

The background of the entire page is a close-up photograph of tall, thin grass stalks with feathery seed heads, rendered in a soft, out-of-focus style with warm, golden-brown tones. Overlaid on this background is a large, thin black circle. Inside the circle, on the left side, is a stylized grey graphic of three wheat stalks. On the right side, also within the circle, is a stylized grey graphic of a single wheat stalk. Centered within the circle is the title text.

# THE FIELDSTONE REVIEW

ISSUE 9, 2016





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### Editor's Note

Jade McDougall

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It has been another year of great submissions here at *The Fieldstone Review*, and we have truly enjoyed assembling issue 9 for your reading pleasure. This year was a general issue, and we received a great mix of entries touching on a wide range of themes. Interestingly, this year there were more submissions than usual relating to politics, as well as to dead birds. Coincidence? We hope so. I'd like to thank the authors whose work appears in this issue (Jeffrey Alfier, Stephen Bett, Dallas Hunt, Shannon Jose-Riz, Shannon Kernaghan, Jonas Kiedrowski, Leah MacLean-Evans, Shannon McConnell, Sonnet Mondal, Melanie Oberg, Jared Pearce, April Vázquez, Linda White, Daniel Yetman, Nicole A. Yurcaba), and everyone who submitted pieces this year. It has been a privilege to read and publish your words.

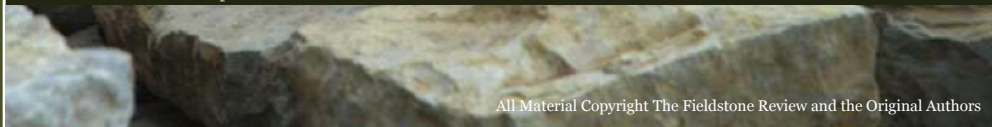
Special thanks go out to our portfolio editors: Tara Chambers (Poetry), Adar Charlton and Martin Winqvist (Fiction), and Jessica Ratcliffe (Non-Fiction). They, along with our team of intrepid readers (Jillian Baker, Shakti Brazier-Tompkins, Tara Chambers, Adar Charlton, Sara-Jane Gloutnez, Claire Peacock, Jessica Ratcliffe, Sheheryar Sheikh, Tristan Taylor, Adam Vázquez) had to make some tough choices this year, and I want to acknowledge all the time and care they put into the review process. Were I vested with the power of trophy-giving, this season's MVP would undoubtedly be the ever-composed Shakti Brazier-Tompkins, who not only took on the tasks of copy-editing this issue and reading for two portfolios, but also lent her wisdom and organizational prowess to guiding a rookie Editor-in-Chief through the process of getting this journal online. Finally, you would not be reading these words without the heroic efforts of our web editors, Adam Vázquez and Jon Bath. Thank you, everyone!

We hope that you enjoy *The Fieldstone Review* 9, and if you feel inspired by these talented literary artists, consider lending your voice to next year's issue.

Sincerely,

Jade McDougall  
Editor-in-Chief

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The background of the image is a soft-focus photograph of several wheat stalks with golden-brown heads and long, feathery awns. Overlaid on this background is a large, thin black circle. Inside the circle, the word "POETRY" is written in a clean, black, sans-serif, all-caps font, centered horizontally. To the left of the word, there is a stylized grey illustration of a wheat stalk with three leaves and a head. To the right of the word, there is a similar stylized grey illustration of a wheat stalk with three leaves and a head. The overall aesthetic is minimalist and elegant, evoking a sense of nature and literary tradition.

POETRY





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## The Collective, 1950

Jeffrey Alfier

*after Marina Razbezhkina's Harvest Time*

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She jumps from the combine  
as if it were burning, leaps  
over windrows to a crying child,  
sucks a thorn from his foot,  
washes him in ravine runoff.

Her husband, legless from the war,  
watercolors her in a bright green  
scarf – a gift for the rescue.

Harvests are white as homespun,  
wheat on the threshing floor,  
light cut by dust motes,

as butterflies that sift the fields,  
get stranded in bedrooms at night  
like pieces of torn sleeves.

Like the white horse  
she must have dreamed.

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### The Guadalquivir in August

Jeffrey Alfier

Daybreak, and I amble down Almansa  
through haze that screens the thoroughfares.  
This is my timeless habit, as are sleepless  
eyes, heart meds, fried eggs,  
letters I forever fail to send home.

For now, this river grows only silence:  
embankment walls beveled  
with first light, stone stairs that dip  
to its smoke-green glissando.

The sun begins its hard lock on the streets.  
By noon, every doorway will be threshed  
by heat.

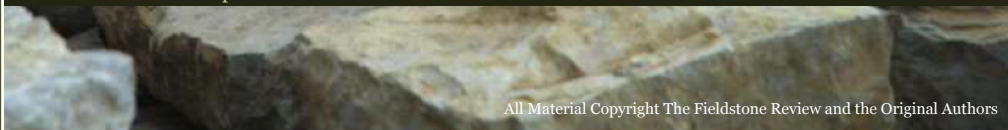
On Isabell's bridge, someone still sings  
last night's ballads. I want to join  
in, but a raw tongue and dry throat  
have stolen the words I need.

