MEAT FOR TEA

VOL. 16 ISSUE 1
THE VALLEY REVIEW

RUSSIAN CARAVAN

ISSN 2372-0999 $12.00

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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Front: "Ghost Trending" by Laraine Herring Back: "The Unsent" by Jessamyn Smyth

Printing:
Paradise Copies, Northampton, MA Typeface: Gill Sans, Libel Suit (Ray Larabie)

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Special thanks:
Mark Alan Miller and Justin Pizzoferrato and Sonelab, Abandoned Building Brewery, Broadside Books, Big Red Frame, Topatoco, Luthier's Coop, Downtown Sounds, Bishop's Lounge, Sucreabeiile, Liberal Arts Gallery, May It Howl, Oh My!, Corsello Butcheria, Hammer and Horn, Salon 180 East, Michael Washburn, Cooper Lace, Valley Arts Newsletter, Waugh Insurance, Heroes of Yoolik, Pineapples, Thomas Matthew Campbell - 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!

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Vol. 16 Issue 1, March 2022, first printing. ISSN 2372-0999 (print) ISSN 2372-1200 (online)

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salutations from the editor

Let's talk about themes baby,
Let's talk about you and me...

But seriously, dear readers, let's talk. Now that Meat for Tea is turning 16, it's time. I never could have known, way back in December, when I picked Russian Caravan as the theme for this issue, the debacle that would ensue. Prescient? Perhaps. But maybe there's a certain magic to a theme that taps into an ineffable...something.

Over ther years I've had a few prospective contributors reach out to me, sometimes correctively, other times concened, over the fact that Meat for Tea has themes. But we always have, since the very first issue, themed "Gristle." Now, do I want pages and pages of art and writing devoted to a literal interpretation of a given theme? Of course not. However, a certain order and magic imposes itself on an issue with a theme, and I want to continue to let this unfold in its mysterious ways.

Maybe you have noticed by now, but if not, now you will: Meat for Tea has always had meat years alternating with tea years and the tea I chose for this issue, back in December 2021, happened to be Russian Caravan. Then the shitstorm hit. Still, the theme resonates and feels even more appropriate as large numbers of Russian people risk criminal charges and imprisonment to protest Putin's war againsst Ukraine. I salute these brave Russians, the people of Ukraine, and Zelenski for their courage. May a literal Russian Caravan of protestors continue to disrupt his illegal war.

besos y abrazos,
Elizabeth

(Errata from Volume 15, Issue 4: We overlooked typos in the spelling of Lino Azevedo, Linda Chown, and Pearse Anderson's names in the contributor's list. This has been corrected for any PDFs ordered from our website, and in future reprintings of that issue, if needed.
With apologies from my slightly dyslexic heart. -Mark.)

russian caravan tea

Jane Yolen

Oh, you smokey concoction,
the Baba and I ride in the mortar,
drinking up your malty taste.
In the darkness, we steer by the stars.
The pestle is cold in my right hand,
tea warm in my left,
The caravan beneath us
strengthening the taste.
What do we need of the maps of men
when we have the lights of Heaven
showing us the way, the tea of the gods
flowing in our veins, the magic of past Babas
keeping usin the moment,
and the songs the men in the caravan singing
of Baba Yaga and her chicken-feet hut,
all racing along the pulse lines of our hearts.

another spoon

Jane Yolen

Here, dear friend,
another spoon, and another,
till I send you a closetful.
One day I shall be able
to come visit you again.
Those spoons will be in teacups
and clotted cream containers,
in potato leek soup bowls,
and morning porridge pots.
We shall dip them into
one another's happy mouths.
Till then, keep them polished
and at the ready.
There is a party in our future,
there is a long tail of friendship
in our past.

my garden daffodils

Jane Yolen

They stretch early,
decorate borders,
create communities,
linger past their bloom,
like New England women
having tea and small cakes,
making flower arrangements,
elegant early, blowsy at midterm,
stiff stalk and salad at the end.

drive-through covid inoculation

Paul Rousseau

As I lower the window she barks, *"Let your arm hang limp,"* and I do, but she says it again like a crew-cut drill sergeant, so I let it hang limper, and then she queries, *"Are you ready for this?,"* and I tell her I waited forty-five minutes in a queue of seventy cars, so yes, I am ready, and as her lips twitch and her brow scrunches she sternly advises, *"Here it comes,"* and a glistening needle spears my arm as she loudly proclaims, *"All done."*

the crumb of my country rye boule

Jane Yolen

The crumb of my country rye boule
is a bread that configures my soul.
It is hearty and light
Fit for day or for night,
And eating it makes me feel whole.

