

## welcome

to the fourth edition of Sour Grapes, the bi-monthly pamphlet of new writing by members of the Monday Night Group.

Thanks to all who have bought Sour Grapes so far. We reckon that four issues means we're "established" - if it carries on like this we'll be offering subscription rates! Keep on buying, people.

The Monday Night Group continues to grow with new writers turning up every week. We meet at the offices of Commonword each Monday evening at 7.30pm to read our work and to give and/or receive feedback. We welcome all who take their writing seriously. Alternatively, if you'd like more information about the group, please feel free to contact the Commonword office at Cheetwood House, 21 Newton St, Manchester (0161 236 2773).

The Monday Night Group also provides publishing and performance opportunities. Members of the group regularly perform at Frog & Bucket and Tommy Ducks' poetry evenings.

This edition's editors are:

### Paul J King

Once described as a genius by Lemn Sissay's 3rd cousin twice removed's wife's sister's son's best friend.

### Jolivia Gaston

Jolivia describes herself as "the American marewolf in Hyde".

### Louise Glasscoe

Desperately seeking poetic intercourse, Franco-British relations to improve.

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## Steve Rouse

### renfield

Spittle on his lips  
like mascarpone,  
as if he'd been eating  
when it happened.

Not eating, but thinking,  
and not unusual thoughts  
in his case, though  
perhaps for others.

Shadowing it with his eyes  
he digests the images,  
hiccoughing them back  
as barks and moans.

Eating it, when it lands,  
when it's in his fist;  
licks the spittle from his lips,  
sees the world laid out.



## Louise Glasscoe

### gorgon's head

She lifted her head, a snake's green scales  
where there had been white skin:  
eyes livid, crazed, blood-red.  
In the depths of her being  
welled loathing, from her mouth  
poured poison; her tongue lashed out  
foul rage, squalid despair, alive and squirming,  
with serpents' heads and spitting tongues in her hair.  
Her reptile's tail slithered swift  
for the archer's kill, scorched the earth,  
rattled a warning; she hissed with satisfaction,  
lifted an arrow, never missed a target,  
pierced the heart; her baleful stare  
held no remorse, turned to cold stone  
all that smelt of warm-blooded human.



## Colette Snowden

### johnson's canyon

Centuries have washed away the rock  
That once stood here.  
This icing sugar sanctuary  
Proclaims its space with silence  
Deeper than the years that made it.  
Blue transparency of ice,  
Unfathomably light,  
Freezes time, creates a stillness  
That sears the mountain.  
And water, stopped from falling  
Rushes without motion,  
Plummets in a freeze-frame,  
Imitating rock.



## Paul J King

### anorexic

Thin  
Pale Skin  
Drawn tight  
Over bones

Eyes glazed  
Shying away  
From my sight  
From my pity  
From my reaching hand

I find  
Hidden food  
Secreted  
Around your room ...  
You lied

I see pictures  
On your walls  
Of the woman  
You want to be  
And two years ago ...  
You were



## Matthew Curry

### poem sent by an evil spirit

The blank page  
Is beautiful

Do not interfere  
With the blank page



## Sophie Clarke

### the man who ...

The man who offered his second wife  
the whole night sky as a gift  
sits and tells she's  
not so starstruck anymore.  
He often mentions his first wife,  
who is dead.  
Though he never talks about her.

The man who never talks about his first wife  
throws a burning cigarette end  
into the warm night.  
We follow its trail, pretend it's  
a shooting star. He doesn't make a wish.

The man who doesn't make a wish  
tells me how much he wants the impossible.  
I would like to offer it him,  
along with the whole night sky  
for his own. I don't say this out loud.  
He tells a joke.

The man who tells a joke  
does it very well, but looks surprised  
when I laugh. He's amazed  
that I read Thurber, and I say,  
what do you take me for?

He says, I take you for a friend.



*Kevin Doyle***reading paint**

Always with Vermeer  
his subjects are visited by light.  
It comes to illuminate their work,  
their food, what they wear:  
those details that go to make them  
what it is they are.

Always with Vermeer  
a frame contains a space  
that only light can enter.  
It comes as consolation  
for lives lived  
in expectation of so little.

Always with Vermeer  
light is that much more  
than the gilded mix of its day.  
It comes at knowing angles  
to touch the darkest corners  
of what it is we all are.

*Louise Glasscoe***machines in high places**

Distractions.  
Hardness. Machines on tables.  
Ideas. Stifled.  
Machines in high places winning the battle.  
Minds are following and never remembering.  
Always moving forward.  
Moving forward.

Follow the crowd and never remember.  
Where is the meaning in remembering and dreaming?  
Lost.

The present continuum loses the past  
merges my dreams and my words.

All is lost in the endless beginning.  
Repetitions. Repetitions.

*Paul J King***the letter**

I knew what it was the moment I saw it. It stared  
straight at me, in pristine white envelope, with  
perfect un-smudged typing, name mis-spelt. I  
knew what it was. A friend once said, 'you can  
always tell by the size of envelope, big, good  
news, small, bad news'. It was small. Picked it up,  
ran fingers down back, felt single page. Knew  
what it was, wanted to open, but didn't want to read  
bad news. Put it on mantelpiece, made coffee, sat  
down, stared at it ... Stared at it ... Stared at it,  
spirits sinking lower with every sip. Thought about  
other similar letters. Bad news always started  
'Dear Mr King' or, even worse, 'Dear Sir', the latter  
inevitably photocopied. A good news letter would  
call me Paul ... Turned on the television, don't  
know why, maybe trying to take my mind off it ...  
maybe trying to psych myself down. Smoked a  
cigarette, shouted at dog, he knew. Stared at  
envelope some more. Would letter contain,  
'however, your details have been kept on file,' the  
line where you can visualise brackets containing  
statement '(in the bin, loser)'? Or 'we wish you  
every success in your future employment', which  
should read, 'we don't want you, don't bother us  
again' ...? Put on tie, thought about where I  
currently work, was my job so bad, stared at letter,  
realised it was ... What if letter wasn't what I  
thought? What if ... Second interview? Stared at  
envelope, picked up, peeled seal, pulled out  
letter ... 'Dear Mr Kling' ...

*Steve O'Connor***twenty-six**

No wife  
No kids  
No job  
No mortgage  
No house  
No car  
No money  
No debts  
No worries

*Sophie Clarke***underwater breathing**

The last time I fainted  
I thought of Alice,  
drawn through the mirror  
to meet her other self.

So it is in dreams,  
jack-in-the-boxes laughing  
to see you pacing endless rooms,  
cobwebs on your fingers.

You remember  
how you danced at the end of the pier,  
around and around,  
as the hours passed.

Asleep, we are not oblivious.  
We twitch and blink at lights  
more real than reality ...

each day, we awake  
knowing more, our feet  
stinging with the sand  
of unfamiliar lands.

*Steve Rouse***my beautiful assistant**

Too dangerous to touch  
this face with my fingers, to see  
this face with my eyes, to be  
inside the glass menagerie.

Jane, in a white phosphor dress,  
stares then laughs - at what?  
Is there any more substance  
to this church than "porch"?

I think that I once holidayed  
in France. Now, all that remains  
of my memories is paper-thin,  
occasional, still, small, lies.

The phone rings. Is that you?



**SOUR**  
**grapes**

in this issue,  
new writing by:

sophie clarke  
matthew curry  
kevin doyle  
louise glasscoe  
paul j king  
steve o'connor  
steve rouse  
colette snowden

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