The river conducts its first traffic.  
Crows appear unsummoned  
like blown cinders, lumbering in the soft  
surprise of blue, troweling with beak  
and claw the scraps of castoff fish.

I watch the bridge, the errant singer  
now gone. A kestrel's shadow  
wheels in from nowhere,  
hangs flightless over the river.

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## **GOP Candidates (2016) Fight ISIS... On Stage!**

Stephen Bett

All these blubber-boy  
candidates ramping up  
tough talk, raunchy-  
paunchy boys  
blowing out  
noise

They're gonna carpet bomb  
terrorists, fling  
burgers & fries,  
drown caliphates  
in soda

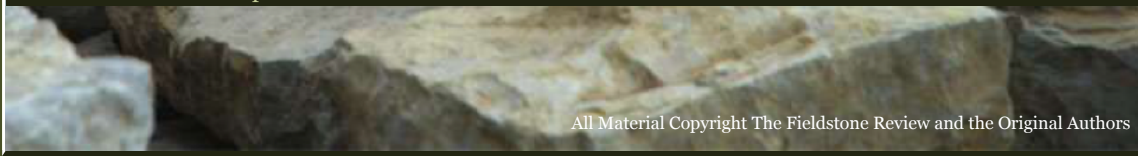
No boot camp for these  
tele-tubbies, they're  
just going to roll  
over Raqqa

Take their sleeper cell  
breath away, breath  
away

breath away

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### Dancing Yellow Thunder

Dallas Hunt

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A shove-off!

Creaking clumsily on one foot,  
followed haphazardly by the other, hang-  
ing in time, your hips swinging,  
staggering to a silence  
that reverberated through  
the hall.

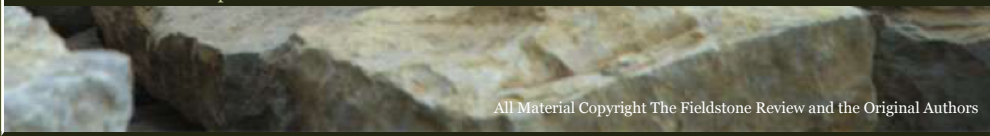
Your forehead gleaming with  
sweat, mouth dry, parched, dancing  
differently than what  
fell from  
elders'  
mouths.

Your soft, worn hands grasp-  
ing for the receiving hands of  
a(n) (inviting) partner, the  
lush manes of mares absent so  
the wind obliges, whirling  
you around, until  
you lie splayed  
on the legion  
floor.

This is no Sun dance, but  
you tap your toes in time with  
the "tsk-tsks," thrust into a  
dance from oblivion, a void with  
no history; another Indian emerging  
from the earth, steeped in mutilated  
self-worth, motivated, they'll say,  
by endless,  
endless thirst.

Next time, I will dance with  
you, Raymond, and we  
will stomp our boots so  
hard we'll create sparks that  
rise to the heavens, that  
call forth clouds and yellow  
thunder, and we will watch as  
they do the electric boogaloo,  
the smell of singed hair  
filling  
the hall.

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### Cracking Open Snow Peas on the Promenade by the Drava

Shannon Jose-Riz

*"Peas are not amused.  
They have spent all their lives  
keeping their knees together."*

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– "Peas," by Lorna Crozier

Dear Lorna,

I think I have been raised a pea.  
I think peas are meant to be punctured,  
manhandled—

see, they don't thrive so well  
in Osijek air.

You're here to adventure,  
explore, he says.

The promenade sprawls naked,  
waiting to be touched,  
to see boys kissing – all these  
bare forearms.

You won't sleep tonight, he whispers;  
the words cling to my collarbone –  
and I say yes, because  
we sleep all too much,  
we readily coma inside  
the tight, green lips  
of peas.

I did not come to the promenade  
to sleep.

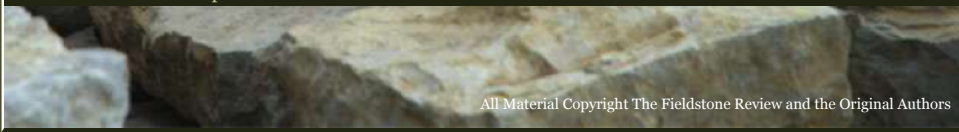
So I challenge the life of peas,  
burst them open  
underneath sweaty sheets  
licked by marijuana and Ožujsko.\*

Cast away the shells  
into the Drava river  
like an old skin  
that I convince him, them,  
myself –  
I had never worn before.

---

\* A traditional Croatian beer.

