MEAT FOR TEA

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THE VALLEY REVIEW

BLACK FOREST

Meat for Tea: The Valley Review

Meat for Tea: The Valley Review was founded by Elizabeth MacDuffie and Alexandra Wagman. We are a non-academic affiliated magazine committed to recognizing and featuring the work of the artists, writers, and musicians living in western Massachusetts and beyond.

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guest salutations

"And bid him whip concupiscent curds…" just like the emperor of celebrity ham and salacious hilarity he is. And while he's (f)at it, bid him churn burn-ward coolants and culotte beef shame-spirals, then make him sprinkle in a grimacing smattering of Francis Bacon bits and salty hymns of hymen-erasure; and lastly toss in a "cannibal's dozen" of mutilated kissing cousins and we think you get the cubist-steak picture. All kinds of unspeakable (albeit spankable) hams on all kinds of gambrels and croaking hooks. Watch Abattoir and Costello teach the dead kids tourniquet etiquette in a pinch. See hot-air-balloons aswim with viscera and victuals and valentines made of kitten's livers ("we'll drink to that!" peal the unmurdered songbirds). No Hindenburgs were spared in the slapping together of this unrivaled viral papyrus, this screaming conflagration of positive negation. And yet, innumerable Road-kill Scholars will flock anon to the Cirque de la Resistance to vent their sloppy gripes and literally squeeze the mutton from the jaundiced tigress' blazing goiter. So grab your sharktank belljar gasmask scimitar AvatarD rainbow blowtorch ghoul-box and clam on down to Sonelab where local token broken heroes and fuddled wounded bards will more or less deliquesce on cue and the Queen of Brisket will have the most recent Triple Crown Stallion lowered (gloweringly) into her.

-Connolly Ryan

one more cup of coffee: iconica social club

Tom Pappalardo

Precious. Quaint. Fussy. Detailed. These are the words that come to mind as I wait seventeen years for my no-foolin'-when-we-say-slow-bar pour-over coffee. These might be considered negative words, but I don't intend them as a condemnation. This is an amazing space in an amazing building, it really is. It's about as good as you can get with the faux-industrial, semi-steampunk aesthetic, where every damned surface is adorned with a hyper-curated selection of midcentury objects and assorted mechanical bits. Take some time to browse the milk crates of records. Examine the vintage adding machine, the antique scale, the one hundred suffocatingly unique light fixtures. Rifle through the bookshelves, touch knick-knacks while rubbing doo-dads, Instagram all the shit bolted to the ceiling and screwed to the walls.

Sitting here makes me overly-conscious of my privilege and class, hyper-aware I'm patronizing such a fancy little spot, a place welcoming a respectful crowd of customers who can be trusted to not destroy the record player needle or steal the guitar amp or overdose in the library loft. Will it last? Can it last? My distrust of humans and Americans and shitheads makes me worry for the owners. My self-conscious nature makes me unable to fully enjoy a generally enjoyable space.

I write at a custom steel frame table with built-in stools, immersed in a parody of myself and the things I like. The coffee is delicious, reasonably priced, and comes on a steel tray with a glass coffee cup and a stoppered science beaker. There is an old-school pencil sharpener. Even the emergency exit signs are individual expressions of… something. I'm sitting inside an art installation. Or maybe I'm in a future Portlandia skit, one that will be written after Fred Armisen's next visit to Northampton. I am a demographic, a consumer profile, successfully identified and targeted with rare precision. It's a hell of a place, it really is.

marceline on the old

Nicole Shea

As long as I can remember, "old" was a goal of mine. The greatest of goals; luck being the primary variable. Smarts can help though. I mean, couldn't hurt, right? Or could it? You be the judge.

I grew up in a violent, cruel world. I've witnessed death in many forms. As a young girl I reasoned, if the neighbor's baby can starve to death, then what a miracle to have my 60 year old grandmother snuggling me and reading aloud *The Diary of a Young Girl* (even though I'd already read it). I imagined wisdom and grace could be claimed if one lived to see 60. I began ruminating on my Wisdom and Grace 60th Birthday Extravaganza! Normally I didn't like being the center of attraction, but I believed the years would teach me how to handle the attention with wisdom and grace. My 40's found me dealing with cancer, so I bumped the Wisdom + Grace Shindig down a decade.

