

# MEAT FOR TEA

VOL 13 ISSUE 2  
THE VALLEY REVIEW

STREET



JEFF  
WRENCH

# 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: "Why Do You Ask?" by Jeff Wrench

Back: "Cityman" by Hayley Patterson

## 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, KW Home, Brits R Us, Oh, My!, Delap Realty, Joslin Hall, Kevin Mulligan, Vaughn Agency, Shark Tank Tattoo, Corsello Butcheria, Glamourama, Whales, Owen Manure, 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. 13 Issue 2, June 2019, first printing. ISSN 2372-0999 (print) ISSN 2372-1200 (online)

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## salutations from the editor

Welcome and Salutations to this, our Street issue.

Perhaps, like me, you feel like you've gone through a looking glass and find yourself in the upside down of our current, post-truth nation. A place where children are held in cages at our border and several have died there, but many of our elected officials claim to be "pro-life," so very much so that, in some states a "heartbeat bill" has passed, and several others are trying to follow suit. A place in which a cluster of cells barely graduated from a blastocyst is guarded and protected, but families with small children are having housing and food stamps withdrawn. But yet, "PRO LIFE!" scream the pundits.

And, perhaps, like me, you wonder how many impossible things you can be expected to believe, and like Alice, you marvel at The White Queen who "believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast." (Is Sarah Huckabee Sanders lying or just equally skilled at believing impossible things?)

In this place we have Trumpty-Chumpty, not yet sitting on a wall, but only because it has not yet been built, despite his boasts to the contrary. And we are compelled, like Alice, to wonder whether "you can make words mean so many different things." Trumpty makes words mean whatever he pleases and is even trying to eliminate a few he doesn't like.

So, here we are, on the other side of the glass. Things are weird and scary, but we may as well have fun and take as our role models Luis Bunuel, Paul Klee, Leonora Carrington, and all the artists who lived through the interwar period. Toward that end, I invite you to enjoy to Street issue, the paintings of Jeff Wrench, three stunning films, and the music of Whales and Owen Manure at the Cirque. Show me the way to the next whiskey bar...

Besos y Abrazos,  
Elizabeth



# in the key of h

John Herold

The country twirls its hair, grinning into calm water,  
and inside of us another body slumps.  
The solar eclipse is fake. Abraham Lincoln was never president.  
The White House deletes pages of the Mass in B Minor.

A body inside of us aches and slumps.  
The president brags of what he has done—  
the sunrise, the forward pass, the Mass in B Minor—  
while our stomachs rise to our mouths.

In front of chicken coops, the president says amazing things.  
Wind turbines cause cancer of the ear. Coal is beautiful.  
Our stomachs rise to our mouths  
while we hear the truth is not the truth.

Wind turbines cause cancer of the ear, coal is clean,  
global warming is a Chinese plot, and guns keep children safe.  
The truth is not the truth,  
and America will be beautiful, it will be great, you will love it.

Global warming is a Chinese plot, handguns make children safe,  
the enemy news media pushes Marxism.  
America will be beautiful, you will love it,  
and in the woods, beetles and centipedes turn away.

The enemy news media pushes Marxism.  
The president reads love letters from dictators,  
and centipedes and beetles bury themselves into the soil  
while something inside drifts an arm's length away.

The president reads love letters from dictators,  
and while the bobcat turns its back to not see us  
something inside moves an arm's length farther away.  
The spruce bog holds its breath, eyes closed.

Lynx and rabbit turn their backs to not see us.  
Our leaders boast of groping women  
as the spruce bog holds its breath, eyes closed.  
Inside us, the stooped body turns away.

The solar eclipse is fake, and Abraham Lincoln was never president.  
Something leaves our bodies, out the tops of our heads,  
and longing swirls of fog wander the shoreline at dusk.  
Grinning, the country pulls out its hair, a few strands every hour.



# five birds

John Herold

Silhouettes float and flutter, going nowhere  
like five squirrels improvising in midair,  
five clowns running around to form a pentagram,  
or random dancers at an outdoor concert.

Why the oddball number, and not four?  
Four makes seating easy at a restaurant table.  
Four can make new pairs while hiking on a trail.  
Maybe five is two couples and a lonesome sister.

Which is the quiet one at lunch?  
Which one is thinking, "I'll be going now. I left something on the stove"?  
Or is always last into the back seat, turning to face the window?  
Maybe one of these wants only to keep up,  
like a boy without a bicycle, running along side his buddies.

Floating and fluttering as if they know  
each other, they keep a familiar pattern  
of compliance, or is it complacency?  
thinking or not, of being  
a musician, or farmer, or activist,  
or of dancing in the air.



# twenty years ago

Ed Coletti

## Twenty Years Ago

*There's not  
a soul among these trees  
And I  
don't know where I've gone*  
- Octavio Paz

Car parked on  
shoulder by  
highway through  
Humboldt County  
California  
years ago  
no driver  
no passengers  
no one walking  
into redwood grove  
where curiosity  
enters to  
survey spaces  
within this  
fairy ring  
defined by  
leaf-filtered  
sun's rays—  
touch of  
God in the woods  
no sign of human  
life or less  
human freeway  
drivers losing  
themselves over  
years dissolving  
in the sun's play  
amongst big trees—  
discovering nothing  
but wood fragrance  
pervasive as  
this silence  
of invisibility



## common starling

Ed Coletti

Unarmed  
swaggering  
unnerving  
this discovery  
I'd never realized  
starlings have no arms

Until they fly  
anomalous mummies  
strut their stuff  
amputees  
on the city streets  
in neat little parks  
by sheltering hedgerows

