

**good evening**

and welcome to issue six of Sour Grapes, the bi-monthly pamphlet of new writing by members of the Monday Night Group, who are based at the offices of Commonword, 21 Newton Street, Manchester.

The Monday Night Group exists to bring writers together in a supportive environment, irrespective of gender, age, ethnic origin, social background, sexual orientation or disability and to give them the opportunity to receive constructive feedback on their work.

A wide variety of writing is encompassed, including poetry, short stories, drama and novels. The group meets every Monday night (except Bank Holidays) from 7.30pm until 9.30pm - just turn up and ring the buzzer.

The group also organises the 'Poetry Party' event on the third Wednesday of each month at the Nag's Head, Lloyd Street, Manchester (just off Albert Square), with a special guest act each month and readers from the floor.

If you would like any further information about the Monday Night Group, Sour Grapes or the Poetry Party, please call Commonword on 0161-236 2773, Steve/Sophie on 0161-881 2943, or e-mail us at [mondaynight@mcmail.com](mailto:mondaynight@mcmail.com).

If you've enjoyed this issue of Sour Grapes, tell your friends!

This month's gorgeous, pouting editors are:

**Paul J King**

Not quite a Chippendale; more of a chair.

Linda Lovelace, Linda McCartney, Lynda Carter, Linda Evangelista, Lynda la Plante, Linda Lusardi? No - **Linda Brogan!**

**Sophie Clarke**

Presently going through an important period of readjustment vis-a-vis her literary activities. In other words - has written bugger-all for months.

**Steve O'Connor**

**attendance**

Hundreds paid their respects to a family elevated by grief.

"He had no enemies".

"A man of the people".

My uncle, (a relationship that's supposed to be distant.)

My friend, acknowledged and bonded in a pissed-up moment that went beyond sobriety.

A final touch and "I love you, Dad!"

Then lowered, stoned away from his grandkids;

Eight hours - the eldest.

The youngest - five minutes.

An officer worker's day.

The length of a good song.

Gathered into the scrum of my family, my dad said "This can't be happening". Words that stay, like memories.



**Marvin Cheeseman**

**crisps**

Crisps ... I love them,

Crisps ... they are the best,

A crunchy consolation, whenever I'm depressed

Crisps are the real thing, they make me feel exalted

Be they cheese and onion, chicken, beef,

Or plain old ready salted,

When I eat a bag of crisps I never want to stop,

How I wish the manufacturers would fill them to the top.

Crisps are delicious, crisps are sublime,

If crisps were illegal I'd end up doing time.

And if ever I was robbed and all my things were taken,

I pray to God they'd leave behind a bag of smokey bacon.



**Colette Snowden**

**bangers and mash**

It was an onion gravy moment when he sidled up and said:

"I think you're cute and sexy and I want you in my bed".

It was a mushy-pea-type moment when he turned to me, eyes bright, saying: "Take me home with you, love and let me spend the night".

It was a jumbo sausage moment when we stumbled from the cab and he squeezed my buttock gently, winking: "Darlin', aren't you fab".

It was a mashed potato moment when he pulled me to his chest, and we thrashed round in a passion 'til at last we came to rest.

But my mashed potato moment turned out lumpy and congealed when he said: "I like you, sweet'ear but I need to play the field".



**Paul J King**

**poem for the ex-wife**

Like a thief in the night,  
You stole the words that I was going to say to you

And the TV  
And the video.



**Carl Dyer**

**box**

Tower block  
series of 58 boxes  
My box, no. 54  
Elevated up and  
down in a box  
I sit in my  
box,  
watching a box  
after consuming  
a box of food.  
As I look out of my  
window  
I spy a box  
taken into the  
cemetery  
lowered into the  
box-shaped  
earth.  
Then I bathe  
in a box of  
water.  
So retiring  
to my mattress  
covered box  
and sleep.  
Awaking to the  
sound of my  
letter box,  
the letter having a  
box number.  
Leaving habitat  
box  
Down elevator  
box  
Make for a  
phone box  
Bureaucratic  
replies over  
phone -  
tell me to go  
to their  
information box.  
Has anybody got  
a suggestion box?





Steve Rouse

## cut up

Do you hear that?  
The crying of the naked Arab boys.  
Bill's dead and they  
won't be getting their jollies anymore.  
Neither will we, come to that;  
though maybe they didn't  
enjoy it much anyway.  
Did we?

