

MEAT FOR TEA

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THE VALLEY REVIEW
BOBA



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

The Bobas Have It

The Boba bean is a most eclectic matter and concept. This now quite popular drink originated in Taiwan in the 1880s and has crossed the world because of its unusual, delicious sweetness combined with a true earthiness. Boba itself refers to a small chewy black ball which appears at the bottom of the tea drink.

Boba is made from tapioca, which comes from the cassava root, placed at the bottom of a tea with milk and a flavoring which gives it an exquisite taste. By now in tea shops all over the world, people are glorying in the enjoyment of this tea.

And you may wonder what is the relation between this seductive tea and the reading of our esteemed Meat for Tea? Well, in the serious years before the enlightenment, people took writing somewhat like the bible, very seriously, a deep meaning was expected.

However, as the world grew and more people traveled and read, this one dimensional view of learning, lightened up some and gradually men, high in the church, began to wonder whether the world was to be so one dimensional, whether reading could have a degree of levity. Many began to maintain that learning was better with the touch of a smile.

And so as we begin an always exciting reading of the latest edition of meat for Tea itself, an impressive conjoining of the light and the serious essay and the meaning coalesce and invite us to more. We must keep the Boba in mind and realize that our reading will be enlightened by many perspectives, by an openness which could enrich a new reading.

We will enjoy the glorious syntax, exact maps and photographs essays which try to make sense of most difficult affairs. And we will enjoy all the more if we can enjoy this delicious Boba Sauce; its sweetness and sharpness, its dark deepness as we perceptively feel the world brighten and lighten in the melding of approaches and flavors. Do not ever tarry from John Cleese's conclusion regarding learning.

He who laughs most learns best."

Linda E Chown

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willa cather and the common view

Linda Chown

it was so hot I hallucinated
away to Red Cloud
which I imagined red
with tuft puff red rings
in the sky but it was gaunt,
a haunt of yesterday's atlas,
whipped white
and mini golf course green.

Willa Cather simply
dug out the passion
the red heave of these flat lives
painted golf course green
windspun living like flat trees
flat soup spoons like frozen lollipops she somehow enlarged their
ordinary glow holy.

Plain brown earth shines rose in
Cather's mind time which writes plainly
the infinity of art,
Its movement in stillness-
That infinity art holds.



forever, i go in

Linda Chown

Forever, I go in enough for always
because the sky is not solid, because the sky can't hold me up
because I grow wants like Goya
my world an ovary of chances bullets and young love
I stay young, because my want is strong -coils of jasmine and alabaster wind my
Spirit long . Like the world's outsiders I see in always, goldfish on my skin,
warmth on my bones.
Revolution motivating my desire to help the deaf hear
To bring us all out in the open, honestly, here..



yes to my english student

Linda Chown

Mary Carmen, am I that strange
when I suggest balancing Samuel Beckett
on your head or when I ask you dead
serious what color the sky is
or to count the teeth in your head.
Sometimes your bright girl eyes
fade and flicker, saying more to me
than your wart-scarred hands twisting
the folds of your red plaid skirt.
Sometimes when I make you close
those eyes to hear the sounds come pure,
I think you think I'm crazy—
after all, after our first class
you told your mother my Spanish
wasn't like anybody you ever heard.

But you go on anyhow and count and conjugate
and name all the colors in the room.
I ask you how old is your brother
and if you like wine or fish or beer.
And you being 8 years old and free of boys,
yourself from your pony tail to your brown
worn boots, almost immaculate in your youth,
come, I think, to watch that funny foreigner
perform and clown, to see if you can match
the strangeness of my English sounds
and you know for an hour or two each week
I become the little girl and you the grownup
poised all proper and slightly skeptical
on the edge of your seat.



a trope of learning

Linda Chown

to my father on his 80th birthday

All little, my patent leathered feet
pad to meet your stride.
Your long powerful legs unreachable,
I flutter in an intensity
To keep the pace you set.
Now, pictures show us, me,
all skinny with bobbed hair
and a crookedly intense wince of a frown
and you, all long and fervent
with lanky motions, intermittent twinkle.

