

Despoiled Shore Medea-material Landscape with Argonauts

By Heiner Mueller

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All footnotes added by translator; all typography (capitalization, line breaks, etc.) are reproduced as in the original.

Mueller's introductory notes: The text needs the naturalism of the scene. DESPOILED SHORE can be shown during the simultaneous operation of a peepshow, MEDEAMATERIAL at a sea by Straussberg, which is a mud-filled swimming pool in Beverly Hills or the bathing facility of a nerve-clinic. Like MAUSER, a society of border-crossing, in which someone condemned to death can turn his actual death into a collective experience on the stage, LANDSCAPE WITH ARGONAUTS presupposes the catastrophes, on which humanity is working. The landscape may be a dead star, on which a search party from another time or another space hears a voice and finds someone dead. As in every landscape the I in this part of the text is collective. The simultaneity of the three parts of the text can be portrayed any which way.

Sea by Straussberg Despoiled shore Trace
Of flaxen-haired Argonauts

Bristles reeds Dead branches
THIS TREE SHALL NOT GROW OVER ME Fish-corpses
Shine in the mud biscuit-tins muck-piles
FROMM'S ACT CASINO¹

Shredded tampons The blood
of the women of Colchis
BUT YOU'VE GOT TO WATCH OUT YEAH
YEAH YEAH YEAH YEAH
FUCKING CUNT I SAYS TO HER THAT'S MY MAN
SLAM IT TO ME COME SWEETIE
Until the Argo smashed his skull the no longer needed
ship

Which hangs in the tree Hangar of the vultures, chewing their cud, in waiting mode
They perch in flocks Faces from handbills and spittle
Each staring a naked member stiff in the pants on painted
Flesh Running gutter costing three weeks' pay Until the
Paint
Scratches Their women serve the food warm hang the beds in the windows clean
The vomit from the Sunday suit Drain-pipes
expelling children in batches against the onslaught of the worms

Schnaps is cheap
The children piss into empty bottles
Dream of a monstrous
Copulation in Chicago

Blood-smear'd women [Weiber]
In the morgues

The dead don't stare in the window
They don't drum in the lavatory
That's them Earth Swindled by the survivors
SEVERAL HANG FROM LAMPPOSTS TONGUES HANGING OUT
ON THE BELLY A SIGN I AM A COWARD

On the ground however Medea the hacked-apart
Brother in her arms She who is skilled
In poisons

MEDEA-MATERIAL LANDSCAPE WITH ARGONAUTS

MEDEA Jason my first one and my last one Nurse
Where is my husband
NURSE With Creon's daughter M'am
MEDEA With Creon you say
NURSE With Creon's daughter
MEDEA Did you say with Creon's daughter Yes
Why with Creon's daughter doesn't have power
Probably over Creon her father who
Can give us the right to live in Corinthia
Or drive us into exile in another strange land
Perhaps at this very moment he's entwining Jason
With the pleas of her bended knee
All for me and his sons who he loves
Are those tears of laughter or sorrow Nurse
NURSE Milady I am older than my laughter or sorrow
MEDEA How do you live in the rubble of your body
With the ghosts of your youth Nurse
Bring a mirror That's not Medea
Jason
JASON Woman [Weib] what sort of tone is that
MEDEA I
Am not wanted here If only a death could take me away
Five nights three times over Jason you have not
Asked for me Not with your voice
And not even with the voice of a slave
With hands or glance
JASON What do you want

MEDEA To die
JASON I've heard that a lot
MEDEA Doesn't this body mean
Anything to you anymore Do you want to drink my blood Jason
JASON When is this going to stop
MEDEA When did it start Jason
JASON What were you before me woman [Weib]
MEDEA Medea
You owe me a brother Jason
JASON I gave you two sons for one brother
MEDEA You Me Do you love them Jason your sons
Do you want to have them again your sons
They're yours What can mine be your slave
Everything on me your tool everything from me
I killed for you and gave birth for you
I your bitch I your whore
I the rung on the ladder of your fame
Sprinkled with your muck The blood of your enemies
And when you intend to celebrate
your victory over my country and people
Which was my betrayal, weaving a garland
Around your brow out of their intestines, they're yours
My belongings the images [Bilder] of the defeated ones
The cries of the ones torn apart my property
Since I left Colchis my homeland
On your trail of blood Blood of my kin
In my new homeland betrayal
I was blind to the sights [Bilder] deaf to the screams
until you ripped apart the net
Woven out of your pleasure and mine
Which was our home now my exile
I stand in its mesh dislocated
The ashes of your kisses on the lips
The sand of our years between the teeth
Only my own sweat on my skin
Your breath a stench from another's bed
A husband gives his wife death as farewell
My death has no other body than yours
Are you my husband Am I still your wife
If only I could bite her out of you, your whore
For who you betrayed me and my
Betrayal which was your pleasure Thanks for your
Betrayal which has given me eyes
To see again What I saw the pictures [Bilder] Jason
Which you painted with the boots of your guards
On my Colchis Ears to hear

