

www.incwriters.com
 Incorporating Writing Issue 2 Volume 3
 Contact incwriters@yahoo.co.uk

Incorporating Writing is an imprint of The Incwriters Society (UK). The magazine is managed by an editorial team independent of The Society's Constitution. Nothing in this magazine may be reproduced in whole or part without permission of the publishers. We cannot accept responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts, reproduction of articles, photographs or content. Incorporating Writing has endeavoured to ensure that all information inside the magazine is correct, however prices and details are subject to change. Individual contributors indemnify Incorporating Writing, The Incwriters Society (UK) against copyright claims, monetary claims, tax payments / NI contributions, or any other claims. This magazine is produced in the UK © The Incwriters Society (UK) 2005

 In this issue:

Editorial: Inspiration

From Blogging to World Domination: Jessa Crispin & Bookslut

Rhythms of Plath and Dada: Interview with Kate Wax

Changing Ideology: An Interview with Mat Fraser

Deities in Training

Sleeping With Sicilians

No Reviews in this edition due to editorial changes

 Inspiration

Editorial by Bixby Monk

Inspiration is a funny thing - there is an argument that runs that there is no such thing as creativity, no such ideas as inspiration, that as humans we merely adapt, adopt and pounce on things - that it is a basic response, an animalistic or primeval capacity we have. Some believe that angels sit on our shoulder and breathe life into gray nature of our world. That, or the other option - a demon. We have to remember that inspiration, religion, state, politics and evolution have all gone hand in hand - the argument that one or more of these has held us back is another argument but many artists have been victims of their inspiration. The world isn't flat. The Earth rotates around the sun. A pile of bricks in the Tate. So, the last seems a bit glib but that's the nature of things - we constantly change our views and involuntarily create a whole new spectrum for inspiration or opportunity. In this edition we look at three different individuals who have or are in themselves an inspiration from Literature to the Stage, each unique in the way they have come up and fought against what is perceived as the status quo, only to see that inspiration lies outside the norm - that taking chances and searching for a new voice will eventually change the scene. It is not politics or movements that change the world, it is individuals - many are lost in the vortex of history, Hugo Ball, Tristan Tzara to name two, but their legacy lives on - Dada, Surrealism. Individuals have guided our science and our art - and that as we age as a world we become narrower in our views - is this the twenty first century making or pessimistic? Corrupt Politics and Business? Sam Morris traces back the narrowing of the human mind in the second of his essays showing that something's never change. Dave Wood tackles being in Sicily and being lost.

So, you can guess that this issue is dealing with inspiration - so much so that we have set up a new debate in The Stray Dog Forum - what inspires you? Get involved.

On another note, we are presently redesigning and taking on new writers and reviewers, so no reviews this edition but they'll be back - giving inspiration to the lowest and highest of us.

From Blogging to World Domination: Jessa Crispin & Bookslut
Interview by Andrew Oldham

Bookslut is a monthly web magazine and daily blog dedicated to those who love to read. They provide a constant supply of news, reviews, commentary, insight, and more than occasional opinions. Jessa Crispin is the Editor. The site can be viewed at: <http://www.bookslut.com/>

For those who don't know, what is Bookslut and how did it all start?
"Bookslut is a literary webzine that I founded three years ago. It includes reviews, columns, author interviews, profiles of literary magazines, and a daily blog of publishing news. The blog came first, and mostly I started that because I was bored at my day job. I was also sending a lot of e-mails to my sister and friends with links to interesting articles about books, and I thought it would be more polite of me to just create a blog that they could check when they wanted to instead of filling their inbox day after day. After I had been doing the blog for a few months, I figured, well, why not just add reviews and other things? Other people started to want to write for the site, so it just grew from there".

Bookslut covers a vast area in Literature, how time consuming was this when you started and how much time do you spend on the site now?

"I had a day job that didn't take me very long to do. I would work for about an hour a day and then spend the other seven working on Bookslut. Now it's really my full time job. I have a lot of help. We have about 40 writers; my friend Michael Schaub is now my co-blogger and Associate Editor".

What has kept Bookslut going when so many other literary sites have sunk in the last year?

"I'm very stubborn. Plus I just don't know what else I would do with my time".

Do you feel new media, web publishing is the way forward for writers or are you purist when it comes to books?

"I'm a purist. I think web publishing is a way to get a foothold sometimes, and I also think that it's an excellent place for literary magazines and short stories. But for me personally, I could never read a work of length at my computer. I'd get distracted by other browser windows, my e-mail, etc. Some days it's difficult enough just to focus on my book when from the other room I can hear my new e-mail sound".

What to you makes a good book?

"I don't think there's any set of things. I tend to read pretty widely, so it's a difficult question to answer".

What to you makes a good review or article on a book or literature?

What, so far, is the worst and best read of 2005?

"Oh man, I actually have one for the worst! But I don't want to say. If something is just bad, just not any good, I'm more hesitant to be vocal about my dislike than if something is offensively bad. Like, if the women characters are all stereotypes or the author didn't do their research and are advancing lies as truth, something along those lines. So I'll just answer the Best question, and the answer is without a doubt Epileptic by David B. I think it's brilliant. As for what makes a good review, I tend to read reviews after I read the book, not the other way around. What I'm looking for is a tie in with the author's other works, personal insight, etc. What I find most disturbing about book reviews is that I read a lot of genre work, specifically comics and science fiction. I've noticed that many publications haven't bothered to find reviewers who know anything about the genres, and sometimes they don't even like them. For example, Laura Miller

at Salon once reviewed a comic book and spent the first three paragraphs explaining why she didn't like comics. I'll never understand why newspapers and magazines do that. It can't be that hard to find good reviewers who also happen to like genre".

Are there any authors, poets out there you feel should garner more recognition and sales from the general public?

"Oh, of course. I don't understand why Joe Sacco isn't adored by millions. Why Cloud Atlas wasn't the best-selling novel of last year. But at the same time, there is always the surprising success, like America (The Book) at the top of the bestseller list for months, The Plot Against America being read by everyone I know, that sort of thing".

What annoys you about writers and publishers?

"The only thing that annoys me about publishers is they tend not to take the Internet very seriously. They don't have webpages -- or if they do, they don't update them very often -- and they're less likely to help a webzine set up an interview with an author than a print magazine, even if the readership is about equal".