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## Gum Wall

Shannon McConnell

### *Seattle*

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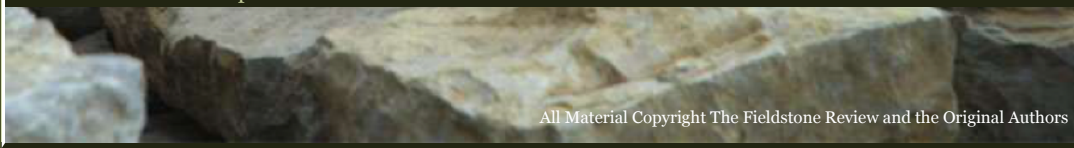
The sound of applause trickles down from the market  
signaling another fish has unnaturally sailed into waiting hands.  
Instead of piss, a ritual saturates the alley below,  
a polyphonic chorus of mashing jaws.  
A peculiar fusion of fruit and mint  
scatters helplessly in the air.

Previously a wall of deep scarlet brick and mortar,  
now a fifty-foot stretch of rainbow spectacle,  
constructed one pressed thumb at a time  
by post-masticated rubber.

Tourists congregate in droves  
to pull globs from their mouths,  
and stick a warm addition  
to scarce vacant spots  
on the discoloured bricks.

To unfocused eyes the alley becomes  
a canvas for a modern world map,  
each piece a hardened pin, a statement of existence,  
connecting continents over an ocean of saliva,  
forever bonding lives in impressions of thumbs.

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## April and My Plastic Sunflowers

Sonnet Mondal

The four plastic sunflowers in my bedroom –  
The way they swayed in the ceiling fan's air –  
Were the functional-year-long-April for me.

Fallen twigs of meditating winter  
And the deadwood sanity of their roughness;  
The begging deserts of the patient summer  
And the coarseness of their ravaged mirages;  
The thin tune of the nostalgic autumn  
And the restlessness of their alcoholic breezes  
Were never like fresh seasonal fruits to me  
For I had the functional-year-long-April in my bedroom:  
Those four plastic sunflowers.

Not long, my wedding and divorce –  
Both in their infancy –  
Ended the perpetual April in my room  
By demanding those yellow sunflowers  
In the package of reparation.

It was four seasons ago and the spring of April  
Now seems to be a creepy plastic serpent  
Irresistibly insidious in its illusory cruelty  
as my new girl friend from the same city  
Talked of bringing new plastic flowers in my room.

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## Michelangelo

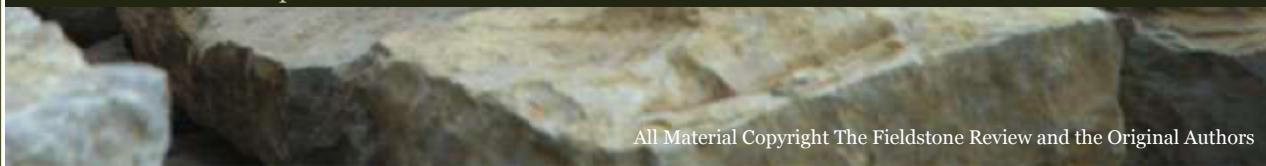
Melanie Oberg

I know how Michelangelo felt painting the Sistine.  
I too started peeling off my skin in infinite boredom  
To reveal pages –  
Sheaves of dermis, translucent tissue wafting to the floor,  
Little membranes of fascia for binding –  
Paint stains between the cracks on my fingertips,  
And nails torn in the plaster.  
My body, my scaffold, full of lead  
Pigments.

Held patience in my hands –  
Above my brush head  
And wished to  
Cut and bind the vellum  
Of my skin so that I can just paint it  
Sitting down.

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## Is Just a Dream, Dream, Dream

Jared Pearce

Though the novel was not about adultery,  
she fantasized about her teenaged lovers  
all night and confessed to her husband:  
she had cuckolded him in her mind's den.

He said, Why not stop reading the book, then?  
But how could she stop? For the dreamland  
the novel wove was a mystery to discover  
God: how He was in love and our sultry  
Affairs against his passion, and his overwhelming  
adoration – who can win against that?  
A husband or a teen romance can only hope  
to fill a momentary emptiness, scratch an itch.

She read the novel, she passed the glitch  
of jealousy to a scarier ground: to grope  
for how to love and be loved by both God and man,  
battering words for a bridge to that realm.

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### The Forest, 24 October 2015

Nicole A. Yurcaba

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Today we feed the woods our souls.  
We hand-bind ourselves to the soil  
from which we came, to which we will return:

black to brown, brown to black; black to black  
to back against Mother's misty call.

We disintegrate, absolve, into column inches,  
decaying status, sweet decadence,  
stacked *stein auf stein, stein auf stein\**

upon our chests until  
ribs cracking into organs declare mortality.

Somewhere, somewhere  
the wind cries not "Mary!" but  
"Tell me, child, did you remember to pray?"

Did you remember to brace yourself against the oak  
and allow ancestors to course through you?"

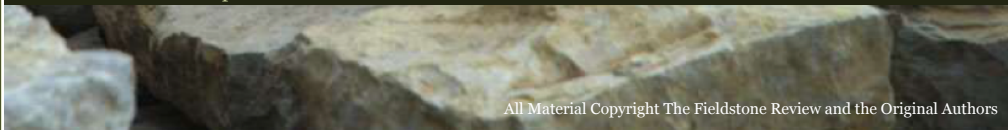
Psychosis lies in separation.  
Psychosis lies in separation.  
Commodity employs.

