



SILVER APPLES MAGAZINE

Creativity Worth Consuming



Issue Eleven | Spring 2019

PEER PRESSURE



Published By:
Silver Apples Magazine
Gráinne O'Brien and Alex Dunne
Collection © Silver Apples Magazine 2019
All authors and artists retain the rights to their own work.

Cover Design By:
Hoach Le Dinh on Unsplash

Logo Design By:
George Dempsey

Published in the Republic of Ireland

Silver Apples Magazine

Peer Pressure

Issue Eleven, Spring 2019

Creativity Worth Consuming

Contents

<i>Letter from the Editors</i>	5
<i>The Deafening Silence</i> Jessica Dunne	6
<i>The Body Beautiful</i> Eoin Devereux	8
<i>Scarred</i> Brian Weston	12
<i>The Train</i> Adam Chappell	13
<i>Ecdemomania</i> Holly Day	18
<i>Wedding</i> James Holden	19
<i>Picnic</i> Lynn White	24
<i>The Smoking Slave</i> Colum Morrin	25
<i>What Did You Avoid By Avoiding These Things</i> Paul McCarrick	26

Letter from the Editors:

In which we get very deep all of a sudden

Gráinne O'Brien and Alex Dunne

What is Peer Pressure? It's a phrase that calls to mind youthful indiscretions—smoking without inhaling, throwing a few extra cola bottles into your 10p mix-up, and bush drinking with friends (is bush drinking specifically an Irish phrase? Answers on a postcard please). But as we were putting together this issue, it became clear to us that Peer Pressure means so much more than that. It recalls a time when we were all desperately trying to figure out who we were and who we were meant to be. It reminded us just how important those years were in crafting the people we became, and how, as artists, our past can inspire and drive our craft.

Reading through the submissions for this issue, it was clear that this was something on a lot of people's minds. What does it mean to fit in? To be a part of something? What does it mean to be different? Do we want to follow the crowd, or do we want to forge our own path?

In this crazy old game of life, some people seem to have it all figured out by the time they're eighteen. Others figure it out when they're fifty. But some of us leave this world never quite sure if we ever really found our place.

This is our eleventh issue and our fifth year producing Silver Apples Magazine. It's a labour of love for us, but we have bigger goals for the magazine, and for ourselves, some of which you will see over the coming months. We're still figuring it out as we go, but we hope you'll continue to join us for the ride as we continue to encourage you to create art worth consuming.

The Deafening Silence

Jessica Dunne

The deafening silence,
Words die in my mouth.
And none interrupt
As our fires burn out.

And tears fall like waves,
A crash in the still.
And all turn to look
At she who did ill.

And whispers, they falter,
And stares slowly fall
As they turn back their heads,
For they care not at all.

And silence, it chokes,
Of this I am sure
And I feel deep sadness
Like never before.

The heads turn back
To the books they must read.
But eyes wander back
And they eye me with greed

For I am the predator
And them, my cruel foe.
I hide in darkness
But they know the shadows

And the silence, it choked
When predators prowled,
And all else hid
When they heard the harsh growl.

But why should I hide,
When I can stand tall?
You can't knock me with words
For I've learnt I can't fall

The deafening silence
Was broken by one,
But we all rise in ranks
And we welcome the sun.

Jessica Dunne is from Dublin, Ireland. She is fourteen years old and enjoys writing poetry, short stories and mainly songs.

***Why we picked it:** Fourteen year old Alex and Gráinne were filling their parents' vodka bottles with water and thinking they were getting away with it. If you feel inadequate reading Jessica's stunning poem, join us. The support group will meet every Wednesday*

The Body Beautiful

Eoin Devereux

I've only the one pair of jeans that fits me anymore and that's after I moved the button a second time. Pretty soon I'll have to send away for clothes or go to your man inside in town who has the bigger sizes in the back of the shop. Jesus, I'm gone awful fat, so I am. The last time I weighed myself I was tipping twenty-five stone. If it gets any worse I might have to get one of those operations where they put an elastic band inside your stomach. That'd do the trick all right.

I saw one of those really huge lads getting it done on the telly a few months ago. The whole nine yards. The fire brigade had to take him out the top window using a crane and a ton bag he was so big. He looked like that fat singer, you know the one who wears a curtain, with his big red face and the cratered belly caked in sores and pus wearing a huge nappy. The foreign doctor warned him you'll be dead within the year if you don't stop the eating.

'None of your family was ever on the stout side and you only get three square meals a day in this house.'

