

MEAT FOR TEA

VOL 15 ISSUE 4
THE VALLEY REVIEW

RAW



Meat for Tea: The Valley Review

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Staff:

Editor-in-Chief: Elizabeth MacDuffie

Layout: Mark Alan Miller

Impresario: Elizabeth MacDuffie

Cover Art:

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salutations from the editor

Welcome to the “Raw” issue, which is not named after esteemed author of Schrödinger’s Cat and otherwise notorious oddball, Robert Anton Wilson, but rather is an attempt to capture our current mood. I mean...how are you feeling? A bit raw? Quite understandable between dealing with the combined effects of climate crisis, Kyle Rittenhouse inexplicably walking free, a deadly virus sweeping the globe, and president #45 still managing to evade arrest (and somehow remain in the zeitgeist!?) Sheesh, that makes me raw -Mark) And on top of all that...another high school shooting? It’s a lot.

One would have to be tougher than rawhide to deal with it all. Still, there’s another side to raw. Think back to fall, when perhaps you were in an orchard, maybe one with a sculpture garden and you ate an apple, fresh from the tree. Or maybe there was a charcuterie platter at your Thanksgiving dinner, complete with prosciutto and Serrano ham? Perhaps you enjoyed an aperitif of oysters and champagne. Raw can be delicious.

Then there’s the matter of raw talent, of which you will encounter plenty in these pages. Raw has many facets, thankfully.

At the Cirque, Ex-Temper and Toxic Friends will heal all of our nerves with the raw power of rock. Don your raw silk and join me there. (Or keep your ears out for a future podcast episode, featuring this audio).

Rawly yours, besos y abrazos,
Elizabeth

cornucopia

George McDermott

So we are the men the ones
who plow the earth and sow the grain
and pray for harvest

day after day
we practice creation
watching the sun and the sky
for omens of fertility
tilling and testing the soil
plowing and sowing we never think
to ask the women
who keep their secrets hidden away

who can raise the sand and the soil
to their lips and touch the humid mysteries
of the ancient places who carry the seasons
who measure their lives with the moon



broken sonnet

George McDermott

Let's make a date right now, today, for the night
of the day our marriage ends. Let's plan to go
dancing. Let's give our bodies a chance to remember
how well they fit together. No anger. Instead,

let's spend our final moments recalling the scent
of your hair against my cheek, the feel of my arm
around your waist, the sound of our laughter in time
with the music. Let's memorize the faces that once

were the first and the last we saw every day. And then
the taste of our lips at evening's end—
a wistful kiss to say goodbye,
not merely goodnight.

Let's take an hour or two to remember a time
when our hearts were soft, were close enough to rhyme.



coming home after a long day of capitalism

Hunter Hodkinson

6

He scrapes
the bloody mess
the day made me
up from the street
corner,
drags me home
and pieces me back
together.
Though nothing
fully patches the leaks
of youthful existentialism,
I appreciate
his brandy efforts
to plug my eyes
with vintage corks
unearthed from
obscure thrift stores.
He's excellent
at containing
the drink
society wants:
my surrender brew.
He collects the drops
that escape
in tea cups
and flushes them
down the sink pipe
before anyone sees.

Succumbing is a myth,
frazzled brick dust
beaten out of
the gentrificationless
brownstones that refuse
to fall and bury
their history
in rubble.
Rattled and roach infested,
my soul will not
be cleaned.
Keep your duster
fingers
and vacuum
phalanges
in your pockets,
I am in no need
or want of cleansing.
I see things exactly
the way they are,
to my bane,
sure,
but true,
lucid
sabotage.



best regards

Hunter Hodkinson

The only things I have in my
apartment are water,
condoms
and 2 year aged cheese.
My AC fell out of my window
this morning
and murdered a bicycle.
I woke up to the smell of hot trash
in the summer breeze.
I turned on my lamp and peered
out into the great wasteland
and frowned.
I looked down at the sidewalk
eight stories below
and saw people
moving like water around boulder,
the machinery catastrophe, unfazed.
A woman shouted
“whos gonna pay for my fucking bike?”
I said I would
and dropped a twenty out the window.
I watched it flutter
to her flipflop feet.
“This won’t even cover it!”
“It’s all I got.”
I shut the window
and collapsed back into
bed.



mysteries of luck

John Davis

as if the water and Doug and I
had not met as if the river
had not swamped the canoe
and we had not rolled
over and the rushing water had not
pinned canoe and us against the rock
the rock speckled-yellow the rock
as stout as Buddha breathing in the world
through his senses
as if luck had not swept us
around the rock in water that pounded down our bodies
the silt water the cool water the white water
as if we had not breathed in

the darkness of drowning as if drowning
like a bully had not held us down
and swollen our lungs with water
the color of weak green tea
bully of the Sandy River
bully of swift currents
bully who broke the spine of an aluminum canoe
as if he had not let us go
had not kicked us in the ass to shore
and we had not thanked him
for losing at luck
we would not be here helping

a father-son duo
in tennis shoes descend a glacier
that feeds the currents of rivers
that bully a landscape we would not
give them Advil to bring on luck
we would not give them four hands
carry their heavy packs
we would see them slide down the glacier
that melts into streams into rivers
with water the color of tea
down around boulders where bullies
roll luck in their fingers





raw - the body -3
Andrea Fonseca

a connecticut valley family

Peter Tacy

I.

