

from *The Wide Road*

A trap. Trains under horses' feet. Dust slides to front. The sky palpitates to our projections. "I will react," we said and made a man spinning around an eye. The eye is the only feature of our "landscape preserved from biographical writings"—a terrain that miraculously came (Kathy Acker would say "orgasmed") from the pen of Journoud sometime previous to our trip to Milwaukee. A flat building drops to the ground. We find our figure Journoud preparing the road. An eclectic gunrunner is trying to obfuscate our invention: Journoud? Acker? "Orgasmed?" The road? The gunrunner will fail to discern the invention, to weed it out from borrowed drek. Because

we are Cassandra Persephone Pandora A. Prop

We slide his coarse and superficial immorality under our gown. I bet you would like to know about this gown. It is terraced and rumped on one side, in blues grouping backward into darker hues as it drags. In the purely ecstatic torment of passivity, we refuse to open our arms. The hand thrashes within the bucket.

dryness and passion  
don't mix

said the professor. It is best to take her out of the desert, put on a few pounds, and give out bullets of lust. We raised our hand, since we realized we'd been captured and put behind bars. "Will these words suit, professor?"

peach juice  
slut  
triple

"I can only tell you that dryness is not sexy and I've never heard of Clement Greenberg, though a man."

"This can't be the University of Milwaukee!" we exclaimed.

The professor admitted that it could not.

It was an Institute of Inquiry, though not of Measure. We lay about with some of the students who were discussing brute force. "This

topic always makes people obvious," said the woman who was supporting herself with her right arm on our lap in order to lean more emphatically toward the splendid but rigid man. "We need immediate substitution," she added.

"You can't improve the world with dictionaries," he said.

"You're right—but you can with airplane tickets," said the one who had been talking about fishing and was now stirring chowder. "My own recipe," he said; "a secret very strong broth."

The sea-scented steam condensed on the walls of the room and even the sheets and pillowcover felt slightly damp, as if we had been sweating.

"If no one yields to brute force, it can be very exciting," we pointed out. The interlocking we imagined increased our appetite. There were spoons to go around but not enough bowls, so we shared ours with the man who had caught the fish, sniffing the odor of his brow as he guzzled the soup from the bowl on our lap.

"It only results in stagnation, if no one yields," said the other man.

"Who? We?" Cupping our breasts with our hands we made the familiar jest.

we desire only you and you and you  
for verification

Later, kneeling in the moonlight on the grass above the brick embankment that held the bend in the river, pouting and spitting we said to ourselves the word "cupping." He was delighted, and shouted "Xho!" Then we directed him to say something fundamental and provoking, using the letter L.

Lavinia, Lavinia, Lavinia

Paranoia results from that old religious preoccupation with the smallest detail and with similarities. And traveling as we are, we can't indulge in self-portraiture, even when we are stark naked and whopping. In fact, much of the time we exceed the perfect differences between you and us, since they are the details demarcating the biological depths and social heights, a part of history and a part of isolation. Meanwhile, we incite ourselves to introspect and expect—is this love? is this theory?—we are not experts of postponement.

our head is round  
such is life  
have we not hatched it?

"We can't get that poem out of our head," we said. We are slaves of environment.

He is standing behind and above us on the slope and puts his arms around us, passing his fingers over our breasts and reaching between our legs. He has us, in the palm of his hand.

From this elevation, or apparent elevation, we have a remarkable look over a high gray fence into the yard where outdated statuary is stored at the face of an eroded cosmonaut and at 17 arms and forefingers of Lenin.

oh rousing weight  
still more tremendous  
for your wondrous love!

This is true: we are writing on a cloudless sheet of blue paper.

we come closer to facing  
the frightening malleability  
of gender

Oh. Oh, so. Oh oh. Oh, no. No. This is also true: as we write three shirtless men carry enormous tree parts along the side of the house. One of them is black and wears a pale blue hat. Another is light with long straw-colored hair and an earring hanging lightly from a delicate ear. The third is responsible, pale, and hulking. We are certain of our third man's role because he stays in the back with a saw.

But this window scene of men is only pure distraction from the work at hand: the manufacture of serenity amidst uselessness, noise, chaos, and demoralization. And now, awesome reader, listen to what is not true—a dream—and then we will tell you how we got down from the mountain.

We were sitting in folding chairs, in about the center of a small-sized unembellished public space, possibly half-full of people, watching a movie. The movie had a familiar plot, and we were remarking on the disquieting yet soothing boredom experienced in being able to anticipate the future so readily, when L., C., P., and K. entered noisily. The room leaked light through the large moth-eaten curtains covering

the floor-to-ceiling windows, so we could see the newcomers quite well: they appeared to be slightly larger than life, as if in a pale fog just before sundown, when the blending of object and shadow and the simultaneous contrast of illuminations and darkness yield a somber massiveness within the landscape. Now, the movie served as a distant overexposed backdrop to the presences of L., C., P., and K. As the red-haired C. crossed from the back of the room to the curtained windows, L. followed. It seemed that C. was looking for an exit. But, upon sensing L., she turned and kissed him passionately. The passionate kisses were repeated as they stood next to the audience like drunken guests at a wedding party. We felt, also, a tinge of desire for the striking L. and his remarkable nonchalant poses which we attributed to his many years of theater experience. When C. released herself from the embrace, we rose, feeling an almost familial obligation to speak to her. We said, "C., we didn't know that you like sex." C. looked at us severely, and we knew that we were very small, almost insect-like, as she floated through the curtains to the patio.