Then, they showed your man trying to get the weight down for the operation in case he died on the table. It was all smoothies and skimmed milk for about six weeks. I know it's supposed to make you feel full after eating just a tiny amount, but I'd be worried about an elastic band inside in me. Would it twang or break or wear out? You could be back to square one in no time.

When they finally did the job they used a yoke like a Vice Grip to cut the stomach and tie a knot with an elastic band to make a small pouch. They cut away about two four-stone bags of spuds worth of fat from him. It was like the yellow honey-combed sheets of tripe being torn out of the sheep stomachs down in the abattoir and when it was all over your man had shrank to half his size and was getting married to his beautiful carer in one of those Elvis Chapels in Vegas.

Now, I'm not as big as that guy on the telly but the stepmother keeps telling me I'm getting as fat as a fool, a right barrel, no wonder none of your friends will have anything to do with you. I can't make it out, she says. None of your family was ever on the stout side and you only get three square meals a day in this house. Tell me about it. You know the days of the week from what she throws up on the table at One O'clock before she runs off to the Ladies Club, the afternoon

tea-dancing or the bingo. Anything to escape the madness of our house, I suppose.

You'll have to do something about it, she says. She keeps telling me I need to get out more, make new friends, that I should walk faster, just put one foot in front of the other and that a woman over in Carlow lost five stone just from doing Line Dancing. The stepmother says I might think of taking up sport or joining the gym. Two chances. The gym is full of those body beautiful fuckers throwing shapes and admiring themselves in the mirror. Apart from the hurling and the soccer, the tennis, rugby and golf crowd blackball anyone from the wrong side of the river. Sport for all, my arse. The stepmother says Mary Kearney is thinking of opening one of those slimming classes for men below in the community centre. It'll be only three quid for the unemployed. I'll lend you the money, she says, if you're stuck.

I won't lie to you. I've no intention of going anywhere near that place. Imagine being asked to hop up on the scales by that Kearney cow and her all talk about her weight loss 'journey' in her designer gear. What harm, she still has a big fat wobbly jelly arse on her. And she does that annoying thing with her fingers, air quotes I think you call them, when she's trying to emphasize a point. I can just see her now, cue cards in hand, asking the fat lads from around the town sitting around in a circle holding in their bellies to clap for each other when she announces to the whole room how much weight they've lost each week. I tell you, you'd be better off getting yourself weighed in the cattle mart out on the Blackstoops Road.

My father, to be fair to him, doesn't pass any remark about my size, one way or the other. The poor man doesn't say much, full stop. On a good day, you might get a remark out of him about his tablets. Do you see them, he says, holding up a big yellow torpedo between his shrivelled forefinger and thumb, I'm on four of them a day. That's twenty-two tablets in all. They've me driven around the bend. The stepmother calls him Howard Hughes behind his back and reminds him that talk is cheap as she sweeps and dusts around him in the living room. She says we can't all be sitting around on our arses all day, some of us have work to do. She tells him that he needs to be making more of an effort, but he just throws his eyes up to heaven and watches Channel 4 Racing with the faded green tartan picnic blanket across his bony lap. Fading away in half pounds he is. Years ago he could do anything with his shovel hands from mortise joints, second fixings to French Polishing. Of course, he's never been the same since he was let go from Kennedys. Losing that job and all of his workmates is killing him slowly but surely.

And it's not just my father you know. When I'm mooching around the town in the drawn-out afternoons I see all the people who are broken and downtrodden and I don't just mean the tinkers or the foreigners.

You see it in the vacant faces of the teenagers wearing Penneys' Nirvana and Joy Division T-shirts. That's why they're all high on the glue and cider and tablets. You see it in the widows' faces and in the crows' feet that line their dead eyes. You see it written in the grey faces of the worn out young mothers from the council estates who look old beyond their years. They only seem a bit happier on Mickey Money Day. It's even in the eyes of the snobby wans in from Bunclody with their fake wax jackets to buy their goats' cheese and vine tomatoes at the Farmers' market. They think eating organic stuff and taking expensive health food potions will sort them out, but scrape away all the makeup, botox and nice clothes and they all look desperately lost, sad and disappointed.

I see it on Tuesdays when I line up with the rest of them to collect my dole. Mothers wait outside with raw infants in prams. Pinch-faced children chaperoning their fathers in the snaking queue to make sure that all the money isn't pissed away down the toilets in the Sarsfield Bar. That wagon at Hatch 22 asks me every week if I am doing any Tom Jobs wallpapering or house painting or if I'm actively looking for work as she slams my money and butter vouchers down on the counter. You'd swear she was paying it out of her own purse the way she goes on. Actively looking for work? That's a bit of a joke. Unless you have pull, the only work to be got in this town is cash in hand, under the counter, no questions asked, picking mushrooms, potatoes and strawberries in June and July or working for fuck all in the cafes.

