

lemon meringue

and cherry pie to this, the latest and fifth edition of Sour Grapes - the bi-monthly pamphlet of new writing by friends, groupies and hangers-on of the Monday Night Group.

Not a writing class, not an exam, but a friendly gathering of would-be Nobel prizewinners and Poet Laureates, the Monday Night Group meets, not surprisingly, every Monday at 7.30pm at the Commonword office at Cheetwood House, 21 Newton Street, Manchester (tel: 0161-236 2773) to discuss, debate and dissect.

This edition's fabulously good-looking, talented and modest editors, as described by their colleagues:

Steve Waling

AWOL

Phil Hatfield

Still not convinced. Still not convincing.

Colette Snowden

Just showing off. She writes because she can (and because everyone lets her!).

**Marvin Cheeseman****the truth hurts**

She wasn't happy with her body
And he wasn't telling lies
When he said
'I love the cellulite
that decorates your thighs'
He didn't mean her harm
And wasn't telling fibs
But when she broke his arm
And kicked him in the ribs
He wasn't happy with his body
Either.

**Pete Ali****cinderella search**

In the nightclubs
Prince Charming is searching
Using his chat-up lines
Once again comes rejection
On his Cinderella search

On the rebound
drinking whiskey from the bar
Warm wet circles stain the tables
The prince turns on the charm
From behind a glass

In nicotine seas
Lips meet
They exchange a kiss of life
The DJ plays a love song
Dedicated to all the lovesick fools

From a bedsit
In a playboy tale
Sexual fantasies are revealed
The prince has left his palace
To fulfil a wet dream

**Louise Glasscoe****instrumental**

As alternative medicine
a herbalist once said (and I agree)
mothers play their daughters
like an instrument;
they revel in a false note,
a sharp or a flat,
a squeak of protest,
rarely do they settle
for a sweet melody.

My mother fingers the instrument
presses all the right buttons
at all the wrong moments.
I am an instrument that has not warmed up,
caught at a weak moment,
when I have not paused for a breath;
ill-timed, on the down-beat, unaware,
my notes evaporate in thin air;
instead of a tune my instrument dribbles.

I am unrehearsed, arrive late,
the concert half-over;
I am unsighted, do not know
when the triangles will tinkle
when the lead soprano comes in,
pushed into a corner
(behind the violins)
cannot see the conductor's baton.

I have never known the score:
it was either hidden in some attic
or burnt long ago.
My mother is a virtuoso
but she is no composer;
there's no variation on a theme:
we always start off in C major
and always wind up in A minor.

My mother never taught me how to tongue;
I have not progressed from descant recorder;
I have not moved on:
we still keep repeating bar 1.

**Kevin Doyle****detective story**

The driver was given no option.
He drove them many miles
to where they put a stop
to the quiet in a copse.

Things scurried through leaves,
birds fled by the flock.
One sudden blast caused a farmer
to spill two pails of milk.

'Fucking Poachers!' was what
he yelled to the distance:
an exchange soon ended
by a smooth, departing engine.

A gamekeeper found the van,
cleared of all cash,
a rook on the front seat.
His pair of young lurchers

goaded one another to a frenzy
over something hidden in brambles
while he busied himself inspecting
green tarpaulin under a tree.

**Matthew Curry**

'Just imagine - if we were walking here
In five hours' time, we'd be underwater,

But we'll probably be up there sailing
Down the waves above our heads, we'll be flung

Along by a wind they won't feel here, we'll
Forget our past selves underneath the keel.'



*Phil Hatfield***the homecoming**

Soft furnishings. The chair
receives him
where a glass of claret rests.
Bookshelf, a library
of his favourite classics
the window looks out
on a walled garden
with a child's swing
a spaniel performing
tricks
for a stick.

But to what end
designs the architect
of habit
Who knows?

Traveller
enters by the front door
carries a bottle
for the hosts
to refrigerate.
Wipes feet
on the welcome mat.
Has that peculiar look
in his eyes
that the hosts don't
recognise.
So they humour him
with small-talk.

Only soon they'll
laugh it off with friends
distancing that strange
young man
who came to a party once.

And that look
What was in his eyes?
A mischief undoing
the hostess's dress
or rifling the mortgage

but he just knew other things,
other worlds, that's all.

As if to say
it's not so much
the houses you visit

As the ones you don't.

*Colette Snowden***thirteen going on thirty-five**

The chicken-legged girl
wears two coats,
too big
and far too thin
She talks non-stop to
keep the heat in.

She says she's clever
with ideas
"but daft
as mud wivout
'em. So mi mam sez,
any road".

"A'm livin' wiv mi
Dad these days"
- she waits
for a reaction -
"I don't care what
mi mam sez."

"Mi mam sez he's a
druggie thief.
'E's not.
I stay up 'til
when I want to.
'E dun't mind."

And then she asks me
have I got
a cig
and do I want
a fizzy worm
or kola kube.

*Colette Snowden***rules of conduct**

She bows her head
and looks up sideways.
'Can you see me?'
I feel her say.

She clears her throat
and slouches further,
'Can I be here?'
Is that okay?'

And there beneath her eyes
I see the colour of worry.
And wrapped around her waist
I see the meals she's had to miss.
And etched upon her mouth
I see the spirit she holds on to.

I smile back
in silent answer:
'How can I help?'
I want to say.

But naturally, I don't.

*Richard Atkinson***satisfyingly strong**

on cider bottle
it says
in quotations
as though expressed
by a literary expert
a professor maybe
or don at Oxford
'satisfyingly strong'
in quotations
as though they went out
on the sidewalks
to ask someone young,
half-dead through it,
'So how does it feel?'
'Satisfyingly strong, my good man,
call me a deathbulance,
my good man,
quick now, hurry to it,
me liver's packed up,
by gods'.



SOUR
grapes

in this issue,
new writing by:

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