

good evening

... and welcome to the ninth 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, e-mail us at mondaynight@mcmail.com, or access our web site at <http://www.mondaynightgroup.mcmail.com>.

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Your editors for this edition:

Colette Snowden

third reserve editor twice removed

Phil Hatfield

not a very good poet, but in the first team and quite good at cricket

Paul J King

still trying to think of something vaguely amusing

**Christiane Casper****a gift and a curse**
(for Martin Gore)

I carry your song
in my heart
and in my hands
trying
to hold it

your song
is the only place
that feels
like home
to me

but I can't find
anybody
to live it for me
the way
you sing

**Kevin Doyle****the find**

He'd gone to do his neighbour a favour:
some shopping (bread, milk, eggs, a newspaper),
but on returning about forty minutes later,
to the just-ajar door, quickly gleaned
the reason for the strong smell of burning
and the kitchen's resemblance to a sauna.

The dead slid weight of her had jammed
a cushion against the chair front.
The awful jumble of legs and feet made for
a sight that would disturb him for months.
He let the police know there was a brother
somewhere? Bill? Bert? Bob? A name like that.

He'd won money and she'd lost contact.
Her heart had had enough, the paramedic
said, as if irony didn't matter really.
He duly closed all the curtains, then the door.
Soon as he'd done, a cat came and queried
scuff marks on stone, alien scents everywhere.

**Paul J King****the madness of john barrett**

Pt 1

I imagined the buzz to be the control gear of
fluorescent light, which flickers and shimmers
above me. Buzzing in perfect tune, to peaks and
lows of light, and my eyes, as they adjust to see
paper, on which I now write. I still see images of
my last acid trip, when objects bent; and reality
displaced, shimmering, bright, magical and
terrifying.

I still remember the doctor's words, when I came
round. Appearing like an angel. Dressed in
white, with bright light behind, which hurt my
eyes. And in that light, chanting dots. Sounding
like the choir in Handel's Messiah.

"You're lucky we got to you on time."

Her words bounced, echoed, choir hit crescendo.

"Don't try and move your legs; we had to strap
them together."

"You were in a bad way when they brought
you in." "We're not sure of the extent of your
injuries yet."

What was real and not at that time was
indistinguishable. I heard the words, but I felt
indestructible, or I didn't know how I felt. Was I
still alive? Was the light really the Celestial
Gates, and the voice God punishing me?

I know it was real. Every time I look down, at
where my leg once was. Unable to leave my
flat, for fear visions will get me. Yes, I know it
was real.

**Steven Waling****ornithologist**

Am I the first to report this?
I walked my schnauzer by
the overspill estate and thought
I heard the distinctive call
of the Common Glottal Stop,

the t', t' of the newly hatched
rising in a chorus of clicks
from some secret nesting site.
Your readers may think it
extinct since the influx of

louder varieties; but though
it's never seen I often hear its
rooftop caesura as if it were
no more than a doorstep away.
Such music is surely worth

preserving on these streets.
Unlike most threatened fauna
this bird of dun camouflage
still leaves a space for itself
language can't fill. Today

I thought I'd found one feather
of our most ubiquitous bird
that nests in forests of housing,
where it's known chiefly for a song
yet to be recorded or caught

that drops through a crack in the throat.

**Kevin Doyle****autumn sport**

Today's sky is a weird playing field.
Pilots have kindly marked out the lines.

Pale cloud is banked like supporters
behind the goal facing my windows.

Some pigeons are building an attack
that comes to nothing in the distance

so they hurry back to defend their own end.
Neutral trees might have wrapped up warmer.



Kevin Otoo

remembrance day

There's no such thing as the hereafter,
he said. There's only the here and now:
and then the screen just goes blank,
instead.

The blades of the helicopter whirling
to wake the dead.
And the hard edges of the moonlight
softening the pillow beneath his head.

But you remember; you remember,
she said. How once you had come calling
by my house; with the sky dull and grey
and beaten flat as lead.
And the two of us walking past the place
where the dealers hang:
Out beyond the church by the boarded-up 'Blues',
Where the light-skinned boys would dance
in their black and white shoes.

Past the off-licence; the laundromat;
and the run-down shops.

Past the takeaway; and the fences;
and the vacant plots.

(and lenny stopping to ask us if we'd heard the news:
how benny had bought himself a ticket on a one-way
cruise)

The undercurrents; the tensions; that swirled beneath
the skin.

Like the roundabouts; and the waltzers, all waiting to
spin.

And the sudden shock of the sunshine
as it started to kick in.

Past the post-office
and the supermarket burned down to a shell.
And the bright young things with what they sell.
And you with your homespun beliefs
in a heaven without a hell

all unravelling

You remember.
You remember them well.

Past the surgery; and the bus depot;
and out around the park.

Then back down to the tenements,
as if returning to the dark.

And the two of us leaning up against the crash barrier
by the edge of the kerb.
Almost as if we had dared to lean out over the edge
of the whole known world.

And something in the wind's gentle push and shove,
And in the faint tolling of some bell;
Told me you were on the inward journey
out from love
And into the arms of what the dealers sell.

You remember.
You remember it well.

The helicopter blades still whirling
overhead.
Her weight shifting effortlessly from the foot
to the head of the bed.
(Their lives held in thrall).
And the bullet-like blue lights bouncing
off the moonlit wall.

Then the silence:
Like the ceasefire that comes after it all.

The memory. The exposed heart.
The wound from which they bled.

You remember:
How you lost your faith,
(she said).



Steve O'Connor

stupidity

Cats are clever.
When a cat is told to sit,
it doesn't.



Colette Snowden

travels without my beanstalk

Tonight
the Giant is blowing
smoke ring turrets
behind the hills.
The glow of his pipe
is a cinnamon wash,
highlighting his handiwork.

Beneath
the spiralling towers
of milky fortress,
his wife unravels
long coils of hair,
de-tangling knots
of rusting tangerine.

I am
Jack. Exploring hidden
landscapes, daring
the unknown,
spying on secret treasure,
I steal these jewels
to boost my coffers.



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

**SOUR
GRAPES**

in this issue,
new writing by:

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kevin doyle
paul j king
steve o'connor
kevin otoo
colette snowden
steven waling

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