The film came to an end. The curtains were drawn, the shabby bare room exposed. We felt that we must rectify ourself, so when C. floated back into the room as if it were L'Opéra, we said, "C., we are very sorry that we spoke insultingly, but we did so admire you for being an Artemis." None of this seemed to mean anything to her, and we left the theater with strident remorse and shame.

Now, why we have postponed telling you how we got down from the mountain is that we had to work our way down, and this was very difficult. Anything we could put our mind to we would try, but few people will pay for the work of a mind such as ours, one that does not fear the incongruity of yielding statuary. So we offered ourselves up as gardeners. Yet, few on the mountain could afford the luxury. We sometimes went hungry for want of a proper fit. Still,

it is in the places where things  
don't fit  
together neatly

that we can best insert  
our political will

This political will of which we speak belongs to the slapstick side of our nature which is so often embodied in the form of a man who himself embodies both wisdom and gluttony in balanced proportions.

And it is of him, Candy & Eggs is his name, that we eat when we get too hungry to continue down the steep, sparsely populated, and heavily forested slopes. We lick and suck his sugary fat and sip from his eggy eyes, while he sleeps the sleep of a spellbound material witness. At last, we are sick of him and return him to a sitting position, proper to the religious, by repeating our recently acquired Lavinian Chant....

Everybody, meaning the few people of the valley, were there to greet us when we completed the descent. And yet

we starve  
as we work unnoticed  
through the one  
endless  
source of work

We write, Dear Men, our messiness broadcasts our tendencies, our capacities, but it can't conceal our tendernesses. Go ahead and call us filthy if you will. We have eyes and a tongue, lips and a navel—we are a triangle in perpetual motion. We didn't wriggle down the cliff clutching at pungent warm shrubs, ride exciting slabs of hot slate down the slope of the high meadow, arrest our careening in the glossy mud of the cool creek (we lay for a spell in the stream of water, head resting on moss, one leg on the right bank and the other on the left (what enigmas await us in the zone between vegetable and mineral!)), climb the trellis at the back of the villa where we were gripped by the thorns of the bougainvillea whose blossoms stuck in our hair, sneak over the roof and around the chimney, and swing down past the windows clinging to the wrought-iron floral grillwork and the edges of the tile cartouche in order to get to this place without getting dirty. But here we are!

Be artful, if you will—please clean us.

almost carnal clods for scrutiny  
almond science sinking  
pillars, pillars, pillars and minerals

“Dear Reader, have we invited you in?”

Have we told you a tale whose analysis will provoke some exciting sensations? we ask. Have we spread our subjectivity? have we engulfed it in the world?

The sun doesn't rise every morning simply to populate allegories. And when a goose damp from dew on the riverbank lectures you can be sure her genitals are clean.

Her point is clear, but her heart beats against her neck.

In our heart we find our desires as earnest as they were when we were young—no half measures... (99)

We begin: “We walk in a vaporous valley with our bovine heads bent toward the plain where Measured Desire is said to dwell.” (1) We are looking for Measured Desire. We are looking to measure desire. We are looking to desire's limits, desire's limitlessness, measure after measure. “We can't help but live in time.” (73) We do not exist outside measure but can confuse its reception, re-arranging measured moments in time via the notations we put to them. We do not want to be measured against, but want to move in measure. A measure musical, as a phrase that might repeat, recur, resound. As a moment or moments in time, but not crystal. Delightful, but not precious. Incantatory and improvisatory. “Our sex is an incitement, urging us to elapse.” (23) Urging us to elapse as time elapses, and elapses again: relapses. Our sex incites time and incites more sex. Our sex balloons time to fit us. We balloon to fill our sex. More desire, measured and unmeasured, without measure.

Prose lines and broken (or verse) lines measure differently. Meanings

“Dear Reader, have we invited you in?”

...we want to tuck an essay into an essay. This is, by the way, non-narrative. There's an ancient belief that mother geese have long necks so they clean their own genitals. And it is well-known that from there or elsewhere mother geese have created many wonderful (though officially disdained) stories.

Non-narrators are historically afraid of what mother geese may say, but thinking about that would just make us hungry for potatoes grown in paradise covered with butter given us by a youth responding to our pen scratching on the skin of a mango into whose flesh we have pressed our clitoris. (91)

How bold is *The Wide Road*! The puritan in us (albeit a minuscule puritan) is shocked by what Lyn Hejinian and Carla Harryman have done—a double-minded, one-headed monster (or monsteure?) that seeks and welcomes sex from any and all men—“The boys have removed our coarse pants and are idly, almost lazily rubbing us with jasmine vine while they also hold their still-dressed crotches” (5)—while being open enough to allow experiences with other women—“Our hands slipped into her tight little back pockets . . . Our hands grabbed around each moon of ass.” (64) The riot girl in us—happily dominating the puritanical—cheers on the monster, urging the protagonist, under our breath, “yes, yes.” An urging, and encouraging, not unlike that in (some) sex. Yes, it is erotic. We are impressed and compelled by the eroticism of the text, the way it invites us in as voyeuse/voyeur. The voyeuse in a position both outside and inside—party to and participant in the party.

The sexualized natural world conjures Whitman: “Do I contradict