Take us through a general week at Bookslut, what do you do?

"I spend the morning blogging, just looking for any interesting news or reviews relating to books. I try to catch up on my always chaotic inbox. Then in the afternoons I send out review copy requests to publishers, try to wrangle interviews, send out notices to my reviewers of what books have come in and figure out who wants to review what. Around 2 the UPS man comes with an armload of packages, and I go through the books, deciding what has a chance of getting reviewed, what I personally want to read, and what will be dropped off at the second-hand bookstore. Those decisions tend to be based on my whim. If I've seen a lot written about a book already before it gets to me, we usually won't review it. I like Bookslut to focus on the neglected and the unchampioned. If a book is some snappy "Stress Reduction for Women!", it immediately gets thrown in the "not in a million years" pile. Books from particular publishers that I like a lot -- Archipelago, Dalkey, FC2, Northwestern University, NYRB -- I try very hard to find reviewers for those books. At the end of the week, I load up bags of the books not claimed by reviewers and take them down to the second-hand bookstore. Then there's my own personal reading, and many times I don't get as much done, as I would like. About once a week I have to leave my apartment (I work from home) and go to a coffee shop where I can't be distracted by thoughts of 'Oh, I need to go write this e-mail, then I'll go back to my book,' and 'I need to look this up on the computer, and then I'll finish reading'"

What are your pet hates about Literature and Bookslut?

"My pet hate about Bookslut is that I can't afford to pay my contributors".

How passionate are you about books and why?

"I've always just loved books. I learned to read at a young age, and I remember spending my summer hauling back bursting bags of books to my house. The library was only about six blocks from our house, but I often had to take breaks on the way home in order to make it. It's just something my father distilled into my older sister and me. He was always a big reader with a huge stack of "To be read next" books by his bed. His bedtime stories for us used to be whatever he was reading at the time, so anything from the short stories of Mark Twain to Dune".

Are you passionate about anything else, will we see Bookslut expand into music and theatre?

"Nah. We just launched Saucymag.com, but it's about food. When it comes to media, books rule for me".

What would be your dream interview, review or article?

"I get so nervous doing interviews, that the greater the writer, the more hesitant I am to agree to them. I'd rather worship from afar. But I always hope that some publication out there somewhere will ask me to write a monthly round up of comic book reviews. I love being asked to write about comic books, because it's a medium that doesn't get enough serious criticism".

Who do you think are the greatest writers, poets of all time?

"I'll try to think of someone less painfully obvious than, you know, Shakespeare... James Joyce, Alasdair Gray, Elizabeth Bowen, Edith Wharton, Dostoevsky, Gogol, etc".

If you could have lunch with any one person, who would it be and why?

"Patricia Wells, the cookbook writer. Hopefully she would be cooking".

Where do you see Bookslut a year from now?

"World domination".

What differences do you think exist between USA and UK publishers, writers and poets?

"The UK seems to be in desperate need of some graphic designers. I am usually amazed at how ugly book covers are in the UK. It's like they're being designed by blind men. You can pretty much take any book published in both the UK and the USA, hold them together, and see immediately what I mean. I don't think there's any fundamental difference between USA and UK writers, though. The UK seems to have better science fiction, but maybe their publishers are just more adventurous. I'm currently in love with Scottish fiction, though. James Kelman, Alasdair Gray, AL Kennedy, etc. It tends to be gritty stuff, which is what I like".

And finally, do you think a writer is born or that anyone can learn to write?

"I think you can learn to write, but I think there's a certain disposition that great writers all share. That, I don't think, can be taught in a class. You can polish your skills in workshops, MFA programs, etc., but if you weren't born with an indefinable something, I don't think you'll ever be the next Fitzgerald or what have you".

Rhythms of Plath and Dada: Interview with Kate Wax
Interview by Andrew Oldham

Kate Wax is half-European, half-Tibetan 26 year old artist born on the shores of Lake Geneva. Wax traveled extensively to exotic locations early in life with her grandmother. Escaping to other worlds provided her with the inspiration to create imaginary ones - and training as a soprano chorist fine-tuned her captivating crystal-clear voice. The music of Kate Wax will be filed under electro-pop, because it's electronic and retains the verse-chorus-verse format. But it's a highly personal hybrid, the result of do-it-yourself digital tinkering with influences ranging from early new-wave legends to 21st century neopop divas - she's got what it takes to become one herself. Her first self-written and produced album on Mental Groove Records. Kate Wax new album Reflections of the Dark Heat features a rich blend of styles from Bauhaus to PJ Harvey, from Cabaret Voltaire to Cologne techno. Listen to her music at: <http://www.kate-wax.com>
Your music seems to draw directly on the early dance music scene, with 80s beats, industrial, analogue drum tracks, using a mixture of tantalising vocals and cool spoken word rather than sampled vocals.

What has influenced this trend within your music?

"My generation has grown up with the explosion of electronic instruments such as synthesizers, drum machines, sequencers and samplers. The development of these new technologies offered artists an extraordinary experimental playground where they can fulfill all their fantasies. These experiments reached out to every field of the creation of music, such as soundtracks, video games, TV shows and even advertisements. My sound and my creative process is certainly a heritage of this research, because in this particular context I've developed an attraction and a sensibility towards electronics, an amazement and a never-ending curiosity for the sound which is generated by machines. I'm working with a laptop, external drumboxes, and some analogue 70s and 80s synths. To me, these electronic machines are the tools to materialize and transform my visions into a language that is music. They give me autonomy and the possibility to create by myself, having total control on the whole process. I've built myself a world with these machines and share a special intimacy with them. You can see me as the leader of a virtual-band, who has close relationship with every member of it. But these machines don't define the identity of my music. I like to use them, make them talk with my own sensibility, build up a sonic versatile universe that belongs to me and reflects who I am. Electronic is not a style of music but a mean of expression/production. I'm interested in weird rhythmic and broken cadence driven by machines (cabaret-voltaire, run DMC). These programmed beats are an authority in my music, something bigger and more implacable than human natural and flowing movements. If my mood is dark, I push that beat to the edge of brutality. I like to mix these beats with raw and dry basslines (DAF). Oddly enough this powerful structure enables me to sing in a total freedom. I would never use vocal samples because my voice is the conductor line of my music, it is not an additional fx, but the main instrument of my music (Prince, PJ Harvey, Joy Division). The voice is instinctive and much more fragile, while editing it, I always keep the natural aspects of it (imperfections, breath noises). The omnipresence, the narrative side and the warmth of the voice gives the piece an expressive side, which contrasts with the more mechanical and brutal instrumental part. I like this tension that reveals a great part of my bipolarity".

