

MEAT FOR TEA

VOL 14 ISSUE 1
THE VALLEY REVIEW

EPAZOTE



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.

Staff:

Editor-in-Chief: Elizabeth MacDuffie

Layout: Mark Alan Miller

Impresario: Elizabeth MacDuffie

Cover Art:

Front: "Epasote" by JRM

Back: "Watchers" by Jennifer Coates

Printing: Paradise Copies, Northampton, MA

Typeface: Gill Sans, Libel Suit (Ray Larabie)

Contributors:

Jamie Berger, Nandini Bhattacharya, Rebekah Bloyd, Seth Cable, Jacob Chapman, Jennifer Coates, Daniel Dagrís, David Ferland, Ellen Mary Hayes, Richard Wayne Horton, Ramon Jimenez, Scott Archer Jones, JRM, Brett Kelley, HJ Lawrence, Marian Kent, Linda Kraus, Mick McGrath, Cynthia McVey, Anne Meuse, David P. Miller, Stephen James Moore, Bill O'Connell, Melissa Pandina, C.M. Preston, Patrick T. Reardon, Jim Ross, Robert Runté, Ellis Scott, Judith Serin, David R. Solheim, Neysa Tapanes, Peter Urkowitz, Joe Volpe, Michael Washburn, Jennifer Weigel, Kobina Wright, Guinotte Wise, Gerald Yelle, Jane Yolen

Special thanks:

Mark Alan Miller and Justin Pizzoferrato and Sonelab, Abandoned Building Brewery, Broadside Books, Big Red Frame, Topatoco, Oh, My!, Joslin Hall, Corsello Butcheria, Heroes of Toolik, Dan Whitley and the Dust Radios, and all of our sponsors. Our sponsors deserve great thanks - please visit them and let them you know you appreciate their support of the arts!

The Meat For Teacast: anchor.fm/meatfortecast - and everywhere you get your favorite podcasts!

Advertising in Meat For Tea is inexpensive and easy. By advertising in Meat For Tea you are helping to keep print media alive! Visit www.meatfortea.com for more information.

To submit to Meat For Tea, please go to: meatforteathevalleyreview.submittable.com/submit. Please send all other editorial correspondences to meatfortea@gmail.com.

Vol. 14 Issue 1, March 2020, first printing. ISSN 2372-0999 (print) ISSN 2372-1200 (online)

All stories, column title and images copyright 2020 by meaty ltd. and the individuals contained herein. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, reprinted, or transmitted in any form without prior written permission from Meat for Tea: The Valley Review. Please address questions, comments, or concerns to meatfortea@gmail.com.

For more information or to purchase current and back issues, PDFs and subscriptions, please visit www.meatfortea.com.

