

Nancy Anne Miller

A Geography of Tea

The kettle's high pitch,
a vexing against *all* ills,
the village women's *hiss*,
wards off evil. The shrill

sound of the wind whipping
casuarinas as a hurricane
circles the island. This
bitter brew we savour,
put in sugar, cream, make
sweet. Indian tea pickers, carry
a basket on their back, thrust
leaves over their shoulders in

a reversal of the child's tipsy
game. *I'm a little teapot,*
small and stout, tip me over
and pour me out. The thick

green bushes grow like pieces
of a puzzled map where
countries try to join. Upstairs
china is fine enough for hot

chai to go in first, won't crack.
Downstairs crockery breaks
without milk first in a cup, like
a doily from the mother country.

Plastic Ocean

I unravel a wave of plastic,
to cover the cheese plate,
clear as water at Ely's Harbour,
see through to view a soft brie,
like a soggy sifting sandbar. This

surge of Saran Wrap will flow
all the way to the ocean where
the slit stomach of the swordfish
has bits of pink, orange, yellow
in its esophagus, mimics a mosaic

coffee table. Dolphins dive in
curves like a can opener cutting
the rim of a steely sea. The ocean
has a smog, a net hangs from
the surface, catches our attention.

A cruel joke about how a butterfly's
fluttering wing in Japan affects
me. I throw away my Pelligrino
water bottle, a disposable bomb,
blows apart in an in-disposable ocean.

Reefs, seaweed, fish absorb broken
pieces, float back to me
in the coral coloured meat
of a salmon I believe I am
eating to be in the pink of health.

Oration

Just when a president
returns to nationalism,
his country better, bigger,

the universe speaks,
wretches up seven new
planets in its mouth like

a Greek orator recites to
the sea, marbles under
his tongue. The world is

large, beyond borders,
beyond walls, the un-
known is the knowable.

Remember the US flag
on the moon, a cocktail
drink ornament on an olive.

Not the Country I Was Born In

So no straight forward monotone,
just raised up high pitches, like a pinky
for tea, and then melting words,
breadfruit which couldn't survive heat,

sticky A snapper flipping on a dock in
a pool of water, like a tongue
still full of the sea's rhythms
seeking an ocean's context.

A sentence as something to end?
Not so in the semi-tropics, enough
just to begin. In the U.K., a course
to jump your horse through for the

Queen. Not this U.S. banner for the self,
Chinese Cookie blurb about truest
you with lips pursed for a kiss.
This is not the country I was born in.

Fly Away

The propeller passenger,
plane over Africa 1943,
looks so heavy, clumsy,

an Oldenburg sculpture
might fall from the sky.
Out of date like 50's

household items. The mixer
with dual spinners, whirls
batter, two birds about

to take off. The peak of
a soufflé, the mountain tip
in Kenya where women defy

gravity, balance papayas, eggs
in a basket on heads, without,
so thin, they might fly away.

Global

*I use to make those circular thatch bags,
when I was a child in Honduras!* the woman says
to me inside the Pantry. A golden cymbal announces
loudly that I too am from a warm country and still

carry this portable sun, I always want near into
colder months. I open its mouth up as she and I peer
into it like a shell forced open for a pearl. The man
in the documentary about the Andes, says all seasons

are becoming one. He believes it is a sign of the end.
The anthropologist filmmaker climbs the mountain
to retrieve a block of ice as dear these days as a diamond.
In Kiribati the islands she visits become saturated

watercolours, a washout, blur, lose the delicacy
of imagery. Their flag, a sunset above island waves,
now rivulets of heat, a bird carries the message
it can no longer weave, make a straw nest, to land.
your other phiz.