What to you makes good or bad dance music?

"You could expand this question to every kind of music I guess, what makes good or bad music...The public does make a distinction between music and dance music, because it has the special function to entertain and makes them dance. The need of fulfilling this functionality, often pushes producers to follow methodically the same standards. But these productions often sound formatted and soulless. I don't make any difference between dance music and music, because I don't judge dance tracks by criteria of efficiency. To me it is a question of emotion, the same way a song will touch me, a dance-track will make me groove and move for subjective feelings and no explicable reason. But we are passing through an important revolution in dance music. She has overcome her own clichés (functionality...), since the last five years, more and more live acts are being booked in clubs. Of course some of these new live-acts have the simple intention of rocking the dancefloors, but other take the freedom to be experimental, conceptual, abstract and brutally raw. The function of the dancefloor as a place to dance has morphed itself towards a playground where sonic experimentations are possible. At the same time the traditional clubber has gone through the same transformation from the simple pleasures of dancing towards an attentive and receptive listener. Incidentally my music can exist in this precise context".

When and where did you start writing music? What was your first gig and how did it go?

"I studied graphic design (specialised in new medias) in an art school in Switzerland. The approach of graphic design at school was like scientist working in a lab of ideas, visual experiences without any commercial constraints. It is where I learned about and fell in love with computers and new technologies. After graduating in 2000, I worked as a designer for only one year, and dropped it because I didn't feel comfortable with the commercial aspect of the job. I started doing music and it became the essential way of expression in my life. Music is a translator that defines my relationship with the world that surrounds me, and the most incredible medium I ever worked with. The one in which I feel completely free. It is a personal kingdom where I can create and follow my emotions and fantasies by programming beats, making tunes, writing lyrics and experimenting my voice. My process of creation is something really profound, and lonely. I create by an intuitive way and rarely have preset a concept before composing, the mood of the day leads me. Being on stage for the first time made me feel vulnerable and fragile - it is giving to people what lies deeply inside me with no possibility to hide or escape. Offering to an audience your visions of the world with your own language and scenery is sublime".

Do you see differences between the UK music scene and the wider European scene, and what do you feel they are?

"Because of its geographic situation, a pride of a great popular musical history and a traditional establishment that of course also reaches to the culture, and more precisely music; the UK dance scene often produces auto-sufficient music, which is made in the UK and specially oriented to the UK music scene and industry. It evolves in autarchy inside the country (UK garage, eskimo, grime...etc). Further than that, the UK dance music scene is fragmented and specialized in different segments the notion of belonging (to a style, a region, a trend) is really important. (London productions are not created for the Manchester scene, grime is not played in techno clubs...etc). If one of these production crosses the UK's borders, it is setting and becoming a trend, because of its strong identity that is so specific and unique (Dizzie Rascal). Most of the time the style is reused and copied by others through out the world (totally insignificant because it is separated from its environment where it was produced). Music in Europe is produced by artists and labels from different countries interacting with each other. That context generates a music that is more open, crossover and has a slower process of evolution. 'Our' music is less identifiable (apart some trends as minimal...etc) but maybe more timeless".

You've been working on your new album, how did you find the process? What were the highs and lows?

"I like to compose in two sessions; the first one is impulsive, I am guided by my subconscious and my emotions, the second one is more rational, I have control over all the technical aspects of the song. During the first step, I usually write the lyrics, compose the tune, and record the voice in a brief time, such as photographic snapshots, I want to freeze moments, moods, emotions and energies. I want to transfigure my stories, fears, ugly demons, dreams and chimerical visions without any constraint. I want that snapshot to keep its integrity and remain close to my first feelings and intentions. During the second phase, I edit the arrangement, take out what is not worthless, add what is missing and improve the quality of certain sounds, with an emotional distance. I've learnt how to make music (technically speaking) by an empiric way, I observed, listened to, and tamed software with patience. My skills and know-how is continuously growing (skills from the live experiences, less inhibition while singing, a better sonic perception and acuity). The LP represents a learning process because the accumulation of knowledge and the growing of my sensibility was directly injected into my music during the whole process".

What is your favourite track on the album? The one you think will please not just you but the people who listen to it?

"One of my favorites is the first song of the album called Beetles and Spider, one of the only tracks which I didn't write the lyrics, but was inspired from a poem by Ted Hughes to his lost suicidal wife (Sylvia Plath) The song I made with his words is soft and dark, sad but full of love. It is a good representation of the duality of my personality, desperate and happy in the same time".

How would you describe your new album?

"This album is a flight across the world of Kate Wax, where you can meet among other characters, a stupid Brad Pitt on radical grimy tunes some childlike nostalgia on raws guitars, several old friend ghosts on soft breaks, some love obsessions on industrial cadence, a sexy icons on dry breakbeats, some carefree afternoon whispered by a crystal voice, two melancholic spiders on blue harmonies, screams of joy on nasty bassline, minutes of ecstasy falling from words beneath physical movements chanted on minimal blows".

What excites you the most about music?

"Music gives me two paradoxical and complementary ways of living; I love to be alone in my studio, like a kind of contemporary hermit, who observes, tries to understand and depicts the world by creating. Afterwards, the complete opposite, I like to be confronted with my audience; Play live in an unknown town in front of unknown people. Offer music, make them dance, scream and happy. Come back to Geneva, and receive e-mails from fans who loved the gig and listen to my tracks ever since. It is magic and exhilarating. The power of music will always impress me".

If you could collaborate with anyone on a track, who would it be and why?