Turn skyward.  
Kiss the sun.

---

\* German for "stone on stone, stone on stone."

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The background of the image is a close-up photograph of several wheat stalks with their seed heads. The stalks are thin and light brown, while the seed heads are more prominent, showing a mix of light tan and reddish-brown hues. The lighting is soft, creating a warm, slightly hazy atmosphere. Overlaid on this background is a large, thin black circle. Inside this circle, the word "FICTION" is written in a clean, black, sans-serif font, centered horizontally. To the left of the word, there is a stylized grey illustration of a wheat stalk with three leaves. To the right, there is a similar stylized grey illustration of a wheat stalk with three leaves, positioned as if it's part of a larger design element that frames the text.

FICTION





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### Snap

Shannon McConnell

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There is a weathered crow carcass crushed on a rusty storm drain. Its belly is ripped open, exposing its skeleton. Its wings bend in different directions like broken crayons, held together by their paper wrappers.

Samantha, thirteen years old, kneels down beside the bird, staring at its thin, withered legs, running parallel to its disheveled tail.

“Do you remember when we had to put Joey down last year?” she asks her younger sister, Erica.

“Yeah, I couldn’t go in the room. It was too sad,” Erica remembers.

“It wasn’t that bad. It was like Joey was there, sick, and then they gave him the needle and he wasn’t Joey anymore.”

Erica winces as Samantha calmly reaches out and pets a clump of feathers on the bird’s awkwardly angled head.

“You know what we should do?” Samantha points towards the belly of the bird. Erica tilts her head to look, but hesitates to get any closer.

“You should probably leave that alone.” Erica checks the quiet suburban street for traffic.

“We should break the wishbone,” Samantha suggests as she touches the defenseless bird.

“No, we shouldn’t. Don’t touch it.” Goosebumps sprout on Erica’s arms as she watches. “If anything, we should bury it.”

“Shouldn’t we get to have the luck that it’s left behind?” Samantha asks, carefully stroking the mangled feathers.

Erica knows that her sister will do whatever she wants.

“Erica, it doesn’t feel anything. It’s empty.”

No matter where Erica looks she can feel the crow’s little eyes pleading with her. Samantha carefully pulls the remaining feathers away from the skeleton, its innards previously expunged by an eager scavenger. She shuts one eye and squints with the other, digging through the mess. Erica pretends to watch for traffic, sweat forming on the back of her neck.

“There it is,” Samantha declares, gripping the “V” of the bone and pulling. A crude “crack” ascends from the bird’s disfigured frame. Samantha swiftly stands up; fingers stained a dirty grey, a small bone in her hand. Erica turns back, her stomach twisting in her torso at the sight of the bone.

Samantha motions for Erica to grip the other side of the bone. Erica reaches out with a wavering hand and pinches it between her finger and thumb. The bone was smaller and rougher than she thought it would be.

Samantha eagerly jerks on the bone, while Erica, eyes closed, stays static. A sharp snap rings out around them.

“Dammit,” Samantha scoffs, holding up the smaller bone. She kicks at the carcass, slamming it against the street curb, scattering mucky feathers and splintered bones, staining her shoe charcoal.

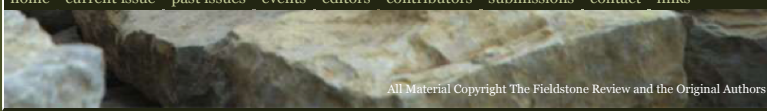
Erica slowly opens her eyes and looks at her piece. The broken bone feels even smaller now, delicate.

“Hey, we should get Slurpees,” Samantha suggests, already crossing the street to the sidewalk, wiping her shoe on a patch of grass.

Erica kneels down beside the bird. Its small black eyes somehow sadder than before. Carefully, she places the bigger bone on top of its chest.

“I’m sorry,” she whispers.

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### As Good a Day as Any

Linda White

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Calvin Harrison turned down the dirt road and braked. He listened to the throb of the big diesel and sighed. He was going to miss his new truck. It made him feel like someone else – not the friendly neighbourhood pharmacist, not the hen-pecked husband, and definitely not the doting father. Someone you saw in commercials – a little taller and straighter. Someone with flinty blue eyes, whose tight Wranglers bulged in all the right places.

He didn't mind the doting father image. He and his daughter, Natalie, had one of those perfect relationships where they laughed at each other's jokes and each knew what the other was thinking. He'd spoiled her and if he had it to do again, he'd spoil her more. No regrets.

That's why it felt worse than betrayal; it was devastation. Natalie wasn't his. In his mind's eye he could see himself standing stunned.

"What do you mean she's not mine?" he'd asked when the silence had stretched so tautly he knew something would break. His wife had looked at him with determined eyes.

"She isn't yours, Calvin. I wasn't ever going to tell you, but I want out. I can't do this anymore." Mim, his wife of twenty years, was leaving. She went on explaining, but he wasn't really listening. All that mattered was the shattering revelation. His beloved Natalie, his Tallie, wasn't his. A few weeks and their marriage was over. Twenty years dissolved with a few strokes of a pen.

