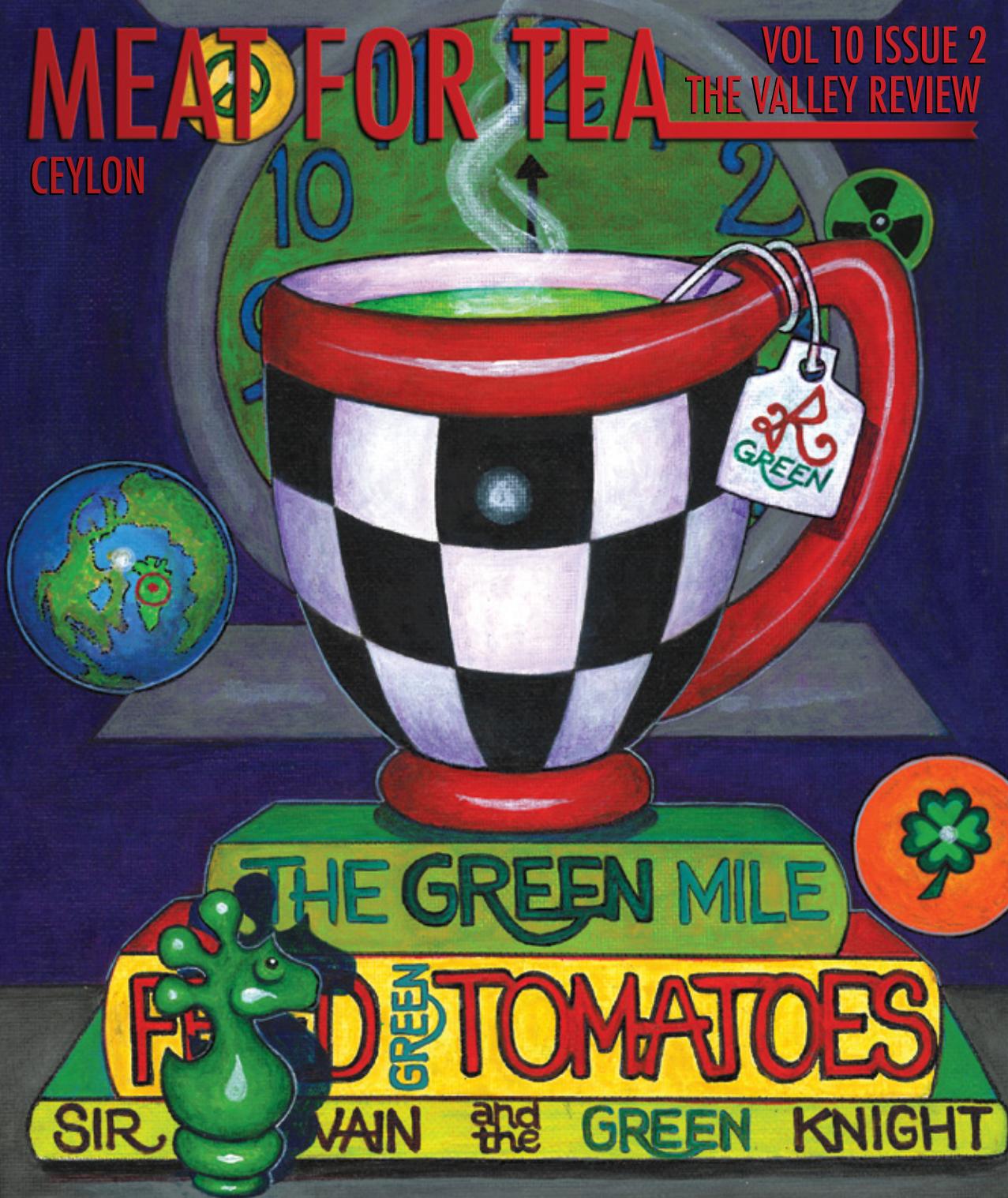


MEAT FOR TEA

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THE VALLEY REVIEW

CEYLON



2016

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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Please send all other editorial correspondences to meatfortea@gmail.com.

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salutations from the staff

Salutations from the staff here at Meat for Tea and welcome to our Ceylon issue,

You open the cover and pale blue mist seeps out. Or else, you notice the pale blue mist, thick and cool, pouring out from between the closed pages pressed together from across the room. The steam is redolent: vanilla, bergamot you can't place it. It is certainly steam, fog, a cloud, not smoke; there is nothing acrid about it and the curls of spume hum with the rattling of mammoth leaves and the indistinct calls of exotic birds.