"Producers like Plastikman (Richie Hawtin), Mike Ink, Model 500 (Juan Atkins) and some new one like Chicken Lips (bizarre inc) Nathan Fake and James Holden (Border Community) are undeniably important to me. But I'd like to work with someone who comes from another music scene than I. Mike Skinner from the Streets. I feel close to him, because he has built his world with his own language, natural and naive, I like his beats and arrangements, his nonchalant way of delivering words. He makes people dance with melancholic music. This ambivalence touches me".

Where would you like to take your music next?

"I'll probably work with other producers for some new projects. I now feel ready, because I've found my sound, my language and my methods of creation. They are of course in constant evolution and transformation according to my life, emotions etc. But I think that I have found my 'style'. Concerning my next maxis or albums, I'll continue to produce alone in my studio from the beginning to the end of the process, because I need that intimate space I've built around me in order to express myself, and it is really important for me to keep my autonomous status. (no label or producer interfering). I'll experiment new instruments, improve the quality of my sound, find some other vocabulary within my music, discover alternative ways to use my voice, and do a lot of gigs (the live shows participate to the learning process and widen my experimentations, I can for instance play with my voice and try a lot of different things I wouldn't do in the studio. The stage gives me a lot of freedom). These are certain things I can decide, but for the others which I can't control, I will let the LP (Reflections of the Dark Heat) live its own life, let the public enter my world and owning parts of it. The moment the public appropriates the music, it doesn't belong to me anymore. So I will go where my music will take me".

How would you describe Kate Wax to people who have never heard of you?

"Kate Wax is the one who transforms positive and negative impressions, feelings and emotions into music. She assumes and reveals multiple personalities from the darkest to the most radiant one. She builds up a universe with these fantasies and materializes them into a language which is music. She is very intuitive, passionate, sometimes wild and revolted, and has no shame to tell you what she thinks. She wants to show that women can exist autonomously, and through her independent producer status, tries to overthrow stereotypes about women. She is utopist and believes that music can bring an antidote towards alienation or at least a piece of happiness".

 Changing Ideology: An Interview with Mat Fraser
 Interview by Andrew Oldham

Musician, actor and presenter Mat Fraser was born in England in 1962 with a physical impairment caused by *in utero* exposure to the Thalidomide drug. His acting career has also encompassed a certain amount of political activism around disability issues. His theatre career included roles in Joe Orton's What the Butler Saw for Graeae Theatre Company, the Group K production of Marisol and the title role in Johnny Sol at the Croydon Warehouse. His first major television role was in the three-part World War II drama series Unknown Soldier (ITV, 1998). He featured in Metrosexuality (Channel 4, 2001), in which his disability is not the main focus of the character but merely an incidental aspect - the kind of role, Fraser admits, that disabled actors long for but are rarely offered. His one-man stage show Sealboy: Freak, based on the true story of 'Sealo' (real name Stanley Berent), who travelled with American freak shows from the 1930s to the 1970s, toured the country. Fraser also presented a Channel 4 documentary about Sealo, Born Freak (2002) and Happy Birthday: Thalidomide. His recent touring show was Sealboy: Freak and he appeared in the one off BBC drama Every Time You Look At Me. He plans to bring Thalidomide! A Musical to the UK in 2005.

In Happy Birthday: Thalidomide on C4 you dealt with how Thalidomide has been and was still being used in the world today. This journey was both a public and private revelation, how did you deal with some of the issues and individuals in this documentary?

Has there been an aftermath in the creation of your own work?

"Yes, many of them...for myself an encouragement to continue expressing what is after all (as I'm a disabled voice, free and autonomous from the constraints of mainstream physical perfection values) a new voice, and in an increasingly professional way, also I've developed a new audience of inclusive, subversive, not stupid, people, which is the biggest thrill for me, to get audiences hitherto unused to being together, to enjoy work together, albeit from a vaguely different perspective. Initially though there was some reactionary criticism from many who were angered that I didn't 100% subscribe to their politicised (though I think I am) disability rights based beliefs.... but I do! I just don't think any kind of censorship is good for progressivity, and I wanted to talk about freak shows, etc, schadenfruede, objectification of the disabled performer etc etc...."

There is a great desire to pigeon hole people in the west, to create effectively what is a form of 'ostracisation'. How much do you feel that your disability has affected your acting career?

"West of where exactly? What about the east, don't you think there is just as much desire to pigeonhole too? I don't know, but I don't think it can just be a preserve of the West...anyway, of course my disability has completely prevented the mainstream possibilities of my acting career, but it has also given me opportunities I would not have got if I were not disabled.... however, the ratio is probably 70% negative in this respect.

My disability both creates and prevents acting work and career possibilities".

In the BBC drama Every Time You Look At Me there was an attempt to look beyond the disability and at the person, to blow apart the preconceptions and the pigeonhole, how do you feel the drama worked for you as (a) an actor and, (b) as a writer?

"A) Ok, but I got all the brooding reaction shots whilst Lisa my co actor got all the good lines, proactivity and movement of plot...but it was great as a disabled actor to have a lead role in a big budgeted BBC drama, so of course it helped blow away preconceptions that disabled actors can't "carry" a plot etc...

B) Ok again, but I felt there was maybe too much about disability still, especially with the degenerative disease we discover near the end. As a film drama, 90 minutes long though, I thought it was well constructed and gave a good story to a very mainstream audience".

Mat Fraser seems more of a Renaissance man than an individual caught between twenty first century ideals, where do you feel this kind of organic approach to your work, which spans page, screen and stage, came about?

"I really don't know, but I get bored doing just one thing, and I love most things to do with entertainment...my parents were actors, so story telling, theatre, film and acting lifestyles have always been familiar to me, but I love music equally, and so have been a professional musician for 15 years before acting...that never goes away, once a muso always a muso etc....then, I love good stories...many of them to do with disability are written by people utterly ignorant of the reality for many disabled people so one starts to want to see it done at least with realism, so you have a go yourself. Then there is all the cabaret and subterranean subversion I delight in...that I can't explain except maybe to say that as a reject of all things mainstream, I enjoy courting those that would welcome me without judgement of inferiority, and so found myself in those environments.....it's hard to gauge myself, but I think all, of these are contributing factors".

In your recent tours you've looked at Sealboy: Freak and are about to launch Thalidomide! A Musical, how did this work come about?