Calvin shook his head to clear it. Pale light fingered the horizon and touched the clouds that had gathered to greet the sun with pink gold. Mim would have a name for the colour, something from the new palette of paints at Home Depot. Pink Desire, Reef Rose, Peach Parfait. Pink Abalone. Mim – so tied into things that didn't matter. She'd be happy choosing the new colour for the walls and happy while she squabbled with the painters. Almost before the paint dried, she'd start getting restless again. It was the same with her hair. When he met her, it had been a shiny blonde mane. She could have modeled for l'Oreal or Clairol. God knows she used enough of their products over the years. Always experimenting beyond blonde. Never happy with the previous tint. He never knew what to expect. Wild Irish Red, Mahogany Fire, Ebony Ice. Then there was the chunking and streaking. Mim said no one had a natural hair colour any more. When Cal tried to summon up the shade her hair had been when they met, he couldn't. He was living with a stranger. Sometimes he watched her when she wasn't looking and by narrowing his eyes and squinting tried to conjure the image of the girl he had married. Occasionally, he thought he caught a fleeting resemblance.

The horizon burned gold fire now where the sun began its shallow ascent into the fall sky. The clouds radiated gilt light. The air was still.

It was as good a day as any, Calvin thought.

He would have liked to take Mollie for a last walk but it wouldn't have been fair to the little mongrel. He couldn't leave her in the truck even though someone would find her... just like they were going to find him.

Light raced across the hilltops, casting the hollows into shadow and outlining the dark limbs of aspen trees with tinsel trim. Time was getting short. His father used to say, no time like the present. Already the siren of lethargy threatened to mire him in inaction.

He lifted the shotgun from the truck seat. Its double barrel glinted in the early light and the handle felt cold. The acrid scent of gun oil hung in the air and there was a sharp snap as Cal broke the gun to load it. He slid two magnum shells into place and there was a second snap as he closed the breech. Magnums... he would only need the first one but he didn't want any mistakes.

He tried not to think about Jim Craddock, who botched the job and actually needed the second shell. He must have lost his nerve at the last minute and only his jaw had been blown away. He'd staggered around his game room, splattering blood and howling in outrage. Then he'd finished what he started.

Cal killed the truck's engine. He wasn't about to destroy the interior. Maybe Mim could get a decent price for it after... even with its unfortunate history. He climbed out and closed the door quietly. No need to slam it; the truck wasn't a year old yet. A breeze sprang up and carried the spicy fall air up the hill to Cal. When he looked out across the valley, he saw a doe standing next to a stand of willows. She had seen him and was testing the air cautiously but it was another month until hunting season opened and she was more curious than scared. He watched her for a minute. A fawn stepped into the clearing and Cal could see it was sleek and healthy, phantom grey in its new winter coat.

When he started down the slope, the whitetails turned to step delicately into the bushes. Cal headed west. There was a small lake... the locals called it Schubert's after an early settler – and at this time of the morning, the bright yellow leaves of the poplars would reflect perfectly from its cobalt depths. Those same poplars protected it from errant puffs of air and made it a picture perfect enough for a calendar.

Cal stood for a couple of minutes. Maybe if things were different between him and his wife... but they weren't. Maybe if Tallie... but he couldn't think of her; he just couldn't.

Minutes later the shotgun blast sent the doe and youngster deeper into the bush, their white flags flashing once as they disappeared. On the hilltop, Cal's Dodge waited in splendour, silhouetted against a cerulean sky that promised early snow.

The silence was absolute. Then the breeze brushed dried grass blades against each other. Aspen leaves like gold foil coins rattled together. A crow flew up and landed at the top of a tree, cawing raucously.

Cal emerged from the western woods. He was a dark shadow against their colour and it was him the crow was scolding. He held the shotgun gingerly and broke it to remove the remaining shell.

"Damn it, shut up," he muttered. The crow cocked its head as though listening. "It's just not a good day to die."

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NON-FICTION





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### Last Chance for Icons

Shannon Kernaghan

I shed my everyday skin, an epidermis of to-do lists and brain-numbing minutia, to travel with my friend Karis. Destination: Greece, for an experience awash in mythology and olive groves.

Although I brought a list of Greek phrases, I rarely remembered them in time. In my defense, the word for "yes" sounded like "no" and a simple "thanks" involved four syllables.

I didn't feel hampered because many of the Greeks communicated seamlessly in English. And while the people made themselves clear, some of the printed material was lost in translation. Take the belly dance CD I bought, not for the music but for the song titles: "My Bouzouki's in High Spirits," "You'll Get Used to Me Little by Little," "A Secret Grieving," "Off with Grievances and Sorrows," and my favourite, "I Do Not Own Mansions or Have a Pot."

I don't own mansions either, but I do own a pot or two. All are from the Gordon Ramsay collection. As for the shape of my bouzouki, that's something I'll discuss with a partner. When I have a partner.