It's hard to kill time but I have worked out a kind of routine. After the dinner I wander around crisscrossing the town. I avoid all the streets with steep slopes as much as I can. It's easier on the chest and the legs. If the dole isn't spent I have coffee and apple tart in the Irish House, a few pints of stout in Sadie Bolgers or I'll play billiards below in The Athenæum. Lately, I've added the charity shops to my daily walk. They say there's great bargains to be had in the rows of mothballed dead men's clothes, but I can never find a big enough jacket or pants.

Every time I'm in Sadie Bolgers Mikey Storan behind the bar says you're gone fine and strong, God bless you, handing me my pint. In the Irish House the ladies give me the biggest slice of tart with an extra dollop of cream. That fucker Brian Magee is the worst though. When he sees me he always roars, you'd want to go jogging;

Eoin Devereux writes short fiction and poetry. His poem 'The Bodhi Tree' was shortlisted for a Hennessy Award in 2018. Sunday Miscellany, RTE Radio 1 broadcast his memoir piece 'Three Bicycles' in June 2018. Eoin's flash fiction story 'Mrs Flood' was broadcast by The Bookshow on RTE Radio 1 and published in the compendium '100 Word, 100 Books.' His writing has been published by Silver Apples, The Ogham Stone, The Old Limerick Journal, Southwords, Number Eleven, Boyne Berries, HCE Review, The Bohemyth, The Galway Review and Revival.

Why we picked it: In this short piece, Eoin paints the picture of someone feeling the pressure to conform. It's by turns sad and pitiable, but hey, at least it's got a good personality!

Scarred

Brian Weston

Darkness creeps in around me
It starts to itch.
The scar.
Borne from a scab
Borne from pain
Further enveloped by the darkness
I scramble for the light
But I can't find it.
Anonymous voices on Snapchat and Insta
Magnifying my madness
The scar taunts me
Torments me.
"Go on. Try again.
You know you want to.
This time you may not be left
with just an itch."
I try not to listen.
Ignore its tempting tune
But I know I will do it
I'll end up
scratching that itch.

Brian Weston is newbie writer who finds happiness in writing. He loves Alan Bennett and worships at the altar of Brian Bilston and would be unimaginably happy to have some work published.

Why we picked it: Brian's poem Scarred left us uncomfortable and full of angst. All the things that we hoped to be feeling with an issue like the themed Peer Pressure

The Train

Adam Chappell

Josef Groszek stood over his pot bellied stove, almost hugging it. Outside, snow fell in great lumps, wafting down from oblivion to settle on the tracks in ever-growing drifts. He'd have to clear it soon. An hour, maybe less at this rate. It was still too early in the year to throw out more salt. The tally showed barely enough left to cover the track between here and Forst for even another month. A long season of handcart runs and frostbitten shovelling ahead. Still, better to be here than fighting in some God-forsaken waste up north.

He turned, plucking the coffee pot from its stand and scratching under the ear flaps of his hat. Bloody thing always made him itch, but the cold was far too sharp to ever take it off. Sweaty ears might drive him mad, but it was better than letting them freeze right off his head.

Not that there was much for him to listen for out here. Just the wind in the forest and the bloody snow. May as well stay muffled. Josef filled his pewter cup, stretched his back and sat down on his stool, sneering as the steaming mud-water almost sloshed out across his knuckles. Hardly coffee at all.

Before the occupation, back in Warsaw, Josef had thought himself something of a connoisseur, favouring the rich Italian stuff above all else. The smell of it, still held in some nostalgic sinus, often seeped out to mock this awful muck. That had been the good stuff. The sort of coffee that still flowed in his dreams. The kind that, to this day, made him sigh and pine.

It used to come in once a month at the market down in Muranowska. He would wake up early, charge across town in such a rush, just to watch the grocer open up. The old man would let Josef buy as much as he could carry, but no matter how much he grabbed it would never last the full month. Now, faced with this...God, he didn't even know what to call it. The only link it had to real coffee was the memories, steeped from layers of scalded tar at the bottom of the pot. Those and the fact it packed enough caffeine to wake the dead. He shook his head, drank and winced at the acrid pinch it gave his tonsils. Then he looked up.