"See above: my dissatisfaction with other previous, largely non disabled attempts at looking at these subjects, coupled with a lack of acting offers, coupled with a desire to do my own show, and a fascination with old time freak shows. When I saw a picture of Stanley Berent, AKA Seal the Sealboy, I knew I'd found a subject that I could write a one man play about, and play him with an authority no one could argue with, let alone recast...the Thalidomide musical came about as a need to have fun with a subject that I've been working with for the last two years, and of course I want to follow in the tradition of sicko musicals such as Springtime for Hitler, Elephant the musical etc...I don't see why the non-disabled should have the non-pc prerogative, and if done from a place of love, offensive material can be great fun!".

Do you feel audiences are changing their pre-conceptions on disability?

"In theatre they are, as more unconceived by non disabled people theatre that includes disabled people is out there and shown...new companies making inclusive work, disabled actors trying to get on...it's all slowly changing yes, too fucking slowly, but it is changing. ON screen I think its changing MUCH more slowly...and at times it seems as if it hasn't at all...but even if the casting of Inside I'm Dancing was non disabled shit, at least the subject matter is being approached now by various writers...most of its still crap, but its a start...and so very slowly those audiences are inevitably changing their hideously inaccurate preconceptions".

With the recent global political changes, if you had the chance to change something on a global and personal stage what would those changes be?
 "Killing the Bush empire dead...and the Empirical fascist ideology that is the USA these days. Also, I would limit all families in the world to just one child each, for a period of at least 25 years. There are too many of us on the rock".

There is an argument in the arts concerning the DDA, about who defines disability vs impairment, do you feel the DDA is discriminatory to the very individuals it serves to work in favour for?

"I don't know enough about it to comment. I will say that although I agree and adhere to the social model of disability myself, there is still a physical aspect that needs to be acknowledged".

On a personal level what defines you as an actor and writer? And what defines you on a public stage?

"Well, my disability is what mostly defines me as a writer...I can't talk for others, but I imagine it has some bearing on my performances too...and that coupled with stage stuff, I have combined my own take on life and everything within it, to include a disability aware persona that is fully mainstream in its technical and public aspirations and capability (I hope!), and I'd like to think, found my own niche...so in public, I hope that it is the package that is the full me. Obviously talent has to pay a role in that, and I would hope that no disabled actors are getting parts if they just can't act. I hope I can. You tell me".

Do you feel that in the UK today disabled actors are defined by their disability rather than their talent, and why do you think this is?

"Yes of course they/we are: because the stupid reactionary scared to change stuck in their religiously handed down power broking mainstream reactions to us, do nothing to change, we have to bully them into it, as all historical minorities have had to do. As each milestone of change occurs, the attitudes change, and it is gratifying to be told by members of the public that you are a good actor, it vindicates your insistence to go against what you are told".

Do you have any advice for people out there who want to become actors?

"To be taken seriously you must have talent, skills, knowledge and a realistic expectation.....then, with all these things, you MAY get some work...it is more uphill for us even than most other actors, and you have to understand that this wrong is the way it is. Without a willingness to do these things, please don't bother cluttering up the pool with your misguided naivety and arrogance. To assume you don't need to be trained and skilled but can just wheel into a part is the very worst thing the business needs right now. It needs professionally attituded disabled actors with skills who then have the right to demand equal treatment".

 Deities in Training
 Article by Sam Morris

Modern, western education dictates a path of specialisation. We are instructed to take a route with a final, certain vocation as an end. With this in mind we see children encouraged in England's GCSE system to choose subjects that they are competent in, or enjoy, or see a final vocational application. At A levels the young adult is pushed again towards further specialisation; and this is all understandable. For the structure of society to function we need specialists. From engineering to agriculture, medicine to mathematics, all fine tuned cogs machined to a precise fit. We take up a role in our adult life that supports the framework around us and what skill we cannot do, due to lack of training, can be purchased or acquired through others years of conditioning. At an early age we can

choose from all manner of options, endless knowledge to be grasped, endless routes to take. We are no longer born into a predestined position in the western world. Regardless of class and wealth, we are taught that all is possible with only one deposit from ourselves, hard work. Although in actuality this may not be the case; with human attitudes, perceptions and luck playing their part. This state of mind still exists and governs our thinking to a great degree. Our whole idea of freedom is based upon this assumption.

We can trace this attitude back to the agricultural, industrial and intellectual revolutions of the late 17th, 18th and 19th century, however the European Renaissance of the 15th and 16th century arguably ignited the shift. Marlowe's Doctor Faustus of the late 16th century is at times seen by contemporary critics as an icon of supermen. From humble birth he strives fearlessly and unsatisfied towards knowledge like the seamen, merchants, astronomers and scholars of the time, symbols of aspiring humanity. Yet this is a mono interpretation from a modern world reacting against the medievalism, Christianity and assertion of mans limits and weakness in the face of the divine. The text seems to support the basic tenets of past Christian morality in saying that Faustus is destined to fall for his actions and "forbidden pursuits". Nowadays Marlowe's Faustus can seem tragic for the harsh punishment levelled on his humanity.

The Enlightenment brought a new confidence to humanity. Seeing ourselves as limitless and not limited, on the path to divinity not subservient to God. Empirical study and science, it would seem, could unlock the gates to total knowledge; and with total knowledge we could evolve further up mount improbable towards our unknown goal and mastery of our physical surroundings. Even our unknown goal may eventually be qualified and quantified. By 1642 Galileo's death had securely fermented the seeds for Mans' separation from God, while Descartes and Newton respectively gave us confirmed existence and laws to govern the location of this existence. However, in this climate of progression and confidence, humanity was not totally at ease with its newly acquired label as deities in training or at least heroic materialists. William Blake executed a print series in 1795 that reveals revulsion towards the power of the rational mind and the Academy art of the 18thC. The series consists of three images: *God creating Adam*, *Newton* and *Nebuchadnezzar* printed on mill paper and then water coloured.

The images are small; therefore we are lead to feel they were meant for personal involvement. In *God Creating Adam* Blake has depicted a flaming deity emerging out of nature, the image is not of a benevolent God. Blake held Gnostic Christian beliefs of the duality of God and the evil of the material world. Therefore men such as Cain, from Genesis, are a type of anti-hero, predestined to suffer, born to commit sin. Man is depicted to have been created with the serpent of materialism coiled around his leg. Adam's birth is not a joyous creation. We were predestined to fall from Eden.