the music again which you played
With the hands of your guards and with mine
Who was your bitch and your whore
On the bodies bones graves of my people
And my brother My brother Jason
Who I threw in the path of your pursuers
Cut to pieces by these my sister's hands
For your flight from the plundered father
From mine and his Do you love your sons
Do you want to have them again your sons
You owe me a brother Jason
Who loves them more The dog or the bitch
If their father looks on them lovingly
And at his new bitch and at the king
Of dogs in Corinthia here to his father
Perhaps their place is at his trough
Take what you have given me Jason
The fruits of betrayal from your seed
And stuff it into the lap of your whore
My bridal gift for your and her wedding
Go with the father who loves you And so
That he kicks away the mother the woman-barbarian
Because she's making their way to the top difficult
Don't you want to sit at the high table
I was the milk-cow now your footrest
Do you want to Do I see your eyes gleaming
With anticipation [Vorschein] at the happiness of full bellies
What still ties you all to the woman-barbarian
Who is your mother and your stigma
You are all actors Children of betrayal
Sink your teeth in my heart and go
With your father who did it before you
Let me have the children one more day Jason
Then I intend to go into my own desert [Wueste]
You owe me a brother Jason
I cannot hate for long what you love
Love comes and goes I was not wise
To forget that No grumbling between us
Take my bridal gown as the bridal gift for your
– the word passes from my lips unwillingly – bride
Who will entwine around your body to cry
On your shoulder sometimes moaning in ecstasy
The garb of love my other skin
Embroidered with the hands of the plundered
Out of the gold of Colchis and dyed with the blood
Of the wedding dinner from fathers brothers sons

Your new love shall be dressed as if
In my skin To be near you I will be so
Near to your love totally distant from me
Now go to your new wedding Jason
I'll turn the bride into a wedding torch
Look your mother creates a spectacle [Schauspiel]
Do you want to see her burn watch the new bride
The bridal gown of the woman-barbarian has a way
Of fatally binding itself to a stranger's skin
Wounds and scars yield strong poison
And fire spits the ash which was my heart
The bride is young the hide tensed smooth as glass
Unblemished by age or childrearing
Now I write my play [Schauspiel] on her body
I want to hear you all laugh when she screams
Before midnight she will stand in flames
My sun rises over Corinthia
I want to see you all laugh when it rises over me
With my children sharing my joys
Now the bride steps into the bridal regalia
Now he arrays his bride at his feet
The bridal gown of the woman-barbarian the bridal gift
Soaked with my sweat of subjugation
Now she splays out the whore in front of the mirror
Now the gold of Colchis closes her pores
Plants a forest of knives in her flesh
The bridal gift of the woman-barbarian celebrates the wedding
With your virgin bride Jason
The first night is mine It is the last
Now she screams Do you have ears for the scream
She screams as if Colchis lay in my body
And is still screaming Do you have ears for the scream
And still screams Are you laughing I want to see you all laugh
My play [Schauspiel] is a comedy Do you laugh
Like tears for the bride Ah my little
Traitors You haven't cried for nothing
I want to cut you all out of my heart
My heart-flesh My memory My love
Give me back my blood from your veins
Your intestines back into my body
Today is payday Jason Today your Medea
Is collecting on your debt
If only you all could laugh now Death is a gift
From my hands are you supposed to receive it
I have behind me totally broken off
What they call a homeland now behind us my land of exile

O that it does not become a homeland you all in mockery of me
With these my human hands Ah
If only I had stayed the animal I was
Before a man made me his wife
Medea the barbarian Now accursed
With these my hands of the barbarian
Hands shriveled skewered torn open over and over
I want to break humanity in two
And live in the empty middle I
No woman [Weib] no man What are you screaming about Worse than death²
Is old his kisses dignify you the hand
Which sends you death do you know life
That was Corinthia Who are you Who dressed you
in the bodies of my children
What sort of animal lurks behind your eyes
Are you playing dead Aren't you putting on your mother
You're all actors Liars and traitors
You're possessed by dogs rats snakes
Which howl and whistle and hiss I hear it well
O I'm so clever I'm Medea I
Don't you have any more blood Now everything is still
The screams of Colchis also silent And nothing more

JASON Medea
MEDEA Nurse Do you know this man

LANDSCAPE WITH ARGONAUTS

Am I supposed to talk about myself I who
Of whom are we speaking if
The talk is of me I Who is that
In the rain of bird-muck In the chalky hide³ [Kalkfell]
Or different I a flag a
Bloody rag hung out A flutter
Between Nothing and Noone Presupposing wind
I monster of a man I monster
Of a woman Commonplace on commonplace I Dream of hell
Which bears my accidental name I Fear
Of my accidental name
MY GRANDFATHER WAS
AN IDIOT IN BOATIA
I my sea-journey
I my land-claim My