Somehow this groping towards
has marked me well.
In this striving to join, to meet
to walk apace
is a trope of learning we share:
holding one's own in the present,
being completely there.

October 28, 1996



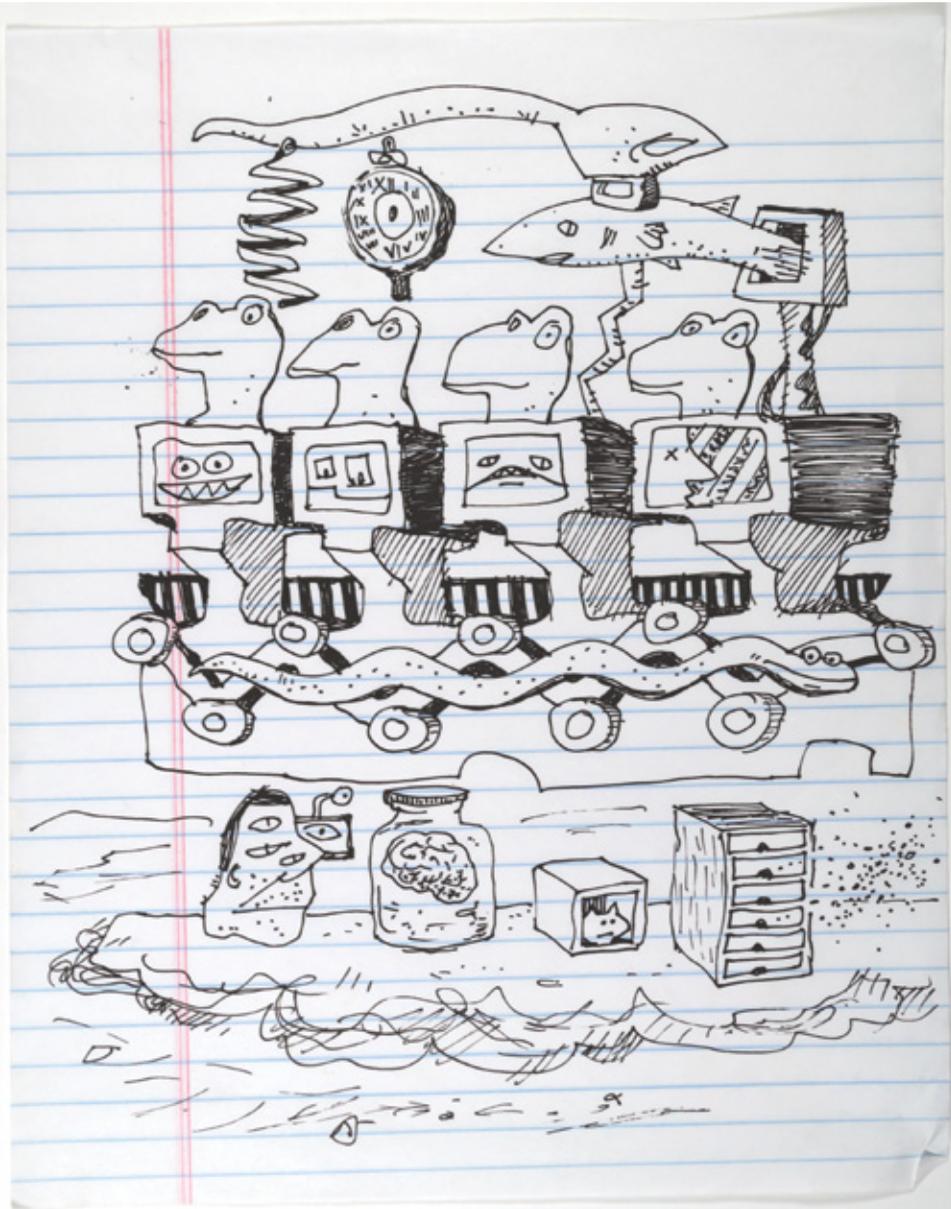
an affair to remember

Linda Chown

My life's been it seems all about getting well
About having the wherewithal
To fly a Sudanese kite, to
Borrow some Celtic headdresses
To wear a purple pointed hat,
To read Faulkner's trilogy when
The words intrude like spilled honey,

