

MEAT FOR TEA

VOL 7 ISSUE 2
THE VALLEY REVIEW

chop





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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salutations from the editor

Ah, nothing like a mild June evening in this happy valley, a glass of Pinot Grigio, and a plate of Hadley grass, lightly boiled then put in the broiler under a blanket of Camembert just till the cheese bubbles and melts. The first time I had this dish was only a few days ago, at my friend Paul's house in East Hampton; his friend Nigel had given him the recipe. Paul and I were sharing a meal and a toast, celebrating the end of Marina's hunger strike. While we both very much want her freed, this small victory was worth celebrating.

I hope my recent decision to ad apiarist to my many avocations gives me reason to celebrate another small victory soon. I have been actively protesting the increasingly widespread use of GMOs in this country, but so far my efforts have done little. So, I have decided to keep bees. I look forward to fresh honeycomb on my morning toast and feel happy tending to these rapidly disappearing critters.

Long before my new apiary produces honey, Cirque de Pamplermousse explodes on the Valley in a whirlwind of art, film, spoken word and a star-studded night of music from Kim Gordon's new band, Body/Head, The Warblers, and Hugface (a new incarnation of this valley's favorites, Curious Buddies). I will definitely see you there and I'll endeavor not to bring any bees along with me.

besos y abrazos

Meaty (The Beekeeper) Gonzales

Free Pussy Riot!

“...it is not true that when the heart is full the eyes necessarily overflow, some people can never manage it, especially in our century, which in spite of all the suffering and sorrow will surely be known to posterity as the tearless century. It was this drought, this tearlessness that brought those who could afford it to Schmuhs’s Onion Cellar, where the host handed them a little cutting board - pig or fish - a pairing knife for eighty pfennigs, and for twelve marks an ordinary, field-s, garden-, and kitchen-variety onion, and induced them to cut their onions smaller and smaller until the juice - what did the onion juice do? It did what the world and the sorrows of the world could not do: it brought forth a round, human tear. It made them cry. At last they were able to cry again. To cry properly, without restraint, to cry like mad. The tears flowed and washed everything away. The rain came. The dew. Oskar has a vision of floodgates opening. Of dams bursting in the spring floods. What is the name of that river that overflows every spring and the government does nothing to stop it?” Chapter 42, pg. 525

The story of the Onion Cellar, taken from Gunter Grass’ *The Tin Drum*, brings to mind the ways in which our culture finds ways to avoid the grief that our media infested lives suffer daily. In short bites from television or the Internet we are presented with the cuts of war, of street crime, of natural disasters or insurgent massacres. At once we are led to believe that our better natures can resolve these traumas through negotiation, intervention and therapy. But, at the same time we are so deluged with information, mostly visual of already or potentially doomed human situations that we despair of solutions. So we move on to the next crisis, helter skelter, self-medicating to dull the anxiety, but hardly letting ourselves process our grief, fear and longing through introspection, meditation, conversation, even prayer.

Time frames these encounters in smaller and smaller increments, pushing itself upon us, tsunami-like, sweeping away our intentions and burying our losses. What we were 10,000 years ago, emerging from caves as the ice receded leaving arable land and communities that formed around it, hasn’t changed much at our emotional core. Our need for reflection, for companionship, for safety, for excitement, all and more remains consistent over the millennia. But we have built a world that dramatically rejects permanence, rips away the institutions we’ve established to insure it, and replaced it with a free-floating commodity culture where everything is reducible to its monetary value. We divide our experience into smaller and smaller bits, each with a quotient equivalency that seduces us into the territory of total simulation, eschewing provenance and its concomitant authenticity. The glamour of surface replaces the depth of personhood.

What is personhood? Putting aside all the current buzzwords that use the notion of ‘personhood’ as a way to politicize the unborn, or reject collective interconnection, can we acknowledge a person as one who speaks, listens, understands and acts; someone for whom meaning and its processes of discovery are based in experience and dialog as well as a connection to precedent. A ‘person’ understands her effect on those around her, and carries a sense of justice and fairness in those encounters. As well he may know enough about himself through reflection to struggle with unresolved issues, and to forgive his failures of action or inaction.

