

MEAT FOR TEA

VOL 20 ISSUE 2
THE VALLEY REVIEW
HIGH



Meat for Tea: The Valley Review

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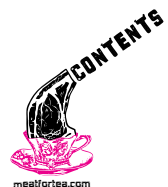
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Guest Salutation with Richard Wayne Horton

Imagine not waking up terrified. I can't do it. Imagine keeping some center alive within you. Imagine being able to laugh. To love. In THIS country. I do it, because I can't not do it. Imagine imagining. Our ultimate downfall and our essential destruction could come if the center does not hold. But it must if we wish to stay fully alive. What if, looking into the face of evil, we remembered that we are we? Even if the worst should then come, we would perish true to ourselves.

Let me talk about "there" and "here." If we're to have a "there," there must be a "here." But the there is precisely what creates the here. What came first? Udan-Adan? The swamp? The nothing-everything? Suppose a town builds itself in the swamp. How did it do that? By sinning/leaving/alienating itself. Personally I've been plagued by alienation since birth. The 1950s was a terrible time not to belong.

But if we're writers, we are the town in the swamp. We are the outside, naming and therefore creating the inside that surrounds us. We might joke that we're the village of the damned, and maybe we are. But damned by who? The walking unconscious? The fake religious? Self-important predators? Cheerfully banal murderers?

So here we are in our world. Try to be safe, but keep going. Keep being true and kind.

4

Richard Wayne Horton



on the exercise bike

Peter Tacy

Frailty is a feeling new to me.
A body that once served me well
and joyfully, now labors to be free
of caution and constraint. A spell
of anguish here, a dart of pain
arriving unforeseen; the ache
of ancient injury, now felt again,
all tell of danger with every stride I take.

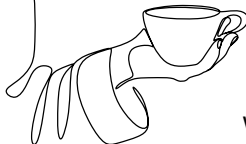
Living with the mindset of the young
is folly. Yet here in the gym, we old men
pedal, and push, and dream; and among
them, I too lose focus, remembering when...
when there was nothing for us to recall,
and the world of a glorious moment was all.



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portrait mode

Chelsea Clammer

It takes taking exactly 32 selfies to capture that *one* in which I look collectively cute, questionably anorexic, beautiful, and complementary with my camera-adverse blue heeler. She's wearing a bandana. Lime green today. Really brings out the life in my sunken eyes.

Eating disorders are all about control and at times, at least for me, ritual. The hard-boiled egg for breakfast. The morning self-weigh-in. The cigarettes instead of snacks. In regards to saying hi to the world, to daily posting a picture on social media to stay delusionally relevant (to whom? To what?), there is another ritual.

What it's like to take public-bound selfies with a dog when a wicked eating disorder filters the experience:

Chin down in a V, lips almost doing that duck thing but I'm forty and not ridiculous so not that. Just almost. Now, eyebrows up and a head tilt depending on the time of day, the sun's position. Don't take selfies inside. Fluorescence doesn't make anyone shine in a good way.

Grandma used to say before any picture was clicked: "Suck in your stomach!" Old lady wisdom. I rejoice in the lack of necessity to do this. What stomach? It's concave on its own accord. Perfection there—check. Legs looking admirably toothpick-y with the camera's downward angle—yup. Because it's all about that angle, your arm reached far away, thumb and pointer finger holding the phone—almost making it levitate. Such skill. Practice. Find the balance. Set the timer. Hit the round button; wait three seconds. Shutter sound. Search for perfection.

Oh, and always put it in portrait mode. Fuzzy background makes your body's hard-earned skeletal ridges pop more.

Now we insert the Texas cattle dog. Skylar hates the camera, is tired of my constant selfie-ing. But this banging, clanging body needs documenting because *LOOK*. I'm a fucking skeleton. I win, says the eating disorder. Are we done? says Skylar. Not yet. We have about 28 more selfie attempts to go until we take the *one* that looks:

- Re: cute—our faces, not duck-y but almost
- Re: questionably anorexic—banging, clanging body
- Re: beautiful—the socially demanded skinny, the grandma-approved stomach
- Re: complementary with my dog—will she ever look at the camera?

