

# MEAT FOR TEA

VOL 17 ISSUE 1  
THE VALLEY REVIEW

DARK



# 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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Contributors: Elizabeth Appelquist, Steven Archer, R. Sherrill Beecher, Eben Bein, Erika Benson, Jerome Berglund, Shirley J. Brewer, Jacob Chapman, Linda Chown, Charles Coe, Carla Manene Cooke, Ellen Covey, RC deWinter, Alexis Rhone Fancher, Jeffrey M. Feingold, Scott Ferry, Christopher Fileds, Tamara Fricke, Howie Good, Chaya Grossberg, Sakari Happonen, Richard Wayne Horton, Paul Illechko, Steven M Johnson, Kimberly Kuchar, Christian Livermore, Stefan Lovasik, Austin Lubetkin, Beth Maciorowski, Jeremy Macomber-Dubs, Madcollage, Corey Mesler, Daniel Steven Miller, Jane Muschenetz, Lillian Nećakov, Emmanuel Ogochukwu, Maggie Parr, Robert Peate, Jim Ross, Thomas Rowland, Terry Sanville, John Sheirer, David Solheim, Joshua Michael Stewart, Edward Supranowicz, Peter Tacy, Jennifer Weigel, John Yamrus, Gerald Yelle, Jane Yolen

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Please send all other editorial correspondences to [meatfortea@gmail.com](mailto:meatfortea@gmail.com).

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# guest salutations

Scott Ferry

I thought of impossible things as I drove to work this morning. I thought of flight and the end of days. The Tom Petty song “Learning to Fly” popped up on my Spotify followed closely by Morrissey’s “Every Day is like Sunday.” Now I am not a very big fan of either of these artists but I kept thinking of the lines “what goes up must come down” and “come Armageddon, come.” Well, what if we could fly up and just keep going, not experience the Icarus letdown but just soar out there without air or bodies or fears (but also without loves)? I think this type of escape sounds like death, letting the body sink down and lifting up into a cloudland of bliss and calm. Then I thought about good old Morrissey, who is always singing about hopeful things. He speaks of a calm misty world of silent Sundays which never cease and he wishes them to end with a cataclysm. Again an escape by death, by destruction and burning. One way to escape is to reach into the light and leave the dark behind; the other is to wish darkness upon all of this filtered light.

As an artist of sorts I always try to either escape all the way or engage all the way, or go through engagement to find escape or attempt to escape and confront engagement. The realistic part of all of this is we never get to escape without engagement, we never get to heaven without going through hell, we never fly without spending 40 days in the desert, we never get to any place of transformation without 7 days and 7 nights in a Gilgamesh tunnel. This is why I find the darkness so nourishing, why I want to bathe in it like absinthe and asbestos. It makes the skin shine like abalone. It makes the words burn like ice. Galvanism is the fruit and - pun intended - currency from which we can convert solar bombardment, kinetic ocean and wind currents, to replace the pollutive coal and nuclear wastes which are presently inundating our air and seas. It is entirely logical, rational even to perceive some figurative or literal Higher Power in that potent might which heats our homes, cooks our meals, drives each transport, charges these very typewriters.

So let us praise this thousand-masked demiurge, at the pleasure and generosity of whom this very moment I am not freezing in my snowy land, enjoyed a hearty dinner of tacos thanks to the benevolent stoves and thawing furnaces. Should this divinity prove merciful perhaps our next generation may just stave off Armageddon yet. Of thee we sing, hail hail.



## guest salutations

Lillian Nećakov

What does it mean to believe in impossible things?

Some of us write in the dark so as not to wake a child, a partner or even the dog. Some of us know what happens when the light stops coming and that darkness moves at the exact same speed as luminosity. Some of us give language to that which we do not see.

I have been thinking a lot about impossible things and how really, everything is possible.

Tom Waits said, *I was born the day after Lead Belly died, I'd like to think we passed in the hall.* I imagine Tom walking through twilight, sunlight scattering, he feels a kind of farsickness and recalls that moment when Lead Belly brushed up against him, cupped his hands around Tom's eyes and said, *listen for the darkness, it's just an idea, it's just that tiny beat between what you're thinking and where you're standing.* But who is to say that these are just neurotransmitters, electrical signals, neurons forming thought and idea? Who is to say it could not, did not happen?

So much happens in the darkness, behind closed eyes. The sonic vibrations that are Lead Belly's voice undulating through the quantum fields of my soul stirring up another kind of darkness. The impossibility of two beings, years apart, existing in time and space, side by side.



## vortex

Charles Coe

A pick-up truck pulls onto the mall parking lot  
and the driver hops out and slams the door,  
face set in anger, striding across the asphalt.  
A young boy climbs slowly from the passenger side  
runs after him, catches up and trailing behind,  
head down says, "Daddy, you don't want me."

His father says nothing for a long moment,  
finally mutters, "It's just that I get mad  
when you do stupid stuff." He says nothing more,  
never looks down at the boy now walking beside him  
into a vortex that waits patiently to swallow them both.



# elegy

Charles Coe

A dead baby deer is lying by the side of the highway,  
a flash of white and brown that I notice  
in a fleeting moment of surprise and dismay.