- 4** Guest Salutations: Mark Alan Miller
- 5** Rorschach Survey
Scott Archer Jones
- 7** My Buddhist
Cynthia McVey
- 9** Failed State
Mick McGrath
- 25** Eek
Jennifer Weigel
- 26** Luvlee
Nandini Bhattacharya
- 35** George Lois Made Me Do It
(or: On the Street Again)
Guinotte Wise
- 41** Not a Math Person: 3 Poems
Jane Yolen
- 42** Hunting
JRM
- 44** The Wash
Ellen Mary Hayes
- 45** Dishes
Ellen Mary Hayes
- 46** Horsensense
Jennifer Coates
- 47** Roleplay
Neysa Tapanes
- 48** Something Will Hatch
Richard Wayne Horton
- 50** Steel Toed Curb
David P. Miller
- 51** House in Basilicata
David P. Miller
- 52** Crossing Avenue
Robert Runté
- 54** Fig A: Encysted Lavea in Straited Muscle
Stephen James Moore
- 55** A Few Thoughts on Entering Outer Space
Jacob Chapman
- 56** Interview with the City
Jacob Chapman
- 58** Adventure in the Sky
Jacob Chapman
- 59** Fake Money Fried Rice & Wedding
Gerald Yelle
- 60** Niece
Gerald Yelle
- 61** Itch Itch Itch: Notes on a Mother's Death
Jamie Berger
- 72** Garden Ghosts
Jennifer Coates
- 73** Somewhere Down, Conflagration & Circular Logic
Marian Kent
- 74** A Tongue of Broken Glass
Seth Cable
- 79** Simon Fails Five Tests
Seth Cable
- 81** Before the Curfew
Seth Cable
- 82** Pond, Nomenclature & Some Snow
Bill O'Connell
- 83** Vision
Melissa Pandina
- 84** Medicine & Minotaur
David Ferland
- 85** Three Options (While a Choice Remains)
David Ferland
- 86** A Thousand Lives
Joe Volpe
- 87** Elbows
Peter Urkowitz
- 88** Wreckage and Rust
Peter Urkowitz
- 90** Call Me Conyeytheus
Peter Urkowitz
- 92** Goddesses on YouTube
Judith Serin
- 94** A Lonely Tree
Daniel Dagrís
- 96** Fig B: Encysted Lavea in Straited Muscle
Stephen James Moore
- 97** On Fortune's Fringe
Michael Washburn
- 109** Demiurge
Brett Kelley
- 110** Boas, Two Story Family & Phantom
David R. Solheim
- 111** When I'm Tired I Care Less
Kobina Wright
- 112** Carrying My Tricycle over Tracks
Linda Kraus
- 113** Casual Sex
Linda Kraus
- 114** Mercado Roberto Huembes
Ramon Jimenez
- 115** Becoming Hollywood
Jim Ross
- 122** Left Hand - Right Hand
H.J. Lawrence
- 124** Tea Party
Anne Meuse
- 125** Bookplate: a Tiny Mystery
Rebekah Bloyd
- 127** Eternal
Patrick T. Reardon
- 128** Alleluia Steeples
Patrick T. Reardon
- 129** Sambo
Patrick T. Reardon
- 130** From the Flood
C.M. Preston
- 131** Stern Promises
C.M. Preston
- 132** Runner
Ellis Scott
- 135** Forest
Kelly Emmrich
- 136** Contributors' Notes



guest salutations: mark alan miller

Here we are! In your hands is the 14th anniversary issue of Meat For Tea. That's quite something, and it's due in part to readers like you, supporting what we think is a special kind of literary journal. I first got involved around the era of volume 3 - more than 11 years ago - participating in the production of the Cirques. Shortly thereafter I became the graphic designer, filling the very large shoes left by Rafael Lino, carrying on his lovely design aesthetic as respectfully as I could.

And those Cirques - almost 8 years ago, we started hosting them at my studio, Sonelab, with the co-hosting of our neighbor, the excellent Abandoned Building Brewery. With that change (from a local rock club where getting the bar patrons to, er, shut up and listen to the spoken word was a constant challenge) came a solidification of the live-in-person Meat For Tea *thing*. Our lounge in the studio makes for an excellent art gallery; the brewery has a nice system for showing films; and the main room of the studio is large enough to host spoken word, live music, and a myriad of other kinds of performances - with plenty of room for an audience. And! It's a *recording* studio. All of the spoken word and music is live recorded. (Enjoyable to many attendees is the option to listen to the recording-in-progress from the control room, a perspective many don't get to witness otherwise.)

So what of all this? The magazine, in print (and PDF) form gets a companion, a multi-media, multi-discipline extension as a real-time, three-dimensional gala experience. But those recordings - what with those?

4

Yes, and as some might be aware, they are the perfect thing to base a podcast around. The Meat For Teacast! The third prong to the fork from which we hope you gain nourishment. With the podcast, we can bring select excerpts from the Cirques (a bonus feature is those who aren't close by enough to attend can do so by proxy) as well as conversations with some of the artists, writers and musicians we have the pleasure to work with. Additionally, other Meat For Tea hosted events are also excellent things to share with you all.