And thus the series of selfies on a daily basis. It's a type of body checking. A visual scale. Numbers matter here, of course. Because we hop on social media, we Facebook and Insta the eating disorder. And we wait—counting the number of likes, unfriending those who show concern in their comments, and hearting the ones with "lookin' good" laudations. So by god it might have taken 33 takes this time—in 12 minutes—but fuck yeah. I look 109 "likes" great.

As great as a gal who is dizzy from the draining physical activity of burning half her caloric intake by selfie-ing for 12 minutes can look.



aviskone

Michael Favala Goldman

Copenhagen, 1928

Every day at noon,
Lily pushes her old baby carriage
filled to the brim with fresh newspapers
to the corner of Jagtvej and Nørrebrogade,
where, infallibly, men, young and old,
find her and trade her flat wares
for coins she tucks into her pouch.

Lily never reads the paper.
It surprises her how the same men
come each day for what
is all the same to her.

Lily has sore feet
and two young children
she will bathe and feed before
going out with the evening edition.

In early twentieth century Denmark, “aviskoner” or “newspaper wives” hawking newspapers from discarded baby carriages were a common city sight.



150 Pleasant St., Easthampton, MA
between Abandoned Building and New City breweries

pastime

Michael Favala Goldman

I wasn't over you,
and it wasn't getting better,
so I chose one photo
that I took when
you weren't looking
and sent it to one
of those places,
had it made into
a jigsaw puzzle.

The box sat in my office
hidden a long time.
One week, my wife away,
I took it out. It was hard.
All that skin. All that hair.
A thousand pieces. I started
with the outline, but then
your eyes staring up at me.
All that body. All I wanted
was to put you together.

I stayed up till midnight.
More than once. Until
you were complete. But
I still wasn't. I stared
long at every section
of this complex puzzle.

I came to accept
we were on two paths.
I cast a spell as I took you
apart piece by piece,
that I would let you go
continue down your path,
leaving me to mine.
I disconnected each nub
from its fitted place
until all was separate again.
And closed the lid.



savagely i walk

Richard Wayne Horton

fourteenth poem

Savagely I Walk

bus wheels drum along under me I dream I'm walking to Dallas but darkness has fallen
and I won't be in time for the motorcade the seeing the waving the lights one by
one go out
far across the dark

I'm on a sidewalk that feeds into more sidewalks
and more sidewalks and more and more and more and more....

savagely I walk my mouth gulps night air

I get downtown about I a.m. pass the public library
then a row of smashed-open shopfronts empty shells of darkness where glass
crunches because someone's inside
walking across wall mirrors walking, walking, walking
out of one wall and into another store after store

my dream starts to cut out on me I kick in rage
as a terrible light starts to dissolve the city

a voice on the radio says:

"You must disperse! You must vacate! You must dissolve!

"You must struggle to get unwound

"From your bedsheet

"Because light has appeared in your window

"You will be extracted from this business
by force if necessary

if you don't let it alone!

"I am shining a light now!"



narthex

Richard Wayne Horton

sixteenth poem

Narthex

I stand in the narthex and see
steps to the choir loft
as the churchdoor coasts closed
and shuts off the ratchet
Of earth movers
in the housing development nearby
the pop of hammers
chalk dust rising
whine of a saw
I enter the cool dark, kissed
at the door by holy water
behold the nave
the cave
cave canem
beware the dog
beware the god
the votive candle pleromas
remember the departed
as they arrive
shrink into nothing
and then become everything

I kneel and accept
what cannot be there
in order for it to be there

I've killed the place I'm going
but will still go

and dare it to stop me



The chapbook *I Go Outside and I Speak To It* is coming out later this year at Lily Poetry Review.

These poems grew from the land and word blanket around Dallas. The black clay and sunrise tinted grass activated psychic forces which carried more life than the 1963 newspaper headlines, camera footage and radio audiotapes of an assassination. Event became requiem. Media evidence acted as ground on which to place a ladder to something bigger and more unruly.

I saw that we would be the good and the bad.

We would be the reason.

bible study reject

Timothy Gager

Evil Over Good

I was wired to not comprehend the existence of a gray area. Things had to be good or bad, dark or light, in or out, right or wrong, with never a gradient of in-between. Doing something good made me good, but if I did something which I was ashamed of, I was doing something bad, and thusly, a bad, horrible person. When I stepped over lines I would self-define. The experimenting with drinking and drugs, was one example of this---which I knew wasn't good in any way, which made me all bad.