*Guidebook: Sightseeing features the Acropolis and Parthenon, plus views of the Agora, Royal Palace, Temple of Zeus and Hadrian's Arch.*

My travel motivation wasn't solely to experience the Grecian marvels I studied in Mr. Edmond's twelfth grade history class. No, it was to forget about Petey, a man whose name always reminded me of a parrot's. Petey was a heart-breaking partner, one who pulled disappearing acts on paydays. After gambling away his money on winking VLT's and come-hither blackjack tables, he'd fly back through my open window. When I finally heeded the sensible warnings from friends and family, I closed the shades on home and heart. Next, I tossed the millet treats (purple fleece-lined hand cuffs, bedroom side table) and threw away every belled mirror (framed pictures of Petey flashing his disarmingly crooked smile, disarming enough that I ignored my three-dates-before-sex rule that night after Earls . . . hell, I took that rule and lined the bottom of my bird cage).

*Guidebook: In Mycenae, see the Treasury of Atreus, the Beehive Tombs, Lion Gate and Agamemnon's Palace. Don't miss the amphitheatre of Epidauros before touring the Olympic Stadium.*

The translation delights didn't end with music. While ordering lunch at an outdoor tavern near Syntagma Square in Athens, Karis read aloud a typo-riddled blurb from the back of her menu: "This store is obliged to dispose ofprinted sheets, at a special place by the exit for the expression of any complaint whatsoever, with content for the market police, the hygiene department or the fiscal department."

Who am I to complain, lazy me, I thought in a mellow mid-afternoon wine buzz, my stomach stuffed drum-tight with succulent tomatoes, grape leaves, and olive oil. After ten days I couldn't decide which greeting to use, *kalimera* or *kalispera*, depending on the time of day. When I paid the bill I took no chances and simply smiled in the direction of our server.

I wasn't always lazy, and arrived on schedule for every tour and event. I climbed a thousand stone steps and rambled through so many temples – Athena, Zeus, Apollo – that I forgot the details, retaining only images of revered ruins where Karis and I held hands to our hearts.

For me, Greece was a land of discovery, past and present. Greece was also a land of icons, available at every street stand and corner store. With Petey off the radar, I focused on collecting the Holy Virgin Mary, weeping, black, or pensive, from tiny key chains to bulky triptychs.

And if a suitcase full of the Virgin Mary wasn't enough, I added an assortment of *Byzantine* saints. Something about the word *Byzantine* sent an unexplainable frisson of pleasure up my vertebrae. (Weeks after I arrived home, my mental abacus added two plus two to equal a long-forgotten crush on that same grade twelve history teacher. Damn his woody cologne and boot-cut Levis as he soared the classroom aisles.)

*Guidebook: We invite you to an evening excursion at a taverna in Plaka. Excellent food served in a lively atmosphere, and entertainment through dances and music.*

I started to laugh again, feel lighthearted. In a restaurant and seated close to a troupe of Greek folk dancers, one of the dancers suddenly stopped in front of me and stuck his shoe under my nose. His toe sported a gigantic yellow pom pom. The man yelled something in Greek and pointed to that fuzzy pom pom. Was I supposed to stroke it? Kiss it? I did both and now could be married to a Greek man. I only hope he owns a pot.

I have no memory of what caused the sparrow-brown bruises on my shins that I saw when pulling up my socks the next morning. I blamed the anise-flavoured ouzo. I also blamed the Metaxa brandy that smelled like Old Spice and tasted like gasoline. Worse, it made me snore like a lawn mower in my hard twin bed.

"I dreamed a bunch of bikers were chasing us," Karis said into the bathroom mirror, smearing concealer under her eyes, "but I woke up and the motorcycle noise was your snoring!"

"Sorry, but when in Greece . . ." I wasn't completely sorry: my friend's pillow-muffled sobs awakened me every second night. Karis had come to Greece to honour her recently deceased mother who'd planned to return to her homeland before the cancer whiskered, then roared. I recall half a dozen blue-framed posters of Crete and Santorini in Karis' family home.

*Guidebook: Bask in a four-day Aegean cruise where you can spend time in the playground of the rich and famous on the island of Mykonos.*

The usual destinations for travellers – Rhodes, Mykonos and Patmos – were picturesque, although it was the inconsequential moments that pushed deep roots into my psyche, especially the tan-furred dogs and one-eyed cats that coiled around my legs. These strays recognized the hopeful rustle of a plastic bag, one that promised leftovers. I gathered chunks of meat and cheese after each meal, enough to fill a few flea-scratched bellies. Each dog's grinning pleasure from a gentle pat lingered in my memory, longer than any piece of antiquity I studied through nose-smudged glass at the National Archaeological Museum. All fascinating, these antiquities I read about since high school, and all forgettable. Excluding the conjured scent of Mr. Edmonds. That scent glided alongside as I circled the Grecian terrain in a bus filled with eager-eyed tourists in wrinkled washable cotton. All with their own agenda, their own baggage.

It was the cat and dog stories that I continued to mention, not the meandering map of my itinerary. It was those memories that occupied my dreams as I hugged my colossal pillow and for months murmured Petey's name – *fly home . . . fly away* – into the dark night.