Let's look at the 'chop' again. In one way it is the wound, in another the surgical route to healing. It is the cutting away of old material to promote new growth, or the masterful art of cosmetic alterations to hide deterioration. Psychologically it is a way through layered resistance, worn out pathways of behavior, routinized relationships as well as unconscious habits. Of course it can also manifest as violent transgressions, inadmissible intrusions, breaking and entering where the life inside home or psyche has been broken.

With the 'chop' I am drawn down to essentials, to the darker place where the impossible/inevitable lives. I cut through the layers of denial, of the search for pleasure, of the gratification of security. I limbo down below the arterial corridors onto a platform where the line ends in a circular path. There is a joker there, offering me no route out, only the fearful retracing and suturing of pieces of myself laid bare.

What does this sutured being look like? Certainly not the slick persona that masks the partialized personality. The dream of wholeness, the recapturing of some kind of fantastic and pure simplicity, is the stuff of cults and nation states. Instead we have the Edward Scissorhands monstrosity, a being able to function, but unable to deny its recombinant nature. This is a world citizen, one who knows no natural roots, only the bricolage of global mash-ups. An historical accident, made of the speed of contemporary instantaneity and the recognition of its mortality.

To what purpose then is this being directed? Certainly not one designed by institutions or tribal loyalties. A purpose might be found in the performance of its discoveries. A daily accomplishment of realizations, of small actions to enable, of flashes of understanding, fleeting as they are, to be followed by moments of vertiginous hovering that tests resolve and shakes the seams that hold form.

There is no cure. It is ours only to thrash about our lives, never forgetting the tears that pull us back, that show us the way through to the knowledge of living and dying.



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today's menu

Zack Rogow

STARTERS

Parsnip rockets strewn with hijiki salsa on a moonbridge of home-made squid chips

Ultra-miniature tree-ear ravioli misted with a tomato suggestion

Seahorse kebabs napping on a mattress of “Kubla Khan” blue rice

Steamed elephant squash filled with zebra artichoke and blood-honeydew pâté

ENTREES

Geléed whole head of manatee stuffed with pearl onion eyes and edible corals

Flamingo confit with giraffe tomatoes and carmelized potato noses

Twice-burnt polenta served with brie-banana raita



DESSERTS

Prickly pear popsicles seasoned with Antarctic sea salt

Assorted gelato flavors: choose from Crib-of-Venus orchid, fried pork rind, or asparagus

“Skunk Hour” crème brûlée

Neon canoli with glow-in-the-dark jujubes



the death of sherlock holmes: a dated uprising

Robert Kingett

A coffee cup sat a few inches to the right of my laptop. There was a pinched concentrated look on my face as I typed in one name into the search box of a database at my local college. I expected to find nothing of interest and move onto some other author. Upon reading a few articles I found something that pivoted my questions skyward.

It begins in a medical room. A patient sits in a chair. A medical teacher and his student, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, were pondering a medical diagnosis. Joseph Bell takes an eight-second look at the patient. He deduces almost everything about their patient. Doyle stares in bewilderment at his professor. He waits to see if Bell is correct. Bell is correct. A character begins to form in Doyle's mind. When Doyle begins writing, he remembers the teacher who could glimpse into someone's life. Attaching this characteristic to the name Sherlock Holmes he began to flesh out a character that would be remembered for decades.

I began this research thinking that I would not find much of anything to think about. I was sadly mistaken. One of the most interesting aspects while starting out the research was Sherlock Holmes himself. I wanted to dwell deep into his mind and place my own magnifying glass to his existence.

I was fascinated with Holmes. I did not care about the mysteries themselves but I was intrigued by his mannerisms, his likes and dislikes, and his thought process. What was he like inside of his own head? Why does he think the way he does, and what inspired such a character? That was the first thing I had to know above anything else. This small mystery had plagued me ever since my first reading of the short stories. I soon got the entire Sherlock Holmes collection in audio and began a journey that would have unexpected results.

Throughout my readings I studied Holmes. I wanted to see what inspired this character. I wanted to figure out just how much Doyle loved his world famous detective. I found much more than Holmes could find.

There is one thing I learned from experience about characters in literature. Writers love their characters as if they were their own child. If there was ever a character who could win the hearts of the public, it was Holmes. He definitely captured my heart the first time I met him. His assurance and intellect and overall wit made me want to sit down and have a cup of tea with the fellow. After reading a few short stories and getting used to being around Holmes I decided to find out how much everybody else loved the witty detective. Surely Holmes was commonly liked by all people including his creator.