We are thick on the ground, my kinfolk here.
Sometimes that fact can be dismissed.
The interstate highway pays no heed
to this history, or much else. Indeed,
I know that there's a growing list
of all we no longer hold as dear...

We shaped this region, though. Look, today,
at the little towns — the shrinking villages
of New England. It's not just the end
of farming I consider. Even now some depend
on land that smiles, and can afford the wages
that present-day farmers have to pay.

But upcountry, land's grown in. The woods
that natives cherished are left untended. The mills
lie vacant, awaiting wreckers, or a fire.
All these once lured folks who could aspire
toward a better life: lured to this valley, to these hills,
to make, or grow, a nation's goods.

My ancestors were much the same
as many others. They began their trip in flight
from danger...but then they made real choices.
I can imagine I hear their voices,
speaking of their dreams, claiming the right
to live anew, regardless of whence they came.

And I might tell you what I know of each, yet
does it really matter? Some built wood
barns of a special kind, to store tobacco and dry
the leaves; elegant, high-tech barns; but why
parse what Joe or Uncle Lewis did — as if we could
learn more from a barn than we can get
from what they left: which is we ourselves, alive.
But the first-arrivers are not entirely gone;
they've endowed us with a presence worth exploring.
It's in ourselves, a legacy still imploring
to be embraced. It tells us that we are not alone;
that we too can live anew, if we risk, and strive.

II.

The early few have passed. Here and there, a stone
marks one who ventured, lived, and died.
Road names recall their world, now lost —
Poor Farm Road, a lurking ghost
of civic shame; King Street, a mark of ancient pride.
School Street remains, though the school is gone.

The way to touch what's left will mandate walking.
Park your car, come here, and stroll with me.
We need to find a smaller, closer scale
of view, to comprehend in real detail
the intimate, enduring sort of legacy
that remains. If you choose, it's for the taking.

Visitor, step gently on this hallowed ground,
where nothing special happened, except lives led
by those content to spend their numbered days
in love of kin; in toil; and in the hopeful ways
that shaped connection to what some are said
to consider not living time, but time profound.

It might be best, right now, to sit upon this wall
and not be bothered by looking where we walk.
What we are seeking is in fact so near to hand
that we can see it from this result of clearing land...
but you've no need for my too-rambling talk.
What remains, remains. In us. And it informs us all.



nosings with Nicola Thomis

You didn't leave much when you slipped into the next room. It was spring, and the air was full of the itchy scent of daffodils, irritating with their optimism. Bright yellow flowers nodding their heads on the centre of the roundabout as if they knew something I didn't.

The walls of your house held their breath as I helped mum make breakfast we didn't taste, drinking tea the colour of puddles, as the light dimmed from everything. Even the dogs seemed subdued as we walked them around grey fields. I wondered if they could smell our sadness. Did they even know you were missing? When would the scent of you start to fade? I wanted to explain to them so they didn't have to wonder, but words weren't enough.

After breakfast (or was it lunch?) I took the key from its hook and struck out across damp lawns to your shed. A lone daffodil stood sentinel at the side of the door. As I yanked it open and peered inside its scent mingled with the scent of your place. Your workroom. The place synonymous with you even before all this.

I stood and inhaled as the door swung silently shut behind me. When had you last been here? Yesterday? The day before? I tried to catch you at the edge of my consciousness but I could no longer feel.

The creosote, warm and sharp rolled on the warming spring air, tumbling to enfold me and bringing with it the scent of the wood stacked in the corner; a jumble of different lengths, shapes, sizes. A jumble to anyone else but to you a set of answers to a problem you hadn't yet met. The dry baritone rumble of mahogany, the blonde, sappiness of pine, and the darker, muskier green of oak.

A metallic fragrance slithered forward, snaking on the wave that the warm wood had brought. It curled silvery around my ankles, then legs, twining its way upwards into my brain. The metal was cool, unfriendly at first. It spoke of edges and angles and the teeth of winter, but it warmed slowly into a familiar murmur. It was the scent of the tools that lined the walls. Tools struck dumb now, perhaps forever. Now that I had noticed it, the smell of metal was everywhere. Quietly rusting bolts in little heaps on the table, the vice standing half open, a hacksaw you had put down never to return to its allotted hook on the wall.

I picked up a screwdriver. Such a humble thing. And as my palm warmed the wooden handle an oily scent crept from it and imprinted itself on my skin. I'd sniff it again later like I was trying to memorise the smell and I wouldn't want to wash it off. The oil was in parts earthy and sweet, greasy, old. It smelled like an artefact, like something that had dragged itself from deep within the soil to peek at daylight one last time. I wanted to smell the scent of your hands as you made the tools talk. I knew it would smell of the contentment of honest work, of skill and satisfaction.

In the slanted sunlight from the tiny window, dust motes danced in the weak rays. Their scent the anticipation of radiators turned on on the first cold evening of the season. Away, deep in the shadows at the back of the shed, behind all the wood you had so carefully stacked, there was an animalic warmth that spoke of fur perhaps, no, not fur, feathers. It too had a dusty sweetness, a close cosiness. The wren that you had patiently tolerated the previous year was building a