*Guidebook: After breakfast, bid farewell to new friends as we transfer you to the airport for your return flight home.*

When Karis and I rushed through the airport to find our homeward terminal, we passed a kiosk that brimmed with souvenirs. In addition to packages of freeze-dried olives in shades from green to black, the faces of a dozen Madonnas and her requisite halo broadcast from every shelf.

"Last chance for icons," Karis called out. "You must have an empty corner inside that carry-on."

"No, I'm good," and I patted a bulging bag that slapped my thigh with each fast step.

My friend was teasing about my frenzied packing the previous evening and how I had to choose between scuffed Adidas and a carved wooden panel depicting the Holy Virgin. The sneakers landed noisily in the hotel trash can and I carefully swaddled the Virgin in my hoodie.

I could hardly wait to land: I flung apart my seatbelt before the plane came to a complete stop. Then I could hardly stand still as luggage tumbled from the carousel's growling maw. All I wanted was to hug my friend goodbye and hurry home, to lay out my treasures across the bedspread. Now that Petey no longer occupied one half of my nest, there was plenty of room to display my icons. And spread my wings.

"Opa!" Karis shouted for the tenth time when climbing into her cab.

"Opa to you, girlfriend!" I shouted back, my grin wide and idiotic, not caring who heard or watched.

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## **RE: Improving Saskatoon by purging undesirables from downtown**

Jonas Kiedrowski

July 29th, 2013

His Worship Don Atchison

City of Saskatoon

222 3rd Avenue North

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7K 0J5

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Dear Your Worship:

re: Improving Saskatoon by purging undesirables from downtown

I write today regarding the undesirables loitering about downtown. Surely you too have seen them, perhaps while you wait at a bus stop. They chortle maniacally, pull off shady deals, and act as though the law does not apply to them. Often in clusters and difficult to walk around, these people are completely oblivious to the citizenry. That is, until they want something from us. Then they're in our face looking for attention.

As far as I'm concerned, these businessmen are ruining downtown!

Now I admit that I've never engaged in a substantive conversation with these lazy bums. But they're different from me. Therefore they must be lesser people than me. And you know what I find most reprehensible? When they do speak up, they're usually looking for handouts! Just this spring they were begging – begging – to get out of paying property taxes. We both know that if these lollygaggers simply worked harder, they wouldn't need handouts. It really burns my assessment.

Enough is enough! It's time for Saskatoon to take action. We need to purge these undesirables from our downtown! Obviously, the most expedient solution is to starve them out by removing a key need for their survival. With this in mind, I have taken it upon myself to observe their one commonality: They are all clad in suits and other business attire. It thus stands to reason that if these undesirables cannot get their hands on suits downtown, they will not hang out downtown.

The solution is clear: Let us tear down the suit stores downtown! It is only by taking the wrecking ball to the peddlers of business attire that we can purge this dangerous filth from our city centre.

It is doubtful that my solution will stop these leeches from continuing to ask for special breaks. However, it will move the problem away from my personal and immediate sphere. Therefore, in my mind the problem will be solved. I am sure it will be in yours too.

Helpfully yours,

Jonas Kiedrowski

PS – Could you please mail me a new Route 12 and Route 14 bus schedule? I want to double-check that peak-hours service through City Park has been cut in half.

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### Cheeky Monkey, Or the Strangest Sentence on My Hard Drive

Leah MacLean-Evans

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Have you ever written topless? At your desk, the door to your room open behind you because you are alone in the apartment. Everyone goes to their real jobs and you sit and the bra band is gone and your ribcage can finally open. Did you know that's supposed to happen when you breathe? Your lungs are bigger than you know. Notebook pages brush the underbelly of your breast.

I only ask because this story is about tits. It ends weird shit and it starts with some smartass hipster poets but mostly it's all tits in between. Maybe you think you know what that means and I suppose you could be right, who knows.

I used to write normal stuff, with fairies and satyrs and gods and shit. I wrote more than one story about goats. Anyway I'm saying I don't start stories about tits on purpose. But it was almost midnight and Aiden showed up at Emma's apartment where everyone but me was already drunk and he'd bought a typewriter from some high school kid online. It came with ribbons and everything for only fifty bucks.

Emma's apartment should have been an omen, a tiny one-bedroom downtown that she shared with her animator/skate-board-shop-owner boyfriend. It was crammed with vinyl records whose faded covers I didn't recognize, not that I would anyway. I wouldn't recognize Justin Bieber standing in front of me. When Aiden arrived later he oohed and aahed over the collection, picking out his favourites for Emma's record player. In attendance were also Luke and Dionne; they were all poets I'd met in a writing course. When the semester ended we decided to keep in touch, and this was the group's first attempt at socializing outside class.

"Here's your prompt," Aiden said. Aiden the bearded wonder who had pointed ears. Our messiah who had brought us the holiest of all outdated writing hardware. Aiden who read Michael Ondaatje, which pleased Luke, who also read Michael Ondaatje, although neither of them liked The English Patient. I still have never read The English Patient, partly because of them. Aiden was a Campbell. Still is. Matt the MacDonald, also from the class, was absent that night. Perhaps if we'd had the MacDonald in the same room as the Campbell some clannish force of fate would have been thrown off balance, changed the course of history, spared me from what was to come.