We hope you all will tuck into what the Meat For Teacast has to offer. We think you'll enjoy it as much as we do.

The Cirque for this anniversary issue will feature music from Heroes of Toolik and Dan Whitley and the Dust Radios, a variety of spoken word, some stand up comedy, and short films. Art on exhibit from Jennifer Coates will adorn the studio. And if you can't make it, well, you might just be able to taste it on a Meat For Teacast in the future.

Hugs and smooches,
Mark

rorschach survey

Scott Archer Jones

Sure, you two have hit it off, and match needs and desires pretty much. You've scribbled down a list of the offsets, the rough that complements smooth, the passive that correlates with the pugnacious. You two resemble a folded inkblot. But will it last? Both of you should delve deeper, and we have just the guide. Explore together. Choose the answer that most suits your personality – and watch his or her psyche unfold.

My idea of nature is

1. Watching Blue Planet II on TV
2. Weeding the front flower beds
3. Biking on the boardwalk
4. Hiking up to a scenic lake
5. Sleeping in a eight ounce hammock suspended off Devil's Tower

My idea of a job well done is

1. Putting away the folded laundry
2. Supporting Public television by buying Dr. Blake DVDs
3. Finishing a law degree started in prison
4. Raising five children
5. Planning and executing the perfect murder

Conspiracy theories turn out to be

1. Either wrong, fantasies, lies, or bad science
2. Sometimes true if about politics
3. Mostly true if about capitalism and corporations
4. Always true if about the CIA and the FBI
5. All about covering up the real conspiracies

Crimes I find acceptable are

1. Jaywalking
2. Driving five miles an hour over the speed limit
3. Cheating on my taxes
4. Cheating on my partner
5. Committing genocide in the Middle East or Africa

My ideal Saturday morning is

1. A rainy day, bagels and lox, pajamas, and the New York Times
2. Clearing out an old barn for a future workshop
3. Catching up on paperwork in preparation for taxes
4. An extended session of flagellistic sex
5. Burning down the gates of Valhalla to sack and pillage the Gods

The person I love lives

1. In a one-bedroom efficiency
2. In a single-wide trailer
3. In the Hamptons
4. In my gatehouse, hovered out on the edge of the Downs
5. In the iron bowels of the earth, watched over by the Sumerian gods of death

The greatest technical mystery to me in the world is

1. The thermos bottle
2. My iPad
3. DNA's role in shaping all animate life
4. Light's duality as both a wave and a particle
5. The Eighteen Hidden Dimensions of the Illuminati

I would rather possess

1. A good reputation
2. A house that is perfect for me
3. A million dollars
4. Immortality
5. Insidious control over the minds of a million people

I prefer in a mate

1. A compliant, gentle partner
2. A strong partner that will provide for me
3. An independent, thoughtful partner eager to disagree with me
4. A partner who belongs to the Merchant Marine and is never home
5. A partner with superhero powers who is not too smart and always aroused

I prefer the following foods the most

1. Simple hamburger and fries
2. Traditional foods like Thanksgiving turkey
3. Ethnically diverse food, with strange and challenging spices
4. Live four-ounce grubs
5. The snake that eats its own tail

I know I am

1. Male
2. Female
3. Nongender conforming
4. Changeable
5. A new form of being as yet undocumented

The truth is

1. All of the above
2. None of the above
3. All points in between



my buddhist

Cynthia McVey

He places the cage, a screened cubic foot, on the bamboo table between us.

“How many are there?” I ask, trying to erase any negative feelings, any *klesha*, or scratch, from my voice.

“I lost count at ninety-six,” he says, running his beautiful fingers along the cage’s lattice work fashioned from endemic Cambodian cinnamon branches.

“Are they still alive?” I ask as I take a sip of green tea.

“Yes. I believe most are still alive.”