In *Newton* we see Blake attacking the rationalist claims of the Enlightenment. Blake illustrates his view that the measuring mind was the pollutant of man. Newton is positioned in a precariously seated manner, as he constructs geometric forms. He is about to fall from his position and will eventually become Nebuchadnezzar, imprisoned by his own geometric creation. The head of the evil Babylonian King is very reminiscent of the head of God in the first print and this may be an allusion to his Gnostic beliefs or a comment on the evil of all knowing man.

Men such as Keats, Shelley, Turner, Palmer and Blake were not attempting to follow any pre-determined '*moral ought*' as previous artists such as David had done; or strive towards an austere, logically conceived ideal of

perfection, *la bonne route*, as the classicists had in recent decades. It seems that to men such as these the only faculty of aesthetic judgement was individual sensibility. Subjectivity was their guiding force. These men did not feel at home in the newly forming world of logic and actuality, they felt a distinct loss of something intrinsic to themselves. God was dying, yet spirituality and supposed divine intuition were mourned. Modern man can be seen as an internal battleground between two camps. One side of our being demands objective fact and law, understanding and logic. While another side suggests a subjective landscape of emotion and feeling, intuition and epiphany. Since the Renaissance intellectual and artistic movements have sent skirmishes from these two polarities. The rational light and form of the art and architecture of 15th century Florence gave way to the unnatural colouring and twisting, elongated forms of Mannerism (Shown vividly in Michelangelo later work). Neo-classical artists and thinkers worked on a framework or ideals towards morality (David's *Oath of the Horatii* exemplifying this). Then Romanticism overthrew the idea that man was an essentially rational creature, rather it saw that the mind of man although cultivated, through social means and education, as a wilderness of disorder. More recently the austere morality and confidence of the Victorian era was later replaced by the hedonism of the 1920's. Leading to the consciousness expansion of the 1960's. In its own time the late 19th century spiritualist loosened the nut of Imperial Victorian confidence. Impressionism craved the captured, transient, subjective moment while earlier Realism had craved vivid steadfast reality (Gustave Courbet's, *Burial at Ornans*, 1849-50, or much of Millet's work.)

Modern society grinds on its path towards material mastery and knowledge, while the occluded side of our being shouts out, but appears to be left behind. God is dying, therapy says emotion should be controlled and spirituality can be purchased at the Gym on a Yoga or Tai Chi course. Imagination is channelled from numbers One to Five on our televisions (or one to infinity if we take a path to further escape.)

The work of the Princeton University psychologist Julian Jaynes sheds some illuminating light on the issues so far discussed. Published in 1976, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* details Jaynes work on understanding the two hemispheres of our brains, and the implications of our 'Bicameral' situation. Our brains are made up of two hemispheres connected by the corpus callosum, a band of transverse fibres, only slightly more than one-eighth of an inch in diameter. In most people the right side deals with shape recognition, patterns, intuition and aesthetic response; so necessarily art, music and mystical or spiritual moments. The left side deals with language, logic, reasoning and evaluation; the person I call 'I' seems to reside in the left side. Severe epileptic patients have been treated by cutting the corpus callosum and severing the hemisphere connection. If a split-brain patient is shown an apple with the left eye and an orange with the right eye and is then asked, "What have you just seen?" they will reply, "An orange." If they are then instructed to write with their left hand (which is connected to the right brain) what they have seen and you do not let them see it, they will write "Apple." You can then ask, "What have you just written?" and they reply, "Orange." It seems that a stranger lives on the right side of our brains and as stated the person I call 'Me' resides in the left. We are not all split-brain patients, however as discussed earlier we seem to be further away from our right brain than ever. Mozart stated that tunes were always walking into his head *fully fledged*, he just had to write them down. Where did they come from? Obviously, that other self in the right brain, they walked into the domain were Mozart (the 'I') lived. With this in mind, the polarity of mans' intellectual and creative pursuits over history can be seen in a new light. While religion and a vague belief in the esoteric or supernatural held, an aspect of our being was satisfied;

in as much as there was a natural playing field for half of our selves. Men such as Jacob Boehme, Blaise Pascal or Emanuel Swedenborg could not have existed as they were, let alone express so much, if they had not had values more centred (in brain hemispherical terms) than today's. The grey 'scientific' geography of a predominantly left brain reality shuts out an abyss of understanding. The main problem, as highlighted earlier, is we exist in an established framework that supports each other while moving along the left brain path. If the solution is not obvious, the action of highlighting the situation is a foundation towards balanced brain reality.

The romantic poets and artist recognised the value of our right brain aspects, yet many of them either killed themselves or died young. I feel that they went at it too hard. They're wholehearted escapes, through imagination or narcotic aid left them with nothing on their return to grey reality. We need grey reality to function. I am typing these words with the aid of a grey reality attitude, leaving my imagination to place touchstones for my left brain to translate on page. At times I drive my car in a grey reality state, while I maintain a dual existence in my head.

As our children struggle on in their search for future roles in the production, should they be told that the theatre is half built? When a civil servant retires at fifty, takes his carriage clock, wonders why he has never felt fulfilment and dies at sixty; should his spiritual salvation have been a concern? The lines may be written and the curtains definite, but how we play and interpret is up to us.

 Sleeping With Sicilians
 Column by Dave Wood

Welcome to Planet England. It's I and myself and Sarah Dennis are driving from the middle of Wimborne up Minster (a perfect Dorsetshire name) to the glories of Stansted airport. We're catching the 6.30am flight to Palermo on the northern coast of Sicily. It must be about nine years since my last touring there. This time it's a direct flight for us English, whereas before it was a flight to the mainland then either another flight or a drive down to Calabria then a boat trip over. And because it was an early morning jaunt it was much cheaper. And oh, the poor woman who had to deal with a surging melee of higher percentage Italians and few polite English passengers! All credit to her, she was feisty enough to do a crowd control job on us and get us safely aboard.

There were no designated seats for us. It was a sit down where you can situation. The blue and yellow of the decor nipped the eyes like a pair of pincers, but at that time in the morning, there was enough desire for sleep to counteract the effect.