Either way, the cover got around to being opened and inside, dessicated but intact, are the words, some tiny oneletter "a"'s and "l"'s. Others large and perfectly preserved, the syllables like the segments of butterflies pinned to the white velvet of the page. On one page is a poem with short, spare lines that run down the course of the ivory paper. The next page begins an essay and the page is littered with fine lines, crescents, and dark consonant clusters as if a tea bag had been torn open and poured out over it. Green leaves sizzle in a dry pan, turn brown, and dry out over the desk lamp. It's the sound of hundreds of pages being turned. Outside cars rumble past in a long line along a steep hill with bales of tea over their shoulders. There are shouts in a language that you don't understand that echo off the cliffides and descend into the valley where the chimneys of villages puff gently. Livestock low. Mules tread between cinnamon trees hauling burlap and from the other side of an essay the phone rings:

At this issue's release, the Cirque des Bougies, art is on exhibit by Brian Thomas Weston. Connolly Ryan will be playing with Free Range Cats, there will be a screening of *Thicker Than Water*, a new film by Thomas Matthew Campbell and featuring our own Editor in Chief. As always, there will be copious, lush, faintly perfumed spoken word.

-Joseph

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RAIN

The newest and hottest lounge/nightclub.

Coming to the center of Westfield (262 Elm Street)

Get ready for the fun and excitement!

the unreliable narrator strikes again

Connolly Ryan

There's a kid killing another kid
down on the bike-path, or is he
licking the other kid? Yeah, licking.
The giant hippy is smoking a purple bong.
No wait, the hippy's purple and the bong's giant.
Puerto Rico is going through a terrible fiscal crisis, that's no joke.
But asking how many white people
it takes to screw up half a million years
of indigenous ingenuity, is a joke.
The answer: all of them. Which is a cruelly
accurate joke but a joke all the same.
Five out of four specialists don't know how
to count. Socrates distrusted Experts in general
because he believed their knowledge was one-eyed and immune from innovation.
The Jury voted for him to die, but he
was so loved that even the prison guard
cried and cried as the hemlock sank in.
My backyard is hide-out for panicked chipmunks
and safe-house for blue hyacinths to blossom.
Holden Caulfield once said that no matter where
you are in the world someone has written fuck you in some form or other.
The last I checked, (just a second ago) there were no fuck yous
in my backyard, except perhaps the bald spots
on the lawn, but those are more like fuck yous
to my neurotic competition with my neighbor's
magazine-green lawn than they are fuck yous
to the grass itself. The biggest untelevised vulture
I've ever seen was devouring a weasel's viscera
an hour ago in my driveway, actually it was
a bundle of chickadees bathing in the cool dirt,
but at least one of them was the official state bird!



prince of the yard

Connolly Ryan

Son on Wa Wa Guitar
contacting spaceships
with Spielberg hieroglyphs
and Zeppelin Hammers:
(a Thor-de-Force)
Birds all agitated, don't
know what to make
of electric boy's
meandering hypnotics.
Do the birds know
that Prince just died?
My son knows.
Hendrix, wherever he
roams, also knows.
The Wa Wa makes waves
and waves of wailing walls,
gorgeous torture-scapes
for our ears to run from and into
as we pretend to process Loss.
The guitar moans and mourns:
not just a machine
that kills fascists,
but a tool to rebuild
prematurely shattered,
cruelly splintered worlds too.
Yard is all lit up and breathless,
like a Passover slut-lamp,
a coruscating tabernacle,
a Princely Séance wherein
stelliform palladiums coalesce
and Rock, in the name of Fuck-all,
is just getting born.



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**White Square -
Fine Books & Art**
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Easthampton MA 01027
whitesquarebooks.com

Coming Events

Natasha Lowe
Saturday, June 11, 1pm.
(during Cultural Chaos)

Bloomsday '16
Our 6th annual group reading
Sunday, June 19, 1 pm

Terrence McCarthy
Author / essayist
Wednesday, July 20, 7 pm

Books & Beer
Summer book events at Fort
Hill Brewery – stay tuned!

the poem is a mouth opened wide

Connolly Ryan

Whippoorwill is a sturdy bird and even sturdier word.
Forsythia in early Spring is the color of a politician.
Motown is more a philosophy than a record label.
The cardinal in the brambles is a liquid torch.
Robert Frost was right about fences: I forget
what he said about them but he was right.
The cat-bird keeps popping up in books
I am reading and also on the bike path.
Line-breaks can look like a stairwell
in a poem about mostly nothing.
Ray Charles changed America,
that much is beyond doubt.
I just took the neighbor's dog,
a beagle named Sienna, for a walk.
The sky has streaks of secret meaning
that only animals and a smattering of elders
can competently decipher. My daughter noted
how strange it is to be having sunny warm days
while there are still scarcely any leaves on the trees.
While I'm not an enormous fan of gingerly sculpted poems,
I have certainly enjoyed chiseling and harvesting this puppy.



letter to jeff koons

Stefan Lovasik

"I always loved balloons and inflatables."

from an interview with Charlie Rose

Dear Jeff,

Whoopdeefuckindoo! Ok...please tell me you're just shittin' me. You have 230 employees/slaves to your cult of personality, like David Koresh, who do all the work based on your "idea"? That you made 58.4 million dollars for the "Balloon Dog". Oh, excuse me, the orange one. I imagine the other colors were not in vogue at that particular moment in bullshit land.