I admire his calm disposition and I feel inadequate whenever I am with him, which is all the time, but I know he’s not all monk. He does not refrain from cooking or sex, does not *detach from all sensual desires*, that’s for sure. He is no Lotus Blossom.

Three months ago, I fell for this graceful, lithe man from Cincinnati when I saw him break up a cockfight on the road to Angkor Wat. I marveled how brave he was, as a recent transplant to Siem Reap, pulling apart the pecking, feathered, frenzied fury, the crowd. A week later, without his asking anything of me, I promised my life to him.

I love him, or maybe our sex, but I don’t understand the tenets by which he lives. I stop eating animals with ease—that I can do—but his reticence to kill mosquitoes, even those circling our bare, heaving bodies, and later our resting heads, tests me. I lie on my hands to squelch my instinct to slap.

Grainy dusks and into the night, I hum as loudly as I can in my head to block out the chorus, meditating as he suggests, while he lures the delicate vampires with a pricked finger, one by one, into the cage. He accumulates dozens each evening, in his porous hut, our love box, my cage. He keeps a silent tally. I had thought mosquitoes live for a day or an endless night, but the females, who whine, who draw blood, live for weeks, drinking their body weight in blood daily. I can hear the melancholy dirge through the thatched wall when we and the darkness are still. In the morning, I am surprised the box is there, that, with its hundreds of wings and the thick air, it has not lifted off during the night.

I am not jealous of his compassion, the attentions he lavishes on these females, but as I watch him, as I have every morning, roll up his organic white cotton sleeve with the care of a doctor going into surgery, I am feeling things I am not supposed to, not as a Buddhist-in-training. As he sticks his arm into the cage through the flapped opening, I cannot contain the notion that this is about him, not a Buddhist solution.

He is focused, doesn't look at me. He doesn't see me, not for who I am.

My finger then eyes trace the edges of my new *sak yant*, a magical geometric tattoo I received yesterday on the inside of my arm. It will protect me from misfortune, endow me with sexual magnetism. It hurts. It doesn't feel magical. I don't feel magnetic.

My parents are not here to gasp and grimace at this latest emblem. I can imagine them now: *Why don't you leave your beautiful body alone?* They would be aghast and surprised to discover I ended up bald, and happy, without medication. Why on earth did they think I should go to law school? Because I debated their assumptions? Didn't follow their rules? Because I marched in DC and stood on the steps of City Hall? Because I care about *issues*, they tried to convince me that the way to affect change was through policy, through law, not walking, blocking and standing still. Not swinging in a hammock and *being*. Being who I am, who I want to be. I can feel something stirring, changing in me, asking.

I should write my parents, probably, but am not sure what I'd say. I cannot explain how I got here, what I'm doing. Here: swathed in a saffron robe, in humility and humidity, in awe, in the scent of him. Beyond my cage, the villagers think I'm a man, if they think of me at all. A gap year between college and law school, a gap year without boundaries and expectations, lawlessness. This is not what they want of me.

Is this when it occurs to me? That this too is artifice? Not pure and simple but convoluted and pretentious. I am whomever, whatever he wants me to be. I have taken on his rules, I am in his shadows.

"Why not just let the mosquitoes outside, free? Why the cage?" I ask.

"One mosquito, two mosquito. . ." He will count to sixty before he draws his arm out of the box slowly so as to not crush a single midge. He will assess the welts, look up at me and smile. He will roll down his sleeve, without succumbing to, scratching, the small mountain range on his arm.

This morning I will not hear him close in on sixty because today I decide that if this is his path to liberation, I will find my own. So, while his attention is on his sacrificial outstretched arm, and he is counting with patient deliberation, ". . . fifty-seven mosquito, fifty- eight mosquito, fifty-nine mosquito . . .", I get up from the table, push out the door and, barefoot, run back to town.



failed state

Mick McGrath

Monday

Right now, we're in the kitchen. Amadeus asks me if I've made enough coffee for two, and I say no, and he says, "Gee. Thanks, Mickey."