The flight fitted the laid back and chilled Sicilians. Once the plane took off and the scant safety instructions were issued, passengers took the opportunity to lounge, lollop and splay themselves across the seats. I had to remind myself their temperaments can easily change - some years ago, I saw a fight over a minor car accident on the edges of Palermo.

Forty winks later, myself and Sarah are ready to feel the tarmac catch us like a...like an airport runway. There was a great cheer from the Italians, not that they're dramatic at all.

We have no problem retrieving our luggage. I was still cynical - knowing someone who lost two pieces of luggage in the deep dark past of Italian flight travel.

We have to wait a while for our other colleague, Sue to join us, flying

from Milan. We do a tad of people watching and Sarah orders two cappuccino. Her Italian is good (well certainly better than mine) and she has the confidence to go with it. And of course, you have to have a brioche (with marmalade) to go with it.

I must admit and I must accept that this is an airport waiting area and you shouldn't expect things to be perfect. But a lukewarm cappuccino! I don't know how much it takes to get struck off the register of Baristas...

Still, a good creamy cappuccino in a plastic cup. It's good to be back to the land of the...erm Euro. The Euro fits the Italians like a blancmange on a bowler hat. Italians are dramatic and should keep their lire replete with lots of noughts. Even the smallest note was a thousand lire and worth about thirty pence.

We had about an hour to wait. We gathered up a couple of maps from the tourist counter and sat down to gawp. Palermo's simple act of providing maps is an acceptance of the tourist industry that Sicily now caters for. It's great moving on compared with maybe nine years ago.

It was at least half an hour since our last cappuccino...oh go on then, yes, why not?

Sarah sees Sue through the glass panels, so she should be out soon and we'll all have another cappuc...no, she's here and for good reason, she's not a happy bunny. They've left her sleeping bag and she has to put a claim form in. I spoke too soon. But things have changed for the good, honestly. And I have to assure people at this moment, that sue is the life of the party - just in case she accuses me of painting her as a miserable so and so.

What is it about Italians? What makes them look so set apart? It's not as if they wear anything flamboyant or garish. Quite the opposite. What they do wear is constantly clean, pressed and is obviously top quality. I always quiveringly English when I meet an Italian and I'm dressed like...I am.

Sue is sorted but very p....d off she has to arrange for her sleeping bag to be delivered to the hotel on Tuesday night.

Next quest - hire car. Find the exit first after asking the nice policemen looking desperately laid back. We turn our back on the 15ft Welcome to Palermo sign (in English) and off we go.

Look left, look right...help. There is a guard who takes notice of us and speaks...English. This will be one of many cases of 'blimey, you speak our language' exclamations which I could but won't (in the interests of my own safety) utter throughout this blogsite. I was impressed. In the 1980's/90's we had to get a basic grasp of Italian if we were to survive our trips here. He explained we had to get a minibus to the car hire, it was free and there was one coming now. We walked off, thankfully - to his English and to our damn good timing...but I do object to being called *Missus* as I walk away; it's revenge I suppose for me making the same mistake on the mainland over a decade ago.

The woman at the car hire booth was helpful, clear and greatly supportive. She gave us clear instructions, pointed where to go and off we toddled. It took a while, but after seeing the man who was obviously in her charge, we finally found it - the cutest little smart car with the cutest little boot for our big fat luggage. Squished, sorted and off we go to find Rosa, our host somewhere in the deepness of the Sicilian metropolis. Oh, I'm not allowed to drive - only two on the insurance please and I'm willing to

admit that I've driven in England since 1998 never mind

Palermo is a nightmare for traffic. Not just for the humble pedestrian, but also the driver and the navigator. It used to be that the Palermo authorities would change the one way system to ease congestion. It never worked. At 8am, there was always a cacophonous honking of horns and a swelling up of exhaust fumes. One morning I recall a lorry driver having parked his vehicle at the lights, gone for a coffee at a bar then came out when he spied the long trail of crawling automobiles finally get back to their clattering snail paces. I also remember a bank robbery outside our hotel window - helicopters, snipers and all. Certainly better than the Italian telly (of adverts and housewives stripping) at the time!

It probably took us longer to find the street for Rosa's than it did to get in the city itself. Parts had been cordoned off but for good reason. It was for walkers and cyclists to stretch their legs and enjoy their own steady perambulations. Palermo has always been a beautiful city but never before had it bowed to the humble pair of legs. Another first. Well done.

We find the flat where Rosa lives. We park quite easily (though know this is not typical to find a space so easy. Sarah always used the mantra, 'We'll never find a space at this time of night', when she worked in Milan. Somehow this deep spiritual chanting worked. Not so sure about here.

Rosa has a flat on the first floor. The interior as you enter is dark varnish and almost classic Raymond Chandler. The bags are unloaded and in we pop. I won't be staying here but with a colleague, who I'll be meeting later.

We need to talk about a few practicalities - parking costs around here and we have to get a series of tickets for the dashboard. Without Rosa, we wouldn't have known. Local knowledge does go a long way. We botch together a sign for the front of the dashboard to say that 'we are strangers here' and resolve to get these scratch cards for first thing in the morning.

Rosa loves to talk and loves company. She exudes energy so I hope we didn't appear too flippy floppy. We weren't too bad, considering the amount of sleep we got and the journey. I've been trying to shake off this grim flu thing for about five weeks and Sue is about to get it full throttle. Another member of the team who worked in northern Italy has come down with it and it seems it's making its way across Italy anyway.

After lunch (pesto...mmmm), we knock back the shot of coffee and let it whizz encouragingly around our systems. Eyes sparking, we're off for a walk to see the school we're working at tomorrow morning. There's no pint in driving, it would take four times as long once the bells strike 8am.

We turn out the door and make for the Vialle Della Liberta. Somewhere off this long traipsing road flanked by the Villa Trabia and the Giardino Inglese is Rosa's school. On the way, we spot a cactus which towers about fourteen feet. Though I'm quite blasé from previous visits, the other two are amazed. Still, it's an interesting observation - the middle of a highly built up city but with a climate which allows something which would be more at home in Africa or a Clint Eastwood film. Rosa points out the school and lets us make our way there and back. Eventually we bring up the important point of, *who knows the way back to Rosa's*. Luckily they weren't relying on my judgment or map-reading - it's crap.