A rattle, thin, like dancing bottles, pulled at the edge of his hearing, making him peer around the room, lifting the flap of his hat to better take the sound. His kerosene lamp was trembling on its

hook and Josef paused, alert now, pressing his feet to the floor and there it was. That familiar, tell-tale tremor, rising through the soles of his shoes.

He leant over and grabbed the book from its corner, knowing there was no train set for this hour, certain of it, but that tremor never lied and, as he sat there, it grew. A half mile out. Maybe a little more. Coming in slow, but on the way for sure. He stood up, kicking the stool back, lifting the lamp and lighting it, waving the black zig-zag trail from his face as he began to bustle around his cabin.

Bundling all the blankets and coats he could find across his shoulders, Josef went to the door, peered out into the deep, thick dark and saw a distant point of light in the blizzard, warped and refracted by the frozen air. It appeared to dance in Josef's vision like a sprite, cheerful as it grew, while the chuffing, rattling thunder of the engine rose to fill the yard as the train slowed and stopped. From the look of the thing, Josef guessed it was some kind of cattle cart. Four cars long, maybe five, the rear end lost in gloom and, dear God, what a smell!

Even in the cold, through the thick scarves covering Josef's face, it was putrid. Not at all the warm, ripe, scent of his old Uncle Jacob's farm. Perhaps, Josef thought, this was just the effect of long winter travel. Jacob's cows had always seemed happy enough, never confined for long and Josef had only ever seen them in summer. Probably this was just the whiff of distress and poor health.

Regardless, Josef adjusted the scarf tighter to his nose as he stepped down from his hut, holding the lamp up high above his head and waving it to signal he was there. The wind blew, the engine hissed and sighed but nothing appeared to be moving on board. Then the sound of feet hitting snow made Josef turn. A shadow appeared against the head of the train, slipping and staggering on the frozen earth. It waved to Josef, the shape indistinct under its own mass of layers.

"Hello" Josef called to the engineer, shuffling his feet. They shook hands, a quick touch of gloved fingers before their arms whipped back beneath their coats. "Is everything alright?"

"We have a drag," the man said, dancing a little on the spot. "On the other side. Ice, I think."

Josef followed the engineer, trudging behind him to the top of the train where the engine's warmth burst in glorious, thawing clouds. A sound made Josef pause and glance back. More shapes. Men, their meagre hats and coats unfit to fight this weather, had dropped from a carriage. They stood in the light of Josef's hut, their thin plumes of breath whipped to ribbons by the wind. Josef could

see their faces, their hands, naked in the cold. The men stamped their boots, lit cigarettes, huddled and laughed together. Were those guns at their backs? Better not to ask.

Josef hurried his step, scurrying after the engineer, following him around the engine and then back along the dark side of the train. They crept, pacing slow, the lamp held down to the wheels and, as they moved, Josef could hear shifting noises from inside each carriage. A hesitant, frightened sound, as if something shied away from the light. Definitely a live cargo then. Josef shook his head. Moving livestock this late in the year, in this weather, seemed crazy. Still, he told himself, better not to puzzle the minds of Fascists. Much safer for everyone.

They pressed on, stopping at each set of wheels, brushing the snow clear with their hands before moving on to the next. At the third carriage, they found the blockage. Its wheels were cased in solid ice, immobilised and left much longer it would have continued to pick up snow, spreading under the belly of the train until it was big enough to tip the whole thing over.

‘A hesitant, frightened sound, as if something shied away from the light.’

“I’ll need a pick,” Josef said, without turning. “Mine’s back in the hut.”

The engineer nodded. “I have one,” he said, “in the cabin. Wait here.” The man turned and left, gathering his coats about him as he stooped into the wind, marching back to the head of the train. In a few steps he was gone, a small, shrinking gap in the blizzard the only evidence the fellow had ever existed at all.

Josef waited, stamped his feet, hugged himself beneath his cloaks and coats, even tried to hum a tune but it was no use. He hated being out here at night, so close to the tree line. Wolves. Bears too and with the train behind him, Josef was cut off from safety. Nowhere to run at all and in his hand the only light, it seemed, for miles. A beacon, or a dinner bell. He shivered.

A thud behind Josef made him jump. He turned, eyes wide, quick breaths. Get a hold of yourself man. That same shuffling sound. Some whisper of moving bodies inside the train, so faint it was as if the animals were apologising, sorry to intrude, ignore us. It made Josef wonder. What could they be, these shy and wary creatures? Not cows. Too soft. Cattle were loud, especially when they were miserable, even Josef knew that. So what then? Sheep maybe? Or something smaller? Lifting his lamp above his head, Josef stretched, rolling his weight up onto his toes, craning at a gap in the wooden panels of the

train.