I wing rapturous  
with these tiniest raptors  
throwback flappers  
disarming passerines  
sleep disturbed  
no evening nappers  
vestigial hands  
their claws or talons  
clinging to some earth



# aimless

Ed Coletti

stationary soldier shooting shouted  
    what in the hell did he yell  
tangible target tracked he toppled  
    in a thrall to where'd he fall  
moist ferny glen all over then  
tear tender eyes  
    shouts break to sighs  
jaybird on fence gesticulating pest  
    nodding a bearing to the West  
(the nature of a globe or any orb  
    belies direction from where I board)  
that further falling father felled  
    continues dropping never lands  
blown in files right to left  
    and in columns down and up  
without its point the compass lost  
    aimless trooper's pentecost



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Danielle Hark

# five years

Sinéad McClure

**1998.**

A scream at night is only effective if someone disturbed by it cares. Even if that scream cuts the night frost like an arrow. Even if that scream has been stifled for five years and rises from the belly like a tsunami to the lips. It is only effective if somebody cares. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of October 1998, nobody cared. Nobody lit a cigarette and leaned against a fence deciding what to do next. Nobody took the spade from the shed. Nobody struggled to lift something heavy into a car boot. Nobody drove up the boreen and disappeared into the morning like a late swallow. Nobody noticed.

**1993.**

The Irish Sea belied its name on most ferry journeys. A lake at Holyhead it would rage into an ocean somewhere along its middle. Claire Jenkins was well used to the rolling disturbances halfway through her three-hour ferry journey from Holyhead to Dun Laoghaire. This was her fifth crossing this year. And she wouldn't be coming home for some time.

She took to the outer decks for a smoke, preferring the sea air mixed with nicotine to the crowded smoking area onboard.

“Have you a light?”

“Yeah, sure.”

The lighter changed hands.

“It's a good crossing for a change.”

“Always rough in the middle, though, like a bad sponge cake.”

“I wouldn't really know about cakes”

“No, you're probably watching your figure or something.”

“No I'm a diabetic, a cake is a rare treat, I'd even settle for a bad one!”

The man who was talking had instigated the conversation when he asked Claire for a light.

He had a Dublin accent, Claire wasn't overly familiar with Irish accents and dialects, but she could tell a Dubliner as much as a Northerner. Probably from the recent influx of Irish made movies, mostly about the troubles in Northern Ireland.

“Are you on a visit?”

“ No I’m moving to Ireland.”

“Why? There isn’t much going on over there.”

“Well hopefully something will happen for me.”

“Yeah go for it!”

“Are you from Dublin?”

“Dun Laoghaire.”

“Oh that’s handy.”

“Handy for the boat you mean? Yes I suppose it is, although I don’t use it much.”

The wind picked up.

“Shite it’s getting to the rough bit, I’m going inside to enjoy the rest of this.”

The man nodded down at his cigarette, the ash spat away on the wind. He turned back towards the door and struggled to open it, cursing as it slammed behind him.

Claire moved closer to the boat rail and flicked the remains of her cigarette into the rising swell. ‘That’ll spoil the cake’ she thought as the butt flew overboard in seconds.

#### **1994.**

The clock ticking became a comfort. There was something homely about the sound. But as time wore on it bit away at the silence like a gnat. There weren’t many sounds outside of this place either except for the birds chirping. Inside, the ticking clock meant she was alone again and that was the only comfort she had. Nothing sounded the same. Everything ticked or chirped even the close hum of a car engine, a car door closing, a click of a key in a door.

These sounds filled her with dread and then the worst sound of all her own heartbeat, ticking, out of time with the clock.

She only had her thoughts in these quiet moments. But even her thoughts had become muddied. It was as if she didn’t know who she was anymore. She couldn’t feel who she was anyway. Her body was no longer hers. She was a ragdoll. Most times she was in darkness. Even when the box was opened she found it hard to focus, this was normally a cruel but brief experience, and done in the darkness to cheat her mind even further.

She was someone else now, it was as if she was reborn on the day he took her. Fragments of her past life came to her in dreams but even then it was as if she was watching a movie about someone else.

She still recalled the first day she came here, as hard as she tried to keep those images out of her mind's eye they never went away.

## 1993

Dun Laoghaire had a lot of charm. The Georgian buildings gave an air of prosperity to the area and it reminded Claire of holidays in Brighton. But she wasn't here for a holiday and had settled into her new routine quite easily. She worked nine to five as an office administrator for a construction firm. Seemingly construction was the business to be in, in Ireland. Her work wasn't too taxing an easy job that she could leave behind her in the evening and not think about until she started again the next day. But the weekends were her own, and she often walked the West Pier preferring its loneliness to the hustling popularity of the East Pier.

"How's it going?"

The man nodded with his greeting. It was something Claire had gotten used to, people always greeted you in Ireland whether they knew you or not.

"Fine, nice day"

"Don't you remember me?"

Now this was unusual.

"Em...should I know you?"

Claire had paused for a moment to look more closely at the man.

"You're the little Welsh lady I met on the boat a few months back, I never forget a face or an accent."

"Oh I recognise you now, the man who knows about cakes!"

"You see, I knew you. I was right, I took a gamble that it was you to be honest."

"Well you have a better memory than me, that's for sure, see you."

Claire turned from the man to continue her walk along the pier.

She remembered seeing a seagull circle overhead and hearing the wash of tide flap against the harbour wall, she remembered a smell that was even saltier than the sea but before she realised it was the smell of her own blood, everything went black.