I began by looking up character analysis in Gale. As I was studying the vast articles I found one article that revealed something shocking. I read many articles by people who enjoyed Holmes as if he were the principal of a friend so seeing this made my thinking cap spin backward.

The public may have become great harmonious friends with Holmes, claiming that they knew him better than they knew some of their family but there was one person who detested

the world famous detective. Doyle hated his best creation. Upon reading this in a personal reflective article I wondered if this was even true. How could this be? Surely, a character that has brought him such fame and fortune would have a solid steadfast place in Doyle's heart... I was mistaken.

Intrigued with the realization I set out to find just how much Doyle hated the sharp-eyed detective. I soon found my answer in a letter that Doyle wrote to his mother. As I was reading the text I pictured a quill shaking in the author's hand as he wrote, "I think of slaying Holmes ... winding him up for good and all. He takes my mind from better things." I reeled back and shock. I just could not grasp why he hated Holmes so vehemently. Holmes was a cunning disarmingly smart and handsome fellow. How could Doyle hate such a creation?

This mystery was getting deeper with every article. I suddenly realized I now had something solid to look for. I knew that Doyle killed Holmes in *The Final Problem*. What I did not know was exactly when Doyle wanted to murder the detective.

Many scholarly journalists would argue that he did not want to kill Holmes until after "the *Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*." many journalists say, including Michael Atkinson, "Rarely has a story had such a straightforward purpose as *The Final Problem*". The goal is simple: shelve Holmes, for good." I have to say that they are correct about the fact that *The Final Problem's* main purpose is to kill Holmes, but I did not think this is where the plot began.

I did not know where to begin my sleuthing so I started looking for characters that may rival Holmes in the tales. After reading the stories for a second time I did not see any clues in the characters, suspects, contenders, or in the detective himself. Dejected, I began to read Doyle's biography to try to determine anything in there. Perhaps Doyle would really show me his feelings in his reflections. As I was reading a year jumped out at me as if it held a flashing beacon. The year tickled something in the back of my mind. I knew that I saw the year somewhere before when I was scanning the library databases. The problem was I couldn't remember where I saw the year or even what article. I decided to try looking on Google to see if this one year tied into two events. If it did then I would at least have something to compare. I found out that a Sherlock Holmes story was published in that year. Since I had that significant event I scrutinized the biography again. The year kept poking my memory wanting me to remember its significance. The year was 1893. I soon found my answer in Doyle's autobiography *The Doctor and the Detective*.

Two significant things happened in the year 1893. A brand new Holmes story made its way into literary journals. "*The Cardboard Box*." The second thing, stated in the biography, was Doyle's father died in 1893. I wanted to concentrate on the story more though, because I thought it held more clues to my initial question of when the plot to murder Holmes began. I dived into the investigating ring ready for action! I got more than what I bargained for.

The instant that I knew those two events had something in common I knew that I just had to read that story again. The answer had to be in some, if not all, lines of the story. It just had to be the place the murder plot began! The fact that his father died just before the publication could not have been a coincidence. I quickly shuffled through my CD sleeves looking for the collection that held this story. After a third time of listening to it, I realized how different it was.

Typical Holmes stories consist of Holmes and his sidekick, Dr. Watson, in their apartment on Baker Street. A character approaches the dynamic duo in desperate need of their help. Holmes deduces some characteristics about their client with some observant glances; the team dig as much of the mystery out as possible, and then the new character leaves their apartment leaving Holmes to tell Watson some things he notices or noticed about the client. The second half of the story, the half that deviates from the safe norm, has the team traveling to various places outside of the bubble of Baker Street. The reader instantly knows that Holmes and Watson are about to get into a tangled web of clues and suspects. This climax of the short stories sets everything up for the ending scenes. After the adventure outside of their headquarters, the team head back to their safe haven where Holmes pieces together the events that they have seen, heard, or figured out along the way using clues, testimonies, or object placements that neither Watson or the reader didn't detect.

As soon as the story ended, I knew *The Cardboard Box* shifted slightly from the normal Holmes formula in the closing scenes.