Nothing. Just darkness. And that smell. Good Lord. Josef blew out his breath, venting the stench from his nose. He eased his weight back down and turned away. Where was that bloody engineer? So rude to leave a man out here like this. In a blizzard no less. Another bump. Closer this time. Right next to Josef's head and he whipped round, stretched once more, his free hand snaking out of his coats to balance against the train, his gloved fingers curling over the planks.

He blinked. A pair of eyes stared back. Dark. And deep. So grave as to almost be black. And wide. And frightened. A child. A human child. Silent. Watching. A boy, filthy, starved to bones and skin like old paper, and behind him, in the dark, were others. Shapes. Wraiths of women, children, men even, huddled together. The whole carriage was stuffed as far as Josef could see and all of them were staring at him, just looking, waiting to see what he would do. The boy smiled, his breath and Josef's clouding together in the snow.

The world, it seemed to Josef, fell away. He forgot the woods, the cold and his hut, as fingers, thin and filthy, so achingly small, touched his own, stretched across his knuckles, his thumb, held his hand so gently Josef barely felt them there at all. The boy tilted his chin, leaned forward and whispered.

"Don't worry," he said. "This path has always been here and will exist forever." Then he stepped back, his fingers slipping away as he disappeared into the dark.

"Hey!" a voice, harsh, shouting the word with force enough to push Josef back onto his heels. "Hey, you there! What are you doing?" A man. Stalking towards him. Not just a man. A group, marching quick and angry up the tracks as Josef lowered his lamp.

Three soldiers came on a gust of wind, circling around him, the biggest of them looming close to Josef's face. Leering into the lamplight.

"Who are you?" he said. "What are you up to?"

"The station master," Josef stammered. "I'm fixing the train."

"Well..." said the soldier. "Fix it then. Where are your tools?"

Just then, as if sent by God himself, the engineer appeared, panting as if he had just run miles. He looked around at the soldiers, hesitated a second before holding out the pick to Josef. The soldiers backed away. Lined up together, watching the station master as he knelt to his task.

It didn't take long, in spite of Josef's shaking hands. He lifted the pick, chipped the ice away, freed one wheel, then another, clearing each blockage all the way to the axel before standing. He handed the pick back, nodding to the engineer.

The soldiers nodded too, their arms pinned tightly as they hopped from foot to foot. Josef felt sick. Those sad ghosts, still watching him, he could feel their eyes. But what could he do? He stood there as the soldiers and the engineer dispersed around him, climbing back onto their train.

The engine coughed, then seemed to lift the train as the carriage jerked forwards, making Josef stumble as he backed away from it, counting three more carts as they rolled by, disappearing off along the track into nothing. And there was his hut. Still glowing, warm and safe. Stepping over the wood and steel of his station, Josef opened his door, set his lamp back on its hook and sat down. Outside, snow fell in great lumps, wafting down from oblivion to settle on the tracks in ever-growing drifts, while Josef held his head and cried.

Adam Chappell is from Limerick, Ireland. To date, his work has featured in magazines including The Galway Review, The Limerick Magazine and Silver Apples. He has also been longlisted for the RTÉ Guide/Penguin Ireland short story competition and shortlisted for the Red Line Book Festival Short Story Competition.

***Why we picked it:** Nothing gives us greater pleasure than to receive submissions from people we have already published. When the submissions are as good, if not better than the last time, it's an even more rewarding experience. We are thrilled to have Adam with us again. this time making us shiver and reach for a hot water bottle while we read his well crafted tale.*

Ecdemomania

Holly Day

the leaves fall from the trees and I find that my shoes
won't come off. I go out to get the newspaper, feel the chill on my
face and
I don't know where I am. Overheard, birds forge ahead with such de-
termination
that I feel inspired to follow them south.

traffic snarls at me as I stumble after the birds, newspaper clutched
in my hand, bathrobe barely knotted closed. I would tell them
if they'd only roll down their windows and turn off their noisy car
heaters
that I have learned something new this morning, that

there is no reason to stay here in a place
that will soon be covered with snow, that we
can follow the paths laid out by buffalo and deer to safety,
that being able to sleep beneath the stars in the middle of December
without fear of frostbite or death
is worth losing all the ridiculous things our real lives have to offer.