This is revenge. For last night. When Amadeus wanted to have sex and I told him I didn't want to have sex and he said, "You know, some guys put sex in their prenuptial agreement, Mickey. Like, they demand sex. And if they don't get it a couple times a week, the agreement is off, and the woman gets nothing."

Amadeus and I don't have a prenuptial agreement.

But I'd be happy to sign one – a postnuptial agreement. I don't want Amadeus's trust fund.

Now I'm in my studio. I'm going through a Philip Guston phase, obsessed with his 1970 exhibition at the Marlborough. All those crude, rough, cartoony things. The clansmen. Those enormous human heads with no bodies. His use of red and pink.

I've been trying to do something similar, only my paintings are a mashup of Guston and Carroll Dunham. That is, slightly pornographic. Men with dicks for noses.

Amadeus is in his office next door, grading papers. He teaches anthropology at the University of _____. I used to call him Indiana Jones. That was before the bloom fell off the rose. (Before I realized he wasn't Harrison Ford.)

Amadeus has framed pictures all over his office walls – Amadeus in Machu Picchu, Amadeus at Gobekli Tepe, the Ajanta Caves, Angkor Wat. He has pictures of Egyptologists. He has a big poster of Howard Carter. He even has potsherds in display cases, pieces of ceramic they found at Calakmul and Chechen Itza. He's always going to conferences and meeting people he says are important – eminent primatologists, animal behaviorists, evolutionary psychologists...

Right now, Amadeus is watching the Kavanaugh Hearing. The TV in his office is loud, and it's as if Brett Kavanaugh is in the house.

BRETT KAVANAUGH:

I have never sexually assaulted anyone. Not in college. Not in high school. Not ever. Listen to the witnesses, who allegedly were at this event thirty-six years ago. Listen to Ms. Kaiser. She does not know me. I was not at the party described by Dr. Ford.

This confirmation process has become a national disgrace. Since my nomination in July, there has been a frenzy on the left to come up with something – anything! – to block my confirmation.

I step into the corridor and train my mouth at the open door down the hall, and I ask Amadeus to turn it down. He doesn't respond.

I close the door to my studio, hoping that'll make things quiet.

It doesn't. I can hear Kavanaugh, though he's muffled now, through the wall.

BRETT KAVANAUGH:

This whole two-week effort has been a calculated and orchestrated political hit. Fueled with pent-up anger about the 2016 election, revenge on behalf of the Clintons, and millions of dollars in money from outside left-wing opposition groups.

10

Now I'm standing in his doorway. "Did you not hear me?" I say, raising my voice, so Amadeus can hear me over the television.

Amadeus has his feet on the desk. He's wearing brown Oxfords, beige slacks, a light-blue button-down, tucked in. He insists on getting dressed each morning, even on days like today, when he doesn't have class or office hours and doesn't need to leave the house. And Amadeus wouldn't dare wear jeans or a t-shirt. He's got to wear slacks, cardigans, button-down shirts, and they've got to be tucked in or he'll have a panic attack.

Amadeus is wearing his Oliver Peoples glasses, tortoise-shell, and his mouth is hanging open. Amadeus is riveted to the TV. The stack of papers is there, on his desk, but he can't take his eyes off C-SPAN.

"I thought we agreed," I say, even louder this time. "No television during the day?"

I find I need complete silence when I'm painting.

Amadeus turns down the volume.

"She says she went to the Safeway with her mom a few weeks after the incident. And she saw Mark Judge. He was working there. And she approached him and said hello. And when Mark Judge saw her, he turned white. Like, he got really nervous."

(Mark Judge is another one. He, too, is on trial sort of, though it's Bret Kavanaugh they want, Brett Kavanaugh that tried to rape Dr. Ford.)

"The implication being he felt guilty," Amadeus says, "having been in the room, watching, when Kavanaugh tried to rape her. Mark Judge was – excuse me, is – an accessory. That's what Ms. Ford is claiming."

