

Is Your Country a He or a She in Your Mouth

Patricia Lockwood

Mine is a man I think, I love men, they call me
a fatherlandsexual, all the motherlandsexuals
have been sailed away, and there were never
any here in the first place, they tell us. Myself
I have never seen a mountain, myself I have
never seen a valley, especially not my own,
I am afraid of the people who live there,
who eat hawk and wild rice from my pelvic
bone. Oh no, I am fourteen, I have walked
into my motherland's bedroom, her body
is indistinguishable from the fatherland
who is "loving her" from behind, so close
their borders match up, except for a notable
Area belonging to the fatherland. I am drawn
to the motherland's lurid sunsets, I am reaching
my fingers to warm them, the people in my
valley are scooping hawk like crazy, I can no
longer tell which country is which, salt air off
both their coasts, so gross, where is a good nice gulp
of Midwestern pre-tornado? The tornado above me
has sucked up a Cow, the motherland declares,
the tornado above him has sucked up a Bull,
she says pointing to the fatherland. But the cow
is clearly a single cow, chewing a single cud
of country, chewing their countries into one,
and "I hate these country!" I scream, and
their eyes shine with rain and fog, because
at last I am using the accent of the homeland,
at last I am a homelandsexual and I will never
go away from them, there will one day be two
of you too they say, but I am boarding myself
already, I recede from their coasts like a Superferry

packed stem to stern with citizens, all waving hellos
and goodbyes, and at night all my people go below
and gorge themselves with hunks of hawk,
the traditional dish of the new floating heartland.

—— 選自 *Motherland Fatherland Homelandsexuals* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014).