You know, Dali at least held the brush and certainly crafted his persona and Picasso had at least one hand on the brush or whatever medium he was using while one hand was on a tit or an ass. You try to tell us that your suspended basketball is about birth and self and community...? That your annoying tick-tocking fucking flowers lined up pretty in a row are about continuity and the life-cycle...? Seriously? Art really is nothing more than the dialogue attached to it. I hope not, but I think you proved it.

Your John Edwards haircut and your whispered, measured speech with your fingers gesturing your obvious exquisite, effeminate sensibilities doesn't work for me. I'd rather just see your balls.

Please start using crayons and construction paper.

By the way, from what snake oil were you birthed?

All the best in your artistic pursuits,
Stefan Lovasik



dick

Stefan Lovasik

i'm just a white/straight/slovak/guy with with hooded eyes/
who wants to finally say something about his dick/
its place among the exquisite sensibilities of watery culture/
who has been reduced to a stuartsmalley psyche/
that my dick is big enough/strong enough/smart enough/and

darn it, good enough/
i can still drill diamonds with it/ can still block out the sun
if i lie at precise angles/
my misplaced simian tail according to some/

we don't care we love everyone/
me and my ithyphallic one eyed monster
that just hangs out like a body in a hammock and doesn't miss a trick/
but after all, i'm just a white/straight/slovak/guy with hooded eyes who doesn't know dick –

*



saint - Lavinia Roberts

a complex root system

Candace R. Curran

His bully wrist-twists band her
with strawberry bracelets
and words that strip
thin shin like birch and still
he expects courtesy and dinner

On waking he remembers sorry and dangles
sloppy grins like runny eggs with fish hooks baited
sweet meats and desire
for an uncomplicated
forgiveness if she isn't foolish about it if she

didn't always have to question and test
He tries to erase last night's tears
cut diamonds from yesterday's sky
can't she see the effort
find it in her
she's a dreamer he says a spoiled brat

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She's dreaming right now
a knife to her cinched tongue
tied and bound unraveling
tangled roots that would recover her
sweet dreams and voice box the sound of her
good name the keys to the car



the secretarial wheel

Marge Piercy

I was a secretary far oftener than once—
and a pretty good one, although I stole
paper and pens to write with and stamps
to send out my early overwrought poems.

I typed fast and accurately, I listened
to bosses' complaints and handed over
sympathy like weak tea. You never really
like the person who work for, it's only

a matter of less difficult, less demanding,
less obnoxious. You learn when to laugh
and when to back off. The distance
is crucial. Now I am the boss, difficult,

demanding, trying to be less so but
failing. Hiring is a lottery that seldom
pays well and firing is a minefield I
pick my clumsy nervous way across.

An intelligent robot would be easier
but why would an intelligent machine
want to serve a person? I need help
but help always has its own needs.



all wilderness gone

Marge Piercy

When I was twelve, my parents
bought a cabin on a small lake
hemmed in by forest. The best path
led deep. I learned to stay upwind
of deer, to be still as a tree.

A huge oak had fallen across
blooming with fungus. We kids had
to creep under it to reach a swampy
patch impassible after hard rain.
We crossed a blowdown from tornado

a decade before. Raspberry bushes.
White berries we thought poisonous.
We came at last to a beach where we
swam, our own lake too weedy. Here
the bottom was yellow sand. Half

an hour of traveling. Now it's flattened:
rows of little houses with their garages
and drives and primped lawns. A few
deer still tiptoe to nibble shrubbery
from scant woods not yet chainsawed.

This land is stripped to blandness.
A two minute drive to an asphalt parking
lot at a beach where a portapottie
marks the edge and the bushes
lean over cans and sunscreen tubes.



quite, quite gone

Marge Piercy

Grief coils around me, cold
slithery. I am the empty center.

What I miss is gone. Missing
is enormously present.

I am me minus one. Who can
replace that pulled tooth?

Time goes on; you didn't.
Ashes give nothing at all.

A poor souvenir. Nothing
personal. Erased face.

I reach out my hands
not even wind fills them.

I speak to the silence.
Silence answers with itself.



not speaking

Marge Piercy

Silence between old friends
embers of a fire
still giving warmth.

Silence between new lovers
hawthorne's white petals
inch long black spines.



green burial

Marge Piercy

Death was a relatively common
event in my childhood. I remember
Aunt Margaret laid out in the parlor
in Ebensburg, another aunt screaming

as she went down, my mother tending
Audrey next door dying slowly of cancer,
Julia who perished in a house fire,
her body carried out on a stretcher

her burnt arm hanging limp. Now
death happens in hospital beds
in a net of tubes and beeping
machines supervised by doctors

who know nothing of you not
inscribed on a chart. I want to own
my death, I want my body treated
like a corpse and not a mannequin

a stuffed creature pumped empty
then sealed in cement. I want to
go into earth, to give back my flesh
and bones, my minerals, all to feed

whatever needs what use I still may
offer. as I buried my cats. Wrap me
in a sheet and shovel me under
with no pretense I am sleeping.