Holly Day's poetry has recently appeared in *The Cape Rock*, *New Ohio Review*,
and *Gargoyle*. Her newest poetry collections are *A Perfect Day for Semaphore*
(Finishing Line Press), *In This Place, She Is Her Own* (Vegetarian Alcoholic
Press), *A Wall to Protect Your Eyes*(Pski's Porch Publishing), *I'm in a Place
Where Reason Went Missing* (Main Street Rag Publishing Co.), and *The Yellow
Dot of a Daisy* (Alien Buddha Press).

Why we picked it: *Ecdemomania* is hard to pronounce but once you Google
what it is you realise that Holly Day has written a poem that speaks to any
person who longs for adventure in the great wide somewhere ala *Belle in Beau-
ty and the Beast*.

Weddings

James Holden

Our invitation had fallen through the letterbox four weeks ago, printed on white paper that had been stuck with glue to cream card. Curly, barely legible writing proclaimed that 'Patrick and Anna Little request your presence at the Wedding of Prince William of the House of Windsor and Catherine Middleton.' Sheila, delighted by the mock-pageantry, had accepted like a shot, making it clear that we should all be going, as this was The Sort Of Thing That Is Important.

'Are you sure you're not coming?' she shouted up the stairs to our daughter.

'Yes,' was the shouted response, her voice tinged with exasperation.

'But this is historic!' Sheila said to me. 'How can Jenny want to go and study history at university and not want to see things like this?'

'We're only going to the Little's to watch it on TV.'

'You know what I mean.'

I shrugged. 'She can catch it on the news or the internet afterwards.'

'It's not the same. You're the history buff - you know that.'

'Well I think she's busy revising about Henry VIII and the Field of Cloth of Gold, not the pageantry of royal weddings down the ages. I was the same at her age.'

'Sounds like there was a lot of pageantry involved if there was a cloth of gold.'

As we walked the five minutes to the Little's house, Sheila nudged me pointing out the bunting and celebratory centrefolds taken from tabloid newspapers that had been proudly stuck with Blu-tack into bay windows. 'It's

James Holden's short stories have been published by Silver Apples, On The Premises, The Clerkenwell Writers Asylum, and performed by Liars League. He works as a political geek, and lives in a north London retirement village with his wife and children, despite only being in his thirties.

Why we picked it: Ah weddings. A time of complaining about how much money you have to spend and how little you actually want to attend said event. Good times. James's story of Royal weddings past reminds us of the one thing weddings are really good for — an excuse to eat and drink too much food.

nice to see so many people take pride in what's happening. This is the kind of thing we do really well as a country don't you think? The pomp and ceremony, and everyone getting involved in their own way. Not as many street parties as last time though. Do you remember it?' she said, gripping my hand tighter.

'I did the ironing whilst I watched it on TV as I remember.'

'What were you doing with an iron at that age?'

'Oh, right,' I said laughing. 'I was talking about Charles and Camilla, not Charles and Di.'

'I don't think that one counts, do you?' She wrinkled her nose, then put her hand on my arm. But seriously, do you remember what you were doing?'

* * *

The party that I remembered from thirty years ago filled the whole of our Close. People had watched the ceremony on telly before streaming out of their semis to sit down at trestle tables that had been covered in Union Jack tablecloths. Dads handed out beer and wine, whilst Mums arranged the food. If the tables had been in a union they'd have launched a strike in protest at the combined weight of sandwiches, sausage rolls and butterfly buns, perhaps supported by a flying picket from the mismatched chairs people had brought outside.

I'd watched the coverage of the wedding for five minutes with Mum and Dad, not even making it as far as the ceremony. We watched as endless obscure members of the aristocracy filed into Westminster Abbey, and my Mum passed judgement or recited facts from a full-colour supplement to complement the commentary, to which my Dad nodded enthusiastically.

Mum looked disappointed as I headed back up to my room, where textbooks were spread all over the narrow bed. I wrote a history essay on the diplomacy of Henry VIII as the ceremony was beamed into the living below, through to people gathering outside, people's thrilled exclamations about the dress easing their way past my net curtains.

There was a cough and when I turned, Bill McGavin was at my bedroom door.

'Your Mum said I should come up and get you,' he said.

'Oh right,' I said, shuffling my notes into order and neatly arranging them on my desk.

'Where's is it?' he said, flicking through my LPs.

'Where's what?'

'Never Mind The Bollocks!' he said, carefully announcing the final two syllables.

'It's on top of the wardrobe,' I said, fetching a chair and standing on top to retrieve it.