Aiden said, "Here's your prompt," and pulled a stool up to the coffee table where he plunked the typewriter's elephant case: "cheeky monkey ice cream."

It should be said, if only for Aiden's sake when he reads this, that I hate these games. I hate continuing stories that aren't mine and I hate improvising and I hate performing on command. But Aiden snapped open the case and unfolded the typewriter over the table and wound a white sheet deep into its belly.

Emma wrote first and then Aiden and then Luke, but Dionne was refusing her turn because her boyfriend had just dumped her. And that's when I got worried because I realized I would have to follow Luke. A significant proportion of Luke's poetry is allegorical for sex and the prospect of writing a collaborative sex poem with a group of intoxicated poets I had no desire to see naked horrified me.

As per the rules, when I sat at my typing post, I read only Luke's text, the rest of the sheet folded back.

were less than helpful. like modern octogenarians sans teeth and gnawing the air without control. this was only a small bit of what was to come and she had to get home soon. her ice cream was melting.

He had written, and I was relieved. I began to write,

its

with no capital, because the shift key didn't work. And then, aiming for the beginning of an article, hit

t

and the typewriter stalled. And the paper shifted of its own agency, sliding to the right with apparent intention, such that the 't' landed on the left of the beginning of the line and in effect I had written

tits

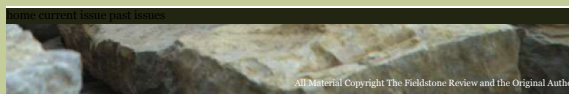
Well fuck, I thought. And Aiden was over my shoulder laughing and Luke was saying, "You can't take it back, you have to keep going," and I thought, screw you guys, you want cheeky monkey ice cream tits, that's what you're getting.

Aiden discovered in Emma's collection a retro whale sounds vinyl of which he was particularly fond and Emma rejoiced because it was supposedly amazing and no one else knew about it. They turned it on and the high-pitched tremble of whale vocalizations crackled on the player as I wrote.

There was no hope for me in that den of hipsterism, only the inevitability of my inept uncoolness. I never meant to write about tits. And definitely, oh definitely, not in relation to cheeky monkey ice cream. In fact, I erased it from the dropbox of my mind, until days later Aiden typed up the hardcopy and sent it to us. It's infamous, now, a bizarre inside joke relived at every new party, in retrospect stranger than it is funny.

tits, he thought looking at the ice cream bowl. it looks like tits, cleanly scooped and cherry-topped. she'd let it melt again, and it dribbled down the side of the bowl. the monkey watched her eat the ice cream and licked his lips.

Later we voted unanimously that Emma, chill, sweet Emma, was the coolest person in the universe, and later Aiden left to travel the world then learn museum restoration in a tiny college town, and later Luke lived in the basement of his Jewish mother for years while learning to cook and tearing it up on Growlr, and Dionne moved West all the way West to the coast. And some of us stayed in touch and some of us didn't. And Cheeky Monkey sits still in my hard drive, an awkward couch-surfing undergrad friend.



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# CONTRIBUTORS



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<p><b>Background</b></p> <p>Background information about the patient, including medical history, social history, and family history.</p>	
<p><b>Chief Complaint</b></p> <p>The patient's primary concern or the reason for seeking medical attention.</p>	
<p><b>History of Present Illness</b></p> <p>A detailed account of the patient's current symptoms, including onset, duration, and progression.</p>	
<p><b>Review of Systems</b></p> <p>A systematic review of the patient's various body systems, including cardiovascular, respiratory, and gastrointestinal.</p>	
<p><b>Physical Examination</b></p> <p>A detailed description of the patient's physical findings, including vital signs and specific organ system examinations.</p>	
<p><b>Diagnostic Tests</b></p> <p>Information about any laboratory tests, imaging studies, or other diagnostic procedures performed.</p>	
<p><b>Assessment</b></p> <p>The clinician's diagnosis or impression based on the history and physical examination.</p>	
<p><b>Plan</b></p> <p>The recommended course of action, including treatment, further testing, and patient education.</p>	
<p><b>Follow-up</b></p> <p>Information about the patient's follow-up care, including the date and location of the next visit.</p>	
<p><b>Signature</b></p> <p>The clinician's signature and name.</p>	
<p><b>Notes</b></p> <p>Additional notes or observations from the clinician.</p>	
<p><b>References</b></p> <p>References to medical literature or other sources used in the assessment.</p>	
<p><b>Appendix</b></p> <p>Additional information or data related to the patient's case, such as lab results or imaging.</p>	
<p><b>Conclusion</b></p> <p>A summary of the patient's case and the clinician's recommendations.</p>	
<p><b>Disclaimer</b></p> <p>A statement indicating that the information is for informational purposes only and not a substitute for professional medical advice.</p>	
<p><b>Footer</b></p> <p>Page number and other administrative information.</p>	