In *The Cardboard Box* it does not end with Holmes proving to his readers and his close friend that everything can be observed and noticed thus there is in fact a reason for everything and that science is deviant. Instead, this story ends with a confession. It ends with a confession from the person who committed the crime: the tale ends with Jim Browner's account of how and why he murdered his wife and her lover. Before, while reading the tale, I glimpsed this scene as just a never before seen confession with excruciating detail on a particular murder. Now, however, knowing that Doyle's father died in the same year that this story was published I now knew that this story formula deviated from the norm and that there was a very clear-cut reason for the formula switch. I needed to take a better look at this scene through new calculating eyes.

I knew that this story was different. I knew that there was a bigger connection than I saw. My task was to find out, exactly, what that connection was.

Something began to tickle the back of my mind, and it was about a character. Since Jim didn't act like any other Holmes suspect seen yet I had to keep my magnifying glass on him. I had my target and now it was time to track down more secrets. I watched him the minute he appeared on the scene. I did not notice anything revealing until his confession at the end.

I listened to the story again paying close attention to the desperation in Browner's tale. I thought, for a second, I could hear Holmes murdering someone. The amount of precision and accuracy in which Jim detailed the murder was with such observance and attention to detail it became increasingly difficult knowing that I was not listening to Sherlock Holmes. His tone when he tells the tale is full of malice directed straight at Sherlock Holmes. I could easily tell that Doyle poured his murderous desire into his own character. Clues and pieces began clicking into place even faster as Jim's murder account became more detailed. I replayed that entire scene again. Upon my fifth time listening to Browner confess the murder of his wife, I heard a message that I did not think I would hear in this story. I stared slack-jawed as I listened to Doyle's hidden message portrayed through Jim.

I could hear the subtle malice towards Holmes Doyle was trying to suppress. Through Browner's confession I saw that he was much like Holmes. He also had a keen eye. He told me

inadvertently when he was talking about his wife. "As I walked in at the door I saw the light of welcome in my wife's face. But as she saw who it was it faded again, and she turned away with a look of disappointment. That was enough for me" (338) "I looked into her eyes," Browner writes of his jealous sister-in-law," and I read it all there. There was no need for her to speak or for me either" (337).

As I was reading that section, I could sense the vibe that Doyle had towards Holmes. He poured his true feelings into Browner. I heard Doyle's cry as he begged someone to crush this first-rate character. It was staring at me the whole time and now that I had a lock on it, it held me. I knew that I was not into just any Sherlock Holmes story anymore. I was listening to Doyle tell his readers that he wanted to get rid of the delightful sleuth. I had the exact time period that Doyle plotted the murder of Holmes... I had solved the mystery that questioned many readers and journalists alike. 1893 was the year that Doyle planned the murder of Holmes.

I immediately wanted to see if anyone else had realized what I had. In all of the journals I was looking at from Gale no one had.

Journalists still speculated. William Gillette writes, "Something mysterious may have indeed happened to Conan Doyle in 1893." I just had to stare in bewilderment. The answer was right in front of me in his biography as well as his own story. Why were journalists still confused? Was I the only one who really looked deep into the death of Sherlock Holmes and made all these connections?

I was. I was also disappointed. I was not disappointed so much that no one had bothered to make the connection but I was disappointed with the speculations that every journalist seemed to allude to. It had to be something "mysterious." I could not help it. I chortled at the absurdity of it all. Why did it have to be "mysterious?"

Could it be that he was just overcome with grief, unable to carry on anymore for a much longer period? Did they really have to be something mysterious that happened to Doyle? I did not think so. Authors I know will usually have something happen in their lives that changes their whole thought process. One author that stood out for me the most in this department was the famous horror writer Stephen King. I chuckled as I compared King's "mysterious" car accident to Doyle's "mysterious happening" in 1893. I did not see a big difference.

I thought about the car accident that nearly killed Stephen King and how his writing began to shift systematically into the darker portion of King's untapped imagination. I began to chuckle at all the mysterious things that should have happened to Doyle in 1893. Nothing mysterious had to happen to Stephen King, did it? Why did it have to happen with Doyle?

Knowing that any further research in the databases was frivolous, I began to re-read each story after *The Cardboard Box*, now that the initial mystery was solved, curiosity got the better of me. I wanted to see how much the writing, or scenes, story, characters, or resolution would change. I kept a vital eye on each tale, trying to feel what Doyle felt page after page of listening to Holmes and Watson talk. I could almost hear Doyle screaming in agony as his permanent houseguest inside of his head dominated the atmosphere. I also noticed something else about Holmes. He had changed.