We all have seen possums and squirrels  
and raccoons and whatnot  
killed on roads and highways,  
but I have never seen a deer, and I'm  
flooded with unanswerable questions:  
did it wander away from its mother?  
Was it orphaned and stumbled in confusion  
onto this highway for its first and final  
encounter with the world of humans?

Did someone pull onto the shoulder,  
drag it to the side of road, take out  
a phone and with shaking fingers  
punch in the numbers to inform whatever  
earthly authorities oversee such matters?

I speed along in my two-thousand-pound chunk  
of metal, captured by the irrational thought  
that there was something I might have done,  
or could do now.

But I have nothing to offer, nothing to add.  
Can only think of deep forests that will go  
unexplored, and tender green leaves untasted.



# since the reading

John Yamrus

since the reading

was  
for a group  
of aspiring writers,

the host  
asked me to  
start off by giving the  
audience a writing challenge of sorts,

something  
to think about  
while i was reading.

i thought  
that was stupid  
and crazy and counter-productive.

it was  
bad enough  
having to read my poems,

which  
i hate doing,

because...

well...

i  
just hate it,  
but that's the job.

so i  
waited till the end.

and then  
i told them  
to go home and  
look in a mirror and  
write about what they saw.

i  
told them  
how to reach me

and said  
i don't care  
how they write it  
or what they write;  
just write something.

anything.

that was  
a week ago,  
and i'm still waiting.

some  
challenges,  
it seems, can't be met.

i'm  
just glad  
that i met mine.



## don looked at him

John Yamrus

don looked at him

and said  
he needed a  
good woman to  
kick his ass now and then.

he said  
it kept him in line.

being  
neither good  
nor a woman, but still  
the best friend Don ever had,

he  
beat the  
shit out of Don,  
finished his drink and

walked  
on out the door.



## her mouth

John Yamrus

her mouth

was a  
ruined white flower.

she  
had to  
be 80 or more,

but  
she stood there,  
in the back of the room,

while i  
read my poems  
to a couple of dozen students

who only  
looked tired and bored.

i wasn't into it  
and neither were they,  
and all i could see was this mop

of  
stringy  
grey hair

and  
a face that  
kept urging me on.





Erika Benson

## now and then i go

Jane Yolen

Now and then I go  
outside into the cold,  
not to engage in the season,  
but to a store, see a doctor,  
have tea with a friend,  
get to my writing group,  
or be driven between my house  
and my husband's home.

Once I went outside  
to go skating, skiing,  
to look for winter birds,  
or marvel at the ice floes  
in the Connecticut River.  
Now I write about those things  
in the warmth of my house,  
surrounded by blankets, scarfs,  
a cup of hot tea waiting on the desk.  
How age regulates our necessities,  
our loves.



## moving on

Peter Tacy

The advice is always the same:  
*move on!* As if one's life were linear,  
a journey without stops or re-boots,  
a trek (or, perhaps, a death march)  
within which we must always lean  
toward a destination, and away  
from our sometimes alluring, but  
always lost, unreachable, past.

I thank my friends for their concern,  
and fully comprehend the meaning.  
Perhaps, in another day, or even  
another life, I'll give it some heed.  
*But not now.* Not yet, after a night's  
dreaming, in which the lost still live,  
and love still ripens, like an apple  
blushing in the mid-day summer sun...

Let's take another byway, then; moving,  
yes, but daring to wander wide and far  
from any common route; bringing along  
a treasure-laden ark of all that's been  
for each of us (it cannot bear the light  
of day). Laden, yes, but liberated  
to go on defined not by a destination  
but by this day alone. Take my hand. Come!



# the histories of history

Linda Chown

When it was all Mediterranean  
it was all shining blue.  
So close to Waterloo.  
The port towns Ceuta and Algeciras  
With the venerable scruff of history  
Dirt, bombs, blood, old scraped rope-  
History was two thousand years here  
And I didn't know each country's name. My skin hung on wild like a dancer riding the roads  
faster. Can all this seem so close?  
The vast voluptuous Mediterranean pushes forward into mystery  
Water thrusting our boat high  
Into the histories of history.



# palimpsest

Linda Chown

If I Could Draw It

If I could draw a sign to fathom  
speech, and language,  
I would draw the deepest palimpsest  
in orange and blue.  
It would radiate the layers of desire  
Adumbrate the thickets of epistemology  
And shine forth the sometimes anguish of words  
This palimpsest would respect the work of poets linguists chanters narrators and mimes  
That anguish of words entangles  
the stunning purity of perception  
on a mildly snow lit afternoon



## over the moon

Linda Chown

Over the moon how to get there  
Strawberry fields forever but how to take you down there.  
Forever my eyes closed; reality up my nose  
Over the moon lies a player piano  
With golden keys. Whose music tickles off key. Take me down to  
Where I can make my own place  
Everywhere



## if you shoot me, we might just fall in love

Eben Bein

Take me out in November.  
Hunting season—I forgot my orange hat.  
Get me while I'm still fat and green  
and brown and maybe I'm asking for it—  
any fresh opening. A gush. Get me  
while the creek is barely a trickle  
and the blast can be heard for miles.  
Sling me over, still warm. I'm calling  
like a great horned owl at noon. I can't wait.  
Calling you with coat the color of  
dead needles, shirt the color of living.  
I bet you'd drive me to the hospital.  
I bet before long I'd have you  
seeing red everywhere.