Walk through the suburbs I My death
In the rain of bird-muck In the chalky hide
The anchor is the last umbilical cord
The memory of the coast passes away with the horizon
Birds are a farewell Are a homecoming
The slaughtered tree plows the snake the sea
Thin between I and NolongerI [NichtmehrIch] the ship's wall
THE SEA IS THE SAILOR'S BRIDE
They say the dead stand on the ground
Upright swimmers Until the bones rest
Mating of the fishes in the eviscerated ribcage
Mussels on the roof of the skull
Thirst is fire
Water means what burns the skin
Hunger chews at the gums Salt the lips
Dirty jokes needle the lonely flesh
Until man reaches for man
The warmth of a woman is a singsong
The stars are cold pathfinders
The sky practices an icy supervision
Or the luckless landing Against the sea hisses
The pop of beer cans
FROM THE LIFE OF A MAN
Memory of a tank-battle
My walk through the suburbs I
Between rubble and construction-debris grows
THE NEW Fuck-cells with central heating
The television spits world into the parlor
Planned obsolescence The container
Servers as cemetery Shapes in the overlay shelf⁴
Those born to cement Parade
Of zombies perforated by advertising spots
In the uniforms of yesterday morning's fashions
The youth of today Ghosts
Of the dead of wars which will happen tomorrow
WHAT REMAINS HOWEVER IS ARRANGED BY THE BOMBS
In the magnificent crossbreeding of protein and tin-can
The children draw landscapes out of garbage
A woman is the familiar glance of light
DEATH HAS A HOPE
BETWEEN THE THIGHS
Or the Yugoslav dream
Between broken statues in flight
From an unknown catastrophe
The mother in tow-rope the old woman with wooden frame
THE FUTURE runs apace in rusting harness

A herd of actors march in step
DON'T YOU KNOW THEY'RE DANGEROUS THEY'RE
ACTORS EVERY CHAIR LEG LIVES A DOG

Word-sludge from my
Forsaken Noone's-body
How to get out of the undergrowth⁵
Of my dreams which slowly
Soundlessly grow around me
A scrap of Shakespeare
In the paradise of the bacteria
The sky is a glove on the hunt
Masked with clouds of an unknown type of construction
Rest on a dead tree The sister-orderlies
My finger plays in the sheath
Nights in the window between city and landscape
We watched the slow dying of the flies
Thus stood Nero over Rome in euphoria
Until the wagon rolls up⁶ Sand in the gears
A wolf stood on the street when it broke into pieces
Bus-ride in the morning gray Right and left
The sisters steaming under the fabric Noon
Dusted their ashes on my hide
During the ride we heard the canvas tear
And saw the pictures fall into each other
The forests burned in EASTMAN COLOR⁷
But the journey had no destination NO PARKING⁸
At the solitary crossing with one eye
Polyphemous regulated traffic
Our harbor was a dead cinema
The stars on the screen rotted in competition
In the box office Fritz Lang strangled Boris Karloff
The south wind played with old posters
OR THE LUCKLESS LANDING The dead Negroes
Rammed into the swamp like poles
In the uniforms of their enemies
DO YOU REMEMBER DO YOU NO I DON'T⁹
The dried-up blood
Smoked in the sun
The theater of my death
Was open when I stood between the mountains
In the circle of dead comrades on the stone
And over me the expected airplane appeared
Without thinking I knew
This machine was
What my Grandmother had called God

The air-pressure swept the corpses from the plateau
And shots rang out in my twisting flight
I felt MY blood draining from MY veins
And MY body transformed into the landscape
Of MY death

IN THE BACK THE PIG

The rest is lyrics Who has sharper teeth
The blood or the stone

Explanatory Footnotes

1. "Fromm" is used as a name here, but the German word literally means "pious" or "devout".
2. Medea uses the plural pronoun "Ihr" (meaning, "you all") for the rest of her monologue.
3. "Kalk" means chalk or lime, so there is an additional suggestion here that Jason looks corpse-like, i.e. like a lime-covered body.
4. "Abraum" is the overlay shelf used in mining, i.e. where the slag heap ("Abraumhalde") is piled up.
5. "Gestruepp" literally means a tangle of undergrowth or brush, and figuratively a jungle – the postmodern version of Brecht's asphalt jungle.
6. The verb here, "vorfuhren", can also mean to display or present a film.
7. The words "EASTMAN COLOR" are in English in the original text.
8. The words "NO PARKING" are in English in the original text.
9. This entire line ("DO YOU REMEMBER DO YOU NO I DON'T") is in English in the original text.