The restaurant we (me, Sarah, Sue, Rosa and friend) go to is (dark varnish again) bench and table style. We huddle in and pull out the menus. The darkness of this expansive seating area could be quite easily mistaken for

one of those steak houses you find in England. But far from it - you have a clear view of the wood-burning oven and you know just from the mere symbol of it that the quality is going to be exceptional, whether you choose pasta, pizza or a plate of chips or spinach. Rosa pays - she's like that. But we promise to get our own back and foot the bill next time. The standard of food, service and joie de vivre are second to none.

Contributors:

Felix Cheong

Felix Cheong was the recipient of the National Arts Council's Young Artist of the Year for Literature Award in 2000. His three books of poetry are *Temptation and Other Poems* (1998), *I Watch the Stars Go Out* (1999) and *Broken by the Rain* (2003).

His work has been published in newspapers, poetry websites, foreign journals and 6 anthologies of Singaporean poetry. Felix has been invited to perform his poetry in Edinburgh, Brisbane, Hong Kong and Singapore. He has also read in London, Sydney, Melbourne, San Francisco and Manila.

As a literary activist, he has been involved in promoting Singaporean literature abroad. He was instrumental in organising and leading a Singapore contingent on 4 successful reading tours - The Philippines (January 2001), Australia (July 2001), the US (April 2002) and the UK (August 2003).

Felix completed his Master of Philosophy in Creative Writing at the University of Queensland in 2002. He is currently a freelance writer for *The Edge* and *Today* newspapers.

Bixby Monk

Bixby Monk his half Scottish and Half Czech, he was born in 1968. Named by his father after the jazz musician, Bix Beiderbecke, he spent a disappointing childhood in the Edinburgh school system before leaving for the army. He splits his time between Edinburgh and Prague. His claims to fame are being the last war correspondent to cover the Gulf War and being the first war correspondent to leave Kuwait. He writes for several press agencies and writes under various pseudonyms in the UK and European Presses. He is the editor of *Incorporating Writing* (ISSN 1743-0380).

Sam Morris

Sam Morris is a freelance writer, living in London, with a foundation and training in Art History. He has previously worked with contemporary artists on various exhibition reviews and artist statements of intent and influence. Yet his main areas of interest are concerned with Existential writings and works that express the Romantic impetus towards elevated consciousness and human emotional understanding. He sympathises with the work of Goethe, Kafka, Camus, Sartre, Wilson, Vonnegut, Keats, Eliot and Ouspensky. Currently he is working on a novel concerning Gherardo Petrarch's (Francesco's brother) time in the Carthusian monastery of Montrieux near Toulon.

Sam Morris can be contacted by email at: Sam1@netcomuk.co.uk

Samantha Morton

Samantha Morton before fleeing the capital worked happily in publishing, the hours were long, the pay was rotten. So in a bid to do what most Londoners do, she left London and set up a gallery and workshop in Cornwall, near St Ives, called Whey Pottery. She has three children and an understanding husband. Next year she hopes to go organic.

Rosalba O'Brien

Rosalba O'Brien is a freelance writer based in Buenos Aires, from where she writes on Latin American society and travel. She has recently contributed to the upcoming second edition of the Rough Guide to Argentina. Contact rooroo@ekit.com.

Andrew Oldham

Andrew Oldham writes for Stage, Television and Film. His credits include BBC1's Doctors, BBC R4 Go 4 it, Piccadilly Key103 BTCC Christmas Campaign, the short film Divine Blonde and The Charlie Manson Room (showcased by Theatre and Beyond at Brighton Pavilion, part of The International Brighton Festival 2002). He is prior recipient of a Writers Award from the ACE NW (UK), a Peggy Ramsay Award (UK) and a nominee of the Jerwood-Arvon award (UK) and has been nominated for the London International Award. Publications include the crime story, Spanking The Monkey, in: Next Stop Hope (Route ISBN 1 901927 19 9). Poetry in The Interpreter's House (UK), Gargoyle (USA), Poetry Greece and Poetry Salzburg (Europe), Grain (Canada) and Dream Catcher (UK) to name a few. He is an academic and journalist.

William Park

William Park was born in Hillingdon, West London, in 1962, and grew up in High Wycombe. He now lives in Preston, where his interests include Buddhist philosophy, World Cinema and Jazz. In 1990 he was awarded a major Eric Gregory Award, and in 2003 he gained an MA in Poetry from Liverpool Hope University College. His poems have appeared in Critical Quarterly, Observer, Poetry Review, Stand, and many more. His latest collection Surfacing (Spike ISBN 0 9518978 7 X) is available now.

Ian Parks

Ian Parks is a Hawthornden Fellow 1991, he has travelled through the United States of America on a Fellowship in 1994. His poetry has received accolades and awards, including the Royal Literary Fund 2003, the Oppenheim Award 2001 and 2002 and the John Masefield Award 2001. Ian was a National Poetry Society New Poet in 1996 and was a prior Poetry Editor for Dream Catcher (issues 7 -11). His collections include, Gargoyles in Winter (Littlewood, 1985), A Climb Through Altered Landscapes (Blackwater 1998), The Angel of the North (Tarantula CD 2000). Departures and Rendezvous: Love Poems 1983-2003 is due for publication in 2005. His next collection, Shell Island, will be available from Way Wiser (USA) in 2005. He teaches at Leeds University.

George Wallace

George Wallace, author of eight chapbooks of poetry, is editor of Poetrybay www.poetrybay.com, co-host of his own weekly poetry radio show www.wusb.org, and the first poet laureate of Suffolk County, New York. A regular performer in New York City, he frequently tours America with his poetry. Internationally, his work has been read in Paris, Copenhagen, Vienna, and particularly in Italy and the UK - including Italian appearances in Rome, Parma, Verona and Trento; and in the UK, London, Cardiff, Belfast, Bury St Edmunds, Norwich and the Lake District. His work has been translated into French, Spanish, Italian, German, Korean, Bengali, Russian and Macedonian. Forthcoming collections are Burn My Heart in Wet Sand (Troubadour, UK) and Fifty Love Poems (La Finestra Editrice, IT).