It was in sophomore year in High School. I started to attend a bible study on Saturday nights. It was a large group of young people all wanting to be good people and be "saved." I wanted to be good too, but what I couldn't commit to was turning my life over to Lord Jesus Christ as my personal savior like all the others in the group. Some would get so zapped by the spirit they would speak in tongues, right in the church basement. It seemed to place those folks in higher standing in the group. Also of high value was if you had any part of the bible memorized and could recite an appropriate passage at an appropriate time. I respected those folks, as what they were doing was impressive, but, deep down I knew it was not for me.

Every Saturday night, my classmate John would pick me up in his mid-seventies Chevelle, and afterwards we would go to Friendly's for an ice-cream, sometimes in a group, but often it was just the two of us. John was very close to God and we would discuss what it meant over fries and sundaes. I liked John, but I often felt the pressure from him to be saved and show more commitment to God than I wanted. I wanted to please John, and the group, but if I took any step in that direction I felt like a phony.

At the church, during break, I loved playing floor hockey in the gym adjacent to the study area. I loved it more than the bible study itself. When I was called back into group, I resented it completely. I attended bible study for other reasons too. There was the social aspect, and a lot of attractive girls attended, and at sixteen I was being led around by my hormones.

Through the Roman Catholic Church, and bible study, I continued to get the message that anything not done in the glory of God was a sin. Unfortunately, everything I found enjoyable tended to be just that. The things I glorified, sex, drugs, and rock-n-roll were all considered sins. I knew I enjoyed drinking and I didn't want to stop that, but drinking was believed to be a sin. I also was still a virgin, and I knew I would commit that sinful act at the first opportunity. I was awkward and insecure, without any game, so the chance of committing sin was bleak.

What was much easier and took me to the dark side, was the immediate love of drinking, and getting high as much as possible. Drinking felt good, and I felt accepted by my peers for doing it, and I was just dabbling in smoking pot at the time. Now, I had a major conflict, and a decision I had to make. Which side of the good vs. evil axis should I pick?

Well, I went with evil, and there were consequences for that choice. I was now a sinner, a bad person, doing bad things. I picked going to hell over everything, and when even a little of gray area moved into my head, I would stuff it back down into the blackness. Any guilt or bad feeling about what I was doing, and who I was becoming, would get squashed with more alcohol. I accepted by rejecting good and accepting that I was basically a bad person. This was pretty easy to do. By “sinning” I was dark, not light. I was evil, and bad, not at all good; wrong, not right, and out, not in, I ---all the extremes of my polarized axis.

This thinking made me feel less of a person. In layman’s terms, I felt like a piece of shit. I doubled down to continue going all out in that direction. I accepted less for myself, less than I deserved, which reinforced my feeling that I had little worth. I deserved everything less-than that I received, and that was a choice I could control. John visited me at college and I challenged him to drink and smoke bongos at every moment of the visit. Woke up, got high, went to bed, got high. It was my way of doubling down, to get back at “good.” After the weekend was over, I never heard from John again.



well, about my attention deficit disorder

Timothy Gager

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Everyone knows by now what ADD is and, in most cases, it can be treated with medication which helps the person stay focused. Most get treated starting as a child, but it wasn’t until I was an adult that I was diagnosed, and then treated effectively. As a child it went undiagnosed, and because of that, it was me that was assumed to be the problem. Attention Deficit Disorder, manifested in many ways for me, which included, problems sitting still, talking without a filter, the inability to have patience, and the desire to go on to the next thing, even while the current thing was still happening. My behavior at church was a good example of this. To be asked to sit through church was almost as if I was being held under water for an entire hour, with the same urgency one would need to rush to the surface for air.

School felt the same way, and having to finish my homework, at the table, knowing full well that the television was waiting caused anxiety. I always finished, but it took a long time, and I often yelled out, “Done!” as if I were freed from being held against my will.

In the classroom my grades were good, but there were many negative hand-written comments from my teachers at the bottom of my report card:

“Does not work well independently.”

“Tim’s class attitude generally needed improvement, although his Math ability is very good.”