The glass glinted,  
even if the water was muddy,  
and we saw the particles of dirt  
like motes in gods' eyes.

Bill won't be going to the other side,  
he'd been there already  
and knew the options.  
Maybe he wanted to die  
with a full glass of whiskey on his head.  
It's a sick picture, BJ.



*Don't Forget!*

## Poetry Party

Third Wednesday of each  
month, upstairs at the Old Nag's  
Head, Lloyd St, Manchester  
(off Deansgate)

**Special Guests and  
Open-Mic Sessions**

Starts 8.30pm  
Admission £2/£1

Paul J King

## dental hospital 1987

"Oh, please drop something heavy on my head so I won't feel the pain of my bridge!" I don't know what shocked me more; the words, or the way he threw his arms in the air. The old Jewish man was obviously distressed. If he had been Muslim, he could have taken up the 'Prayer Mats Available On Request' offer from reception. I had always held the belief that these were places where masochists came for confirmation. Why else would the waiting room table be littered with seven-year-old Reader's Digests, and why else would the Woman's Realm be opened at the 'Dear Doctor' page? Further proof could be found by looking at the 'Hospital Through the Ages' display; the exhibits more like tools of satanic ritual than practical dentistry. My beliefs were affirmed; this was a place where you were assessed in order of pain, and first-year students nervously told you to calm down, making you think: "If you're not calm, why should I be?" At the time you most need a cigarette, you see the sign which reads: "Only kippers should be smoked, and not in here". When I arrived, the receptionist had asked for the name and address of my doctor, and what religion I was. I thought it was innocent questioning; now I began to wonder. Was this facility dual-functional? Did they, on Saturdays, erect great altars of dental chairs and, in the centre, did the senior houseman preach the virtues of gas and self-injection? Were the white robes to disguise the tattoo of their belonging to the great dental mutilation sect, whose motto is: "To be in constant pain is to be without pain", and did their lunchboxes indeed contain tongue sandwiches? Was the drill just a drill? The poor people who came in with a chipped tooth and left with bridge and braces, a week's supply of a placebo drug, told they were on a clinical trial for a new wonder painkiller and, if the pain gets too bad, feel free to come back ... What was I doing in this place of torture and devilry? Its location should have given it away; next door to the medical school, where surgery students practice on the bodies of the dead ... "The dentist will see you now". Not bloody likely.



Matthew Curry

New moon when he was born,  
A rocked cradle  
To hold dark matter  
Near his mother's torn  
And mangled middle  
As visitors natter.



Louise Glasscoe

## sun in gemini

It is written.  
I started off on Apollo 56  
and so far there have been no kicks.  
My horoscope is full of horrors:  
Pluto square Saturn in the 12th,  
Mars in tight opposition,  
blue moon in Capricorn in the 2nd,  
a Pluto/Jupiter conjunction.  
With such a planetary composition  
I should press the self-destruct button.  
Only Jupiter in the 9th,  
Virgo in midheaven  
alleviate my Saturnine disposition.

It's been said that I have to work with my karma  
with the greater malefic,  
but I'm still having trouble with the lesser:  
I prefer Pathfinder quests on television  
(to red planet Mars)  
to inner self-exploration.

My future is sealed;  
somewhere my deathday is hidden  
in the calendar.  
But I'll not challenge the grim reaper:  
there's no avoiding my fate:  
when Mars is in the 8th,  
perhaps an accident will annihilate,  
or perhaps a Sun Pluto opposition  
will bring about a desire for transformation  
on a very deep level.  
My next Saturn return could be the final,  
my personal last, and not my personal best.  
The ferryman beckons  
from across the River Styx.



John Calvert

## a slow thaw

Ice-cleaving submarines  
Rust all along the peninsula  
Their atomic clocks frozen  
Short of incinerating a hemisphere  
From burst pods, a toxic seed  
Warms into meltwater  
Poisons sense the shifting globe  
Change their forms  
And move on



**SOUR  
GRAPE  
S**

in this issue,  
new writing by:

john calvert  
marvin cheeseman  
matthew curry  
carl dyer  
louise glasscoe  
paul j king  
colette snowden  
steve o'connor  
steve rouse

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