Getting well is an inner and outer affair to remember yourself by.
Lying in the beach at Nice the sand
Felt like holding hands with yourself
All complete and surrendered to
What is the honeymoon of your life.





frog train with brain and bees
Luke Jaeger

an incomplete poem i found in my computer

Peter Tacy

It slipped from some dark and silent place
by accident — the kind of failed embrace
I'm seeing all too often — a fragment of a thought
that never found a life. I'd fought
it to a solid start,
but finally left a single part.

A vision began, but its crisis was deleted.

So I finally left it... to be completed?

What remained had found a path, a route;
It bent toward a destiny I knew so well;
the story of a loss I'd longed to tell;
but left unfinished; inert: abandoned; mute.

Completed poems that I've contrived
leave me standing with the hearer.
They describe events that I've survived.

This was a tale of what's found nearer.



a perverse creation story

Peter Tacu

On the day when He had the whim to create a thing called Life,
God foresaw a heavy burden; the never-ending task of management
of this bright new bauble, amid the constant pull and strife
of an existing Earthly planet, upon which every continent

would forever drift, requiring life to be modified repeatedly
or cease to be. “What may I do,” the Great Imaginer inquired,
“to require Life to take on itself the task of creatively
persisting, of doing all that might in time be required

to survive?” Life, already inclined to go its own determined way,
proposed a new creation, which it could solely oversee.
In an instant, something called Evolution arrived — to stay.
But Evolution demanded its own rules from the Great Divinity.

“Before I take up my work,” Evolution said to God the Father,
“I must have the single tool I need for my endless duty;
the only instrument that can cause the force called Life to bother
itself to respect me, rather than rejoicing in its selfish beauty.”

“What might that be?” the Creator asked, in one astonished breath.
So Evolution was provided with Life’s antithesis, Death.



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february 24, 2024

Peter Tacy

Unhappy with its deficit of days,
February moves off in a muddy pet.
it's hard to be the shortest month
and stuck between the seasons...
never armed with winter's might
nor graced with the joy of spring.

Outside my window, dark-season birds —
juncos, cardinals, a lonely dove,
see their images in a slushy puddle,
and think of moving on, moving on —
February can't be short enough
for those driven by such impatience.

The cycle of seasons, life's inborn call,
exist here, in small and quiet ways.
You only have to watch and listen.
What then, if this sodden, chilly month
is given yet another day? A year arising
awaits! The sun is lighting us on our way.



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the crow and i

Jane Yolen

The crow and I
exchange glances.
He sends his
unsettling call
down to me,
and I laugh back.
Old friend,
good neighbors,
But we do not
take tea together.



the pills still bubbling

Jane Yolen

The morning pills still bubbling their way
down into my comfortable stomach,
I start my poem.

Sometimes it takes days to finish,
sometimes I just go with what I've got.
The poem insists,
I do not.



hands

Jane Yolen

That old arthritis,
once a neighbor,
has moved in for good.
Or for bad.
I can still type,
My brain still functions,
But I would starve
if I did not have
a husband, daughter,
cleaning lady,
or food other than those
in unopenable bottles
in my cupboards
and refrigerator.
God hands are rare.
God's hands rarer.



vultures at pt

Jane Yolen

As I wait my turn at PT,
I watch a roof-full of vultures
across the road, black wings
exercizing, the flap unrivaled.
Still hobbled by a broken leg,
I envy their smooth movements,
the moments before and after
they each float effortlessly off the roof
to capture the wind, the sky





icarus in gold
Niki McQueen