'Why do you keep it up there,' he said, trying out a Jonny Rotten sneer in the window's shadowy reflection.

I shrugged. 'Mum and Dad won't find it up there, I guess.'

'Jesus, you can be wet. it's not like we're in Fahrenheit 999.'

'It's 451.'

'Whatever. When you gonna do it?'

I checked my watch. 'Ten minutes?'

'This is gonna be great,' he said. 'See you later.'

'If I'm not grounded...'

'You won't be grounded, Mr Goody Two Shoes,'

Billy had hatched a vague plan a couple of weeks ago whilst we were flicking through his older brother's vinyl. One LP stood out against all the others. It really wasn't my kind of music - I was much more into The Beat and The Specials, Grace Jones and Hotter Than July. The cover was lurid yellow and pink, amateurish print declaring never mind, this was The Sex Pistols. Billy put it on and we each declared that despite being four

'You should play it at the Royal Wedding - a big blast of God Save The Queen would really shake things up.'

years old that it was one of the most shocking things we'd ever heard.

'You should play it at the Royal Wedding - a big blast of God Save The Queen would really shake things up.' I said laughing.

'No, you should play it at the Royal Wedding. I'd never get away with it. The guys at school would love it,' he said, sitting on the edge of the bed and putting a hand on my shoulder.

We realised he was right and so I snuck the LP home in a carrier bag. I couldn't remember their reaction to punk, but I'm sure Mum and Dad wouldn't have approved. They certainly wouldn't have liked the word Bollocks.

Billy kept on at me in the run-up to the wedding to make sure I would do it. I must admit, I was dazzled by the kudos and cool that he promised I'd get when people at school found out what I'd done. From my bedroom window, I watched Billy come out of our house and walk over to a table. He stuffed a sandwich triangle in his mouth, and then grabbed a can of lager. He looked up at my window, and checking the clock I decided it was time.

I got the song queued up on the turntable, turned up the volume and opened the window wide. My hand hovered over the needle,

ready to drop it onto the vinyl.

And then all these dates that I'd started to memorise flashed before my eyes, the quotations I'd learnt, the slips of paper and underlining and notes in my Eng Lit books. Grades, reports, commendations, I thought of them all. The neighbours that said I was a credit to Mum and Dad. Dad's embarrassment the night when Paul walked down the road one night, drunk, singing *Another Brick In The Wall*.

When I walked out onto the street Dad put an arm around my shoulder beaming. 'Here, you deserve it,' he said, passing me a tin of lager, and pushing me towards an empty place he had saved. Billy took one of the tins off the table in front of him and started drinking it, a look of disgust on his face.

* * *

At the Little's we drank prosecco and ate homemade scones whilst we watched the service. I sat on a low stool from one of the kid's bedrooms that had been placed next to an overstuffed sofa where Sheila had found a perch. Enjoying the prosecco which was generously topped up by our host, I found my attention wandering as I bored of the proceedings, my gaze snapping back to the TV whenever Sheila sighed or cooed or placed a hand on my shoulder at key moments.

After the ceremony, when the coverage moved from Westminster Abbey to people's parties on the Mall and beyond, we picked over a modest buffet. As we ate smoked salmon blinis and dipped sliced peppers in hummus, we traded stories about our own weddings and what we had done to celebrate Charles and Di, to commiserate her death. I told about the street party, and how Billy McGavin got into trouble again. This time it was for getting drunk for the first time, egged on by an older boy from the other side of the close, before he puked in a neighbour's garden. He never blamed me for not doing what I'd promised, as it was his escapades that became the story that went round school on Monday morning, and not how I'd been the good boy again.

When we got home Sheila offered to go and give Jenny a blow by blow account of the wedding and our modest gathering, not that there was much gossip to relate. Instead, I went to check she was okay and found her on her bed listening to music, flicking through a magazine.

'Don't let your Mum catch you like that - she already thinks it's shocking that you've missed the wedding of the year.

'Wedding of the decade, surely?'

'Not century?'

She looked at her watch, a wry smile on her face. 'Bit early to say, isn't it?'

'Make out you're interested when she tells you about it, yeah?'

'Like I bet you did all afternoon.'

I struggled not to smile. You're a good kid, was on the edge of my lips. I looked round her room, textbooks neatly arranged on a shelf above her desk, books for pleasure arranged alphabetically on the bookcase. Ring binders with well-thumbed notes were scattered around her desk, a revision timetable pinned up at eye level when you were sat down.

'Ever heard of the Sex Pistols?'

'Should I have?'