After turning 50, I began referring to myself as "old". It felt like a badge of honor. I'd lived through enough to claim the rewards of "old". However, society wasn't having it. Society at that time and place was a large American university. One celebratory luncheon with the department, I referred to myself as "old" in the context of the story I was telling. A colleague hissed, "You're not old". There was such venom in the tone, that I immediately understood I'd made the mistake of identifying with a reviled group. Researcher that I am, I started documenting the responses I received when I used the word "old" as a self-referent. I only did it when a situation arose naturally, but I did work it in as much as possible, even when it was an awkward word choice. Results indicate a statistically significant negative response rate.

Naturally, I already knew that American mass culture worshipped at the altar of youth. Look around. What surprised me was that in an enlightened higher education culture, people were not embarrassed to correct a colleague's choice of word if that word was "old". Intellectual discourse tending to be polite, respectful, and open-minded. One might pose a question to clarify terminology; one does not interrupt to express contempt for wording, especially to a non-native speaker.

A couple years later at another university gathering, I joked about being "old" and technology. A male colleague said, "My dear, you, are not old". To which I replied, "I like to treat the old with honor and dignity" raising my glass. He clarified for me that "the 50's are no longer considered old" and "that I don't look a day over 40". I offered my identification to prove I was 53. A female colleague further explained, "He's paying you a compliment". To which I replied, "Are you certain about that?". Then I became an old asshole.

transitory space
Leah Oates

4 poems

John Yamrus

how

were
we
to know

we
were
happy?

.....

they

both
knew it

do
any
one thing

long
enough

and
you'll
see things
to break your heart

.....

whisper

to
me,

she
said,

you
sound
like god.

sure,

lay
back,

have
some wine.

.....

when

it
came

to
him,

she
always

knew

that much

was
never

more.

a world without frogs

Marge Piercy

We are robbing our grandchildren.
They may never hear the basso
belch of a bullfrog or the frenzied trill
of treefrogs' orgy in a vernal pool.

Once there were many toads. Forty
years past I went with a girlfriend
to the Beachcomber bar and under
neath we filled our bucket with brownish

toads we carried home to my garden
setting up little clay pot houses
for them, hoping they would as they
did gobble beetles and slugs.

I rarely see a toad. Green frogs
are not so common. Click quick
salamanders spotted yellow on black,
where have they gone from leaf mold?

How many species has our greed
devoured, poisoned, bulldozed
or clearcut their habitat. We squat
on the sweet earth pissing it dead.

[postmodern black hole in eight collapses]

Christian Arthur

After Kieran Collier

1.

Clicking a misleading internet pop-up
initiates a re-coding
of The Metamorphosis by Franz Kafka.

World-wide, the words unplug themselves,
rearrange on textbooks pages, Tumblr posts,
in dingy-plywood-shelf-editions—every copy
of the story by Kafka now reads:

Sprawled in a meadow, a beetle wakes up
g a s p i n g,
To find overnight it transformed
into a human,

who in his clumsy sleep
rolled and crushed his family.

Their broken exoskeletons whirligig
off his
flailing
arm
like
obsolete
drafts.

For the first time the man-beetle swells
with these things we name
human emotions, and weeps into the soft
grass.

Dare we imagine the sight
of the sun rising over the hills,
fresh retina cones witnessing the color
of a belabored heart, a fermenting apple,

our new person learning beauty,
learning a 2nd reason to cry.

Next, his two phantom claws hunt for
traction like the hands of a wall clock
never reach the circumference.
Three days later he dies of dehydration.

No One Likes This Version of The Metamorphosis
and Everyone Misses the Original Story.
Critics Widely Pan It. Finally, publishers remove it
from the compilations. Teachers trade in textbooks.
In a couple decades we forget about the whole thing.

2.

Gregor Samsa is writing a story,
stays at the office late, ~~rereading~~,
crossing out words. Edits, sitting in trains ~~and taxis~~.
~~The pages jostle in his suitcase~~ like
pigeons flapping at the window.

The protagonist's name is Franz Kafka, who
~~hates writing but~~ loves the majority of activities.

He was the most popular kid in high school,
but years later his ~~best~~ friends will sit
on a dock in San Francisco.
One will say, "I think he ~~kind of~~ fizzled out."
The other will say, "Yeah, whatever happened ~~to Kafka~~?"

3.

Corresponding over many months,
    using a single email thread,
        which is always a bad and confusing
        method to communicate long-term,
            because you have to spend
            a lot of time scrolling upwards,
    Gregor Samsa and Franz Kafka
    team up to ghostwrite my poem for me.
        It actually turns out reading just like
        something I would have written,
            but, you know, better.