality and I realised I was next.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... Creating the perfect sonnet or villanelle, which are my two favourite forms of poetic writing.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Be kind and, better yet, be kind secretly. People like Bob Geldof and Bono truly believe their celebrity adds to the cause – but does it?

The order of service at your funeral... I am a born-again atheist, so there isn't going to be a funeral. I will be buried in a linen wrap in a cardboard coffin in my forest with an oak tree planted on my head. There'll be a big rock with a poem chiselled on it and that's it. I have left £10,000 for a knees-up.

The way you want to be remembered... As I won't be around I can't see that it really matters.

The Plug... How To Make Money is published by Vermilion, £8.99. Visit www.felixdennis.com

As told to Rob McGibbon

PS...

Ye Gods! Chris Hemsworth stars as Norse legend Thor, in cinemas from Friday. All's Well That Ends Well opens at London's Globe Theatre, starring Janie Dee. And Jennifer Lopez is back with a new album, Love?, in shops Monday



NEXT WEEK

- Unveiled: the new host of the National Movie Awards
- Janet Street-Porter returns with another Walk On The Wild Side
- Mouthwatering seasonal recipes
- PLUS Don't miss Britain's biggest and most detailed TV guide