

good evening

... and welcome to the eighth edition of Sour Grapes, the bi-monthly pamphlet of the Monday Night Group.

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

The group also provides publishing and performance opportunities. Members of the group regularly perform at the Frog & Bucket and Old Nag's Head poetry evenings.

If you would like more details of the Monday Night Group, please contact Commonword on 0161-236 2773.

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Your editors for this edition:

Christiane Casper

is not a ghost...

Matthew Curry

is unwell...

Louise Glasscoe

is under the influence...



Kevin Doyle

circus crazy

Clowns cavorted with giant brushes
and rubbery ladders that bent double.
Best of all, their every bucket
had water in it; even those they saved
for the smiling crowds at the end.

When work was done: lions lay down
with the elephants, jugglers slept
with the tightrope walkers
and the strongman played chess
with the ringmaster's daughter.

Then the human cannonball went AWOL.
Men in sober suits tested ropes and poles.
When an acrobat ate poison berries
loaded trucks left town in a rush
trailing psychotic dogs in their dust.



Paul J King

eggs for breakfast?

I remember in early childhood
When my favourite teddy bear Tinkerbell and I
Would attempt to make the family breakfast.

Tinkerbell had a passion for eggs
Straight from the fridge
Dropped from the highest height
He could muster

I had a passion for hiding
On the window ledge
In the corner
The curtains obscured most



Steve O'Connor

enlightenment

The handshake, smile and wink
I give out of habit and hope
of defusing the situation
is given back and says,
"You've been sussed".



Phil Hatfield

skimming stones

It's a matter of trajectory,
Skimming stones across a pond;
A loop. Occasionally lower and flatter,
natural extension of arms and wrists,
shot from the waist, which is the lynchpin;
Stone selection - not too large
not too small - Rounded and smooth.
A disc for the skimmer.

A sight to watch
winging its way across the water
before stalling like a wounded starling.
Gulp! The water opens its mouth.
The ripples mesmerise.

For nights after the sun has disappeared,
I've perfected this exact science.
My schoolfriends turning over
their Neanderthal minds,
mouths agape, comprehend nothing.

What's always fascinated:
How a stone propelled over grass
pitches, one bounce or two at most,
Momentum killed. Dead weight.
Resonance of, say, a barrel laden with ale.

Such that my science leads to conjecture,
that a balloon (for example)
will take only so much tugging,
and a brick wall hurts
the hell out of a schoolboy shoulder.

Once, a boy from the grammar school
picked a fight. His uniform posher
than mine, toffee-nosed runt
from the large houses near the park.
I hit him hard, but only once.
What's perplexing is:
Where I expected a wall
or at least something of a fight,
I met nothing.

I didn't even bleed. What a disappointment!

So here I am, exploring the lost art
of climbing trees:
of course, tree selection's crucial.
Don't try the straight, sleek ones -
The polished ones. A losing bet if
ever there was. Hands grip
the small crevices where bugs run,
squeeze until the fingers turn white.
Look for a foothold. Make use of the knees,
and plan ahead - no more than
one or two steps at a time.

Consider it science:

Then, when only you and the birds
can see the school's slate roof
over the fence,
Or the weir where the river rages
over the rocks -
Consider yourself a King.

From here, I see the girls bathing
in the shallow, their high-pitched songs
rising like larks through the air,
pink bodies flimsy as cobwebs.

Once, a girl brushed past me in the corridor.
My throat tightened. I've asked myself why.
Current enquiries reveal nothing.
I doubt if the answer's found in books.

Last thing at night this mystery
disturbs me the most.



Diane Marsland

untitled

He is, was a goldfish who sat on top
of the sideboard who, with the least
drop of whiskey be it one two or
three gulps, would burst into song
belting out from the depths of his
collapsed lungs *My bonnie lies over
the ocean* he was once also a
daffodil planted upside down that
never bloomed - refused to. Then he
went away with a kiss when the
tree blossomed out of season - he
returned as twelve white lilies -
they cried and he now is love.



Pam Leeson

17

He got out of the car
and turned away,
wearing his orange leather jacket
and walk that didn't need me,
and I looked away
as though that's
what I'd brought him up to do.

☘

Steve Rouse

the leopard's new spots

*"The party became associated increasingly
with the most disagreeable messages and
thoughts... Tories were linked to harshness:
thought to be uncaring about unemployment,
poverty, poor housing and single parenthood."*

-Michael Portillo

Don't touch! It's still wet ...
stroke me later, but not just yet.
I'm feeling a little contact-shy,
waiting for my new coat to dry.

Do you like it? It's all the rage,
I'm turning over a new page:
understanding instead of firm -
compassion is my new concern.

All those nasty things I said,
and those evil things I did,
were all a terrible mistake.
I'm sorry ... now it's too late.

Where once I snarled, now I purr;
where I disagreed, I'll concur.
The hand I bit, I'll now lick better,
If I hurt you, I'm now your debtor.

I ask your forgiveness, crave your love:
want to take your hand in my velvet glove.
I live to satisfy your every whim,
until the next time I get in.

☘

Colette Snowden

you're funny you (a love poem)

You eat cold ravioli straight out of the tin,
you think hosepipes are clever and bagpipes are 'in',
you beguile old ladies with your great gormless grin,
you're funny you -
but I like you.

You take eight sorts of vitamins six times a day,
you shave with Darjeeling and bathe in Earl Grey,
you keep sheep in your kitchen and think that's OK
you're funny you -
but I like you.

You believe there are aliens living next door,
you sit on the table and sleep on the floor,
you talk about lives that you've lived through before
you're funny you -
but I like you.

You greet me with poems whenever we meet,
you remain unperturbed by the smell of my feet,
I can burp in your face and you still think I'm sweet,
you're lovely you
and I love you.

☘

Sophie Clarke

faith

There are days
when I don't believe in me,
when I exist only via my clothes
and have an urge to take a trip, go see
a me on some other day.
A ten-year trip, then I could look back
and say - some life!
If only I'd been living it.

I'd like to live on someone else's nerves
and stop getting on my own.
But I just read books about life,
waste energy in not living these days
completely.

There'll be time; another life.
Things will become clear but,
here,
I listen to the person who isn't me,
talking like I believe it.

☘

Steve Waling

helmshore textile museums

The cafe has an early 80's feel: fixed
green plastic chairs, tea, confectionery.
None of your doilies, table cloths,

tinkle of polite conversation. Last time I came
the waterwheel loomed twice as large,
four fulling stocks boomed in unison. It's shrunk

in its urine wash or I've grown out of it.
Hardly any visitors watch the Derby Doubler
pull its threads into line. Then Compton's Mule,

twisting the thinnest of yarns across centuries.
It must have seemed crammed as a weaver's arse
in this valley, its lodge deep enough for drowning.

There's a World Outside and a World of the Factory:
when the gates first opened Washington was President.
During the Civil War, the hands all starved,

built roads between Burnley and Blackburn.
School Parties Welcome. I finish my coffee,
walk back past newly done up terraces

where a woman I don't know smiles as I pass.

☘

Colette Snowden

predator

"I won't bite you,
you know,"
he said.
And I,
Naive
and soft in the head,
believed him.

☘

SOUL
of
trades
se
S

in this issue,
new writing by:

sophie clarke
kevin doyle
phil hatfield
paul j king
pam leeson
diane marsland
colette snowden
steve o'connor
steve rouse
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