I shrugged. 'I'll be in my study if you need me.' She smiled before her attention drifted back to her magazine.

Study was rather a grand word for the small front room, which had a computer trolley in it and a wall given over to history books and paperbacks, dotted with photos of me and Sheila and Jenny down the years. After I switched on the computer on I opened up YouTube, searching for a group of very angry young men. Smiling, I opened the window and turned the monitor volume up as far as it would go.

Picnic

Lynn White

Gather round!
Who dares first will win the prize,
fly away with the sweetest bite,
the most crumbly crumb,
most fleshy fruit.
Gather round!
Wait till they look the other way.
There's safety in numbers
and they'll be feeling sleepy
from drinking the stuff in the bottles.
Gather round!
There's enough to share.
No need to wait for them to go.
They'll only leave the tiny morsels
and we'll have to scavenge for them
in the grass.
All together now!
Here we go!

Lynn White lives in north Wales. Her work is influenced by issues of social justice and events, places and people she has known or imagined. She is especially interested in exploring the boundaries of dream, fantasy and reality. She was shortlisted in the Theatre Cloud 'War Poetry for Today' competition and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and a Rhysling Award. Her poetry has appeared in many publications including: Apogee, Firewords, Vagabond Press, Light Journal and So It Goes Journal. Find Lynn at: <https://lynnwhitepoetry.blogspot.com> and <https://www.facebook.com/Lynn-White-Poetry-1603675983213077/>

Why we picked it: *If you go down to the woods today... Lynn White will give you a lovely poetic surprise, as she did for us.*

The Smoking Slave

Colum Morrin

I was confused, there was nothing
I didn't worry about in my life.

I thought smoking would be the death of me,
not able to understand why I smoked in the
first place.

When I wasn't smoking, my friends judged
me and my stomach twisted like a scorched
rat in a cage,

scratching for a way out but there was no es-
cape.
I found my courage in cigarettes, but it was
fleeting and burned

faster than the first drag of a poorly rolled
skin.
I silently begged at the sky for fresh air to
return

to me and make me happy between moments
of solace
with my friend the smoke, shackled around
my throat.

During a moment like this, I could die with
my insecurity
like salt slated on a lashed slave's back.

Colum Morrin is a new writer trying to get published. He lives in Mountrath, Portlaois, Co. Laois. He is a student at Carlow College, St Patrick's where he is studying Art and Humanities with a focus on Philosophy and English Literature. He is in his third year and hopes to complete his honors degree next year.

Why we picked it: If the first thing you thought of when you heard "Peer Pressure" wasn't pretending to enjoy smoking to be in with the cool kids then your childhood was either really great or really terrible. We are undecided as to which. Colum's poem took us right back to being behind the art shed in school, coughing till we puked.

What Did You Avoid by Avoiding These Things?

Paul McCarrick

Wherever you are on the stretch to the terminus,
you will have time to find some peace to think.
You will be able to count on your fingers and your limbs
all your mistakes and regrets three times over before you arrive.
When you're out of the echo-crossing of your beloveds,
you will see that there was always enough time for love,
for building up broken walls, to measure out spaces for doors,
to chronicle in grey matter exactitude the extent of your mistakes,
that you can do all the good and all the bad possible,
and still take in oxygen at a reasonable rate.
So you didn't go to a funeral. So you didn't want to walk in the rain.
So you burnt the letters. So what. You did this, you avoided the things.
Tell me about everything you still have time to do.

Paul McCarrick has poetry published with Dodging the Rain, Crannóg, Boyne Berries, Skylight 47, and The Stinging Fly among others. He was longlisted in the 2018 Over the Edge New Writer Competition. His novel 'Happy-Cry with My Brilliant Life' was longlisted in the 2014 Irish Writers Centre's Novel Fair Competition.

Why we picked it: Paul's poem makes us feel like elderly widows, standing on the edge of a cliff, the wind artfully ruffling our hair. We reflect back on our lives, on all we did and didn't do and wonder whether there's still time...

Thank you for reading Issue Eleven:
'Peer Pressure'

We are doing something special for issue
twelve, Redemption.

To keep up to date, follow us on Twitter:
[@silverapplesmag](https://twitter.com/silverapplesmag)
and Facebook:
facebook.com/silverapplesmag



SILVER APPLES MAGAZINE

Creativity Worth Consuming

© Silver Apples Magazine 2019

Creativity Worth Consuming

*Confessions from the back page: Somewhere in the reaches of the
Internet lies OC fanfiction, composed by Gráinne*