Elizabeth MacDuffie

other people's children

Peter Tacy

"I've never really felt it was society's responsibility to take care of other people's children."
Senator Ron Johnson

Well, Ron: while I'm not much of a Biblical scholar,
and mostly see that book as a trove of sometimes useful myths
(even if the myths tend to be open to misinterpretation);
I do recall a story about Jesus being asked by a lawyer
(of course) what God's commandment about treating our neighbors
really means — to wit, sez counsel: "who is my neighbor?"

And Jesus responds with a story. A man is beaten and robbed
and left half-naked on a roadside. A priest of his own
religion passes…on the other side of the road. Does nothing.
Then, a member of a different social group passes; does nothing.
At last, a member of the victim's most despised social rivals,
a Samaritan, arrives. He stops. He binds the man's wounds, takes him to
an inn, and funds his care.

"So — Jesus asks — who was this man's neighbor?"

Ron, this one's for you. Up there in Wisconsin, there are persons
unrelated to you, even unbegotten by you, who are hurting.
And here's the question, Ron. Are you their neighbor?

Or are you just another self-admiring blithering elected peacock
who thinks that the situation of an unknown person doesn't merit the attention
of a U.S. Senator? Oh, there's a moral in this one, Ron. Nibble on it.

two februarys

Peter Tacy

We listened then, around a wood-cased radio
that sat atop a kitchen table my father had found
at a used furniture store — we'd painted it red —

I heard an American voice speaking from London,
and the sound of bombs; ...and glimpsed, hanging
from the hat-rack, my mother's Air-Raid Warden helmet…

It was then, for the first time in my life, I met a sort of fear
that has no limit; where no happy ending can be counted on,
and where the warm arms that always offer comfort

may no longer be nearby. That was in the 1940's,
a time we kids exited via pictures in *Life* magazine
of emaciated survivors in the extermination camps.

So I came to know that life past childhood can be dire
and deadly…and yet, today, I see the horror of Kyiv,
now a TV story played for children in their silent homes.

It's no different, is it? The same dreadful shock, just
for other children: that human beings have a gift for savagery
which can always trump the deceitful companion gift

of creature-kindness, whenever opportunity provides;
and that wisdom is never enough to make the difference.
The medium has changed. The message remains.

a word to the wise:

John Yamrus

a word to the wise::

please do not
photoshop
yourself
until

you've removed
every mark,
line,

wrinkle or
sign of
life

from
your face.

it
tells us

way
too much.

this guy

John Yamrus

this guy

who
reviewed
some of my poems

thought he
was doing me a dirty
by calling them "nothing special",

when
in point of fact,
he hit the nail on the head.

they *are*
nothing special.

that's
the point.

and
you either

get it,
or you don't.

get it?

emily was

John Yamrus

Emily was

a horror show,
but her legs were the real deal,

and Lenny
knew enough about noir to know
that the only thing Emily needed to pull it off

was
a name
like Gilda
or Veronica.

and
he knew
that a noir woman
is always the promise
of the best sex you'll ever have,

and
also the reason
you're going to die.

but,
Lenny
was good with that.

you're
damned if you do
and damned if you don't.

and
when it
comes right down to it,

Gilda
or Veronica or Emily
or any other name she chose to have,

would
never really give a damn,

would she?

years ago

John Yamrus

years ago

i knew a woman
who was in Paris in 1927
on the day that Lindberg landed.

she talked
about the crowds
and the noise and the joy.

she
talked
about the mess
and the shouts and the tears.

she was told
they hadn't seen crowds like that
since the day the war to end all wars came to an end.

she
was young
and worked for one
of the little magazines that
sold in Montparnasse and nowhere else.

her name was Claire
and she was over 90 when we met.

and she
served us
chowder in antique bowls
that could have been new when she

was a girl
and Lindberg landed
and all the world got crazy, wild and drunk.

tear I

John Yamrus

/ter/
verb
3rd person present: tears
1.
pull or rip (something) apart or to pieces with force.
“I tore up the letter”
1.1
move very quickly in a reckless or excited manner.
“she tore along the footpath on her bike”
noun
plural noun: tears
1.
a hole or split in something caused by it having been pulled apart forcefully.
“there was a tear in her dress”
2.
INFORMAL•US
a brief spell of erratic or unrestrained behavior; a binge or spree.
“one of my drinking buddies came for the weekend and we went on a tear”