"I find it odd that you can't call her doctor," I say. "The woman has a PhD."

The Kavanaugh-Ford Hearing has turned into another Moon Landing, the O.J. Simpson trial. I.E. Another major TV event. Unless you're living under a rock, you know that Brett Kavanaugh, a judge, was about to be confirmed to the Supreme Court before Christine Blasey Ford, a professor of psychology at the University of Palo Alto, came along and accused him and his friend Mark Judge of attacking her and trying to rape her at a house party in 1982. Then two more women came forward, saying they, too, had been assaulted by Kavanaugh.

"Anyway, do you really think she would lie?" I say, still standing in the doorway. "I'm sure they have records. Like, they can confirm that Mark Judge was working at the Safeway that day. I'm sure Dr. Ford is telling the truth."

"Oh, I don't doubt she's telling the truth."

"Well what's your point, then?"

"She approached him," says Amadeus. "When he was working at the Safeway. Don't you think that's just a little bit strange? That she would approach him? That she would say hello to him?"

It's a worthwhile question.

"Look. I can't work with Kavanaugh yelling in the background," I say.

Then, under his breath: "I'd be yelling too if I'd been falsely accused."

On his bookshelves, there are books by David Bus and Christopher Ryan, countless issues of *Current Anthropology*, issues of *Science* and *Nature*.

Nabokov's *Speak, Memory* is on one of his shelves. *White Dialogues* by Bennett Sims. *The Mezzanine* by Nicholson Baker. *American Psycho*. David Foster Wallace: *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again*, *Infinite Jest*...

The *Mezzanine* is literally about a guy buying a pair of shoe laces, and Amadeus calls this a profound work of art.

Under his breath again: "I'd be yelling too if I'd been falsely accused of rape."

"Look. Can you just turn it down?"

“This is important, Mickey! Whether you realize it or not, this is a big historical moment. A big moment in our nation’s history.”

I ask him again to turn it down, like I’m his mother.

“I did turn it down,” he says, angrily. “It’s down.”

Tuesday

We live in Santa Ana. We used to live in Hollywood, but Amadeus thought it was too liberal there. Plus, we’d been living in a small apartment, and when Amadeus got a full-time position at the University of _____, we thought why not upgrade.

Now we have a house.

It’s a two-story house. A small Spanish villa. Chalky white. With a terracotta roof and rounded windows and archways and a small arcade covering the porch, where we sometimes sit, drinking wine, at night – though we don’t do that so much anymore. It’s always sunny here in the day, and the lawn is quite green, and there’s a line of bottle-brush trees separating us from the neighbors, giving us the illusion of privacy, and the tree closest to the sidewalk paints the concrete pink with the red brushes that overhang the sidewalk and occasionally drop from the branches like apples. The whole place is very vibrant and verdant and lush and colorful. Like the Garden of Eden.

I thought relocating might breathe life back into our marriage. Like, maybe now that Amadeus was making more money he would feel happier. And he would start exercising. And then he would have more stamina – like, in the bedroom.

And he would look better.

And maybe now he wouldn’t snap all the time, throwing a tantrum every time he came in through the front door and stepped into the foyer and tripped on the shoes I’d left there; having a conniption when he couldn’t work the can opener; pounding his big gorilla fists on the table when the soup I’d made for the two of us was too hot.

It’s Tuesday, and I’m sitting at the breakfast table, eating egg whites with ground pepper. I’m drinking orange juice and coffee, and I’m watching a documentary about Andrew Wyeth on my iPad. (I love Wyeth’s egg tempera paintings – Braids, Christina’s World.)

Amadeus comes into the kitchen. He looks haggard, sleep-deprived. I think he may have been up all night arguing with Facebook friends.

“No coffee?” he says, looking at the empty coffee pot. Then he looks at me, as if it’s my job to make him coffee every morning.

“Sorry,” I say.