

Oysters

When I was young, my mum worked the night shift at Asda. She told me that during her time there, some of her female colleagues got re-assigned to the fish counter. 'Within a few weeks, all those girls turned gay'. I wondered what it was about dead fish, the ridges and valves of molluscs, that changed the sexualities of women.

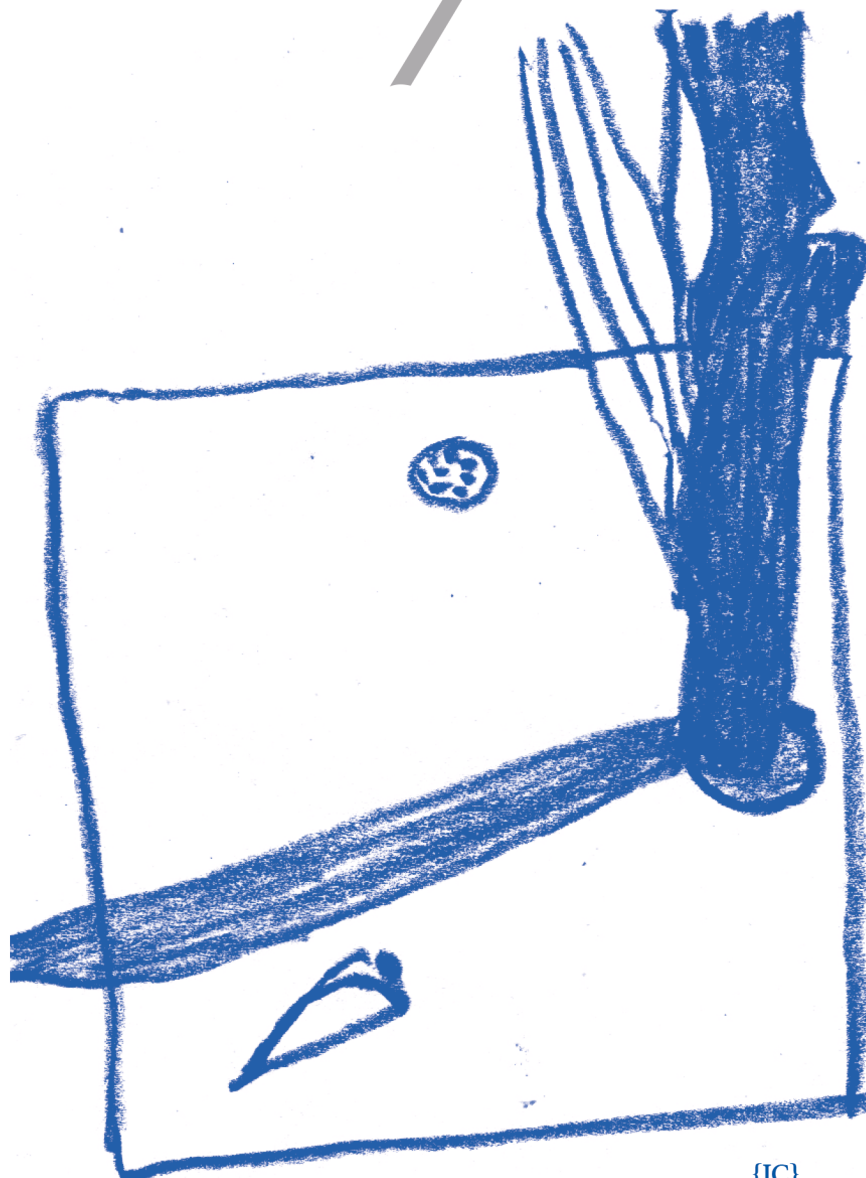
To shuck an oyster, you have to hold it steadily between your fingertips, making sure that it doesn't squirm or slip. Insert a cool knife into its pursed lips. You may meet resistance; adductor muscles govern who oysters open their insides for. Once you feel the slimy flesh give beneath your blade, you are free to run your knife around the soft mantle. You have severed the part of it that can consent to your entry. When its ruffled shell is opened, you have to be careful not to spill any of its precious juice. Some people call it 'the milk of the sea'. Men love to taste its saltiness on their tongue.

Oystercatchers are large, black and white birds with long, red bills. Between their wings, two white markings form the letter 'V'. Violent and full of vengeance their bills veer into the Vaseline valleys they hunt for. The defeated oystercatchers are voyeurs to the victor's guzzling of velvet vaults, now empty, now voids. Maybe a child will find its pretty shell body on a beach somewhere.

An oystercatcher thrusts its red bill into an oyster until its insides are wet and torn and the technique is called stabbing. Maybe insides is the wrong word. Stabbing severs the adductor muscles; the mollusc never closes its shell again. Their insides are outsides, until they are outsiders on the inside of a man's rumbling gut. Spit-covered, they slide down fat throats. The shell is slurped, sucked, licked by the customer's hungry mouth.

I still don't know why the fish-counter turned women gay. I think what my mum meant by her story is that cunt smells like fish, fish smells like cunt. I've never worked at a fish-counter.

{JD}

1*The Paper*

{IC}

The Magnitude of Loneliness

How do you quantify loneliness? Is it measurable on a scale or by the number of moments we experience? Is it how long we can go into isolation with no one but the limbs we carry on our bodies? As for me, it was never the days of solitude when my reflection was my only company. If anything, it gave me a sense of comfort.

The irony of it is that I feel loneliness at its peak when I'm with the people I once deemed dear to me. When I see them in front of me, but never really beside me. When I merely follow the footsteps they trail ahead, I wonder if they turn to see if anyone is there. Or is it when I see moments become picturesque memories, but I'm not in the scene. Only a bystander of the day. Loneliness seems much more realised when people present remind you of it.

{LL}

Orange Eggs and
Rough Seas

As his milky moon eyes spiral onto mine,
I turn my head slightly and catch the
roughest sea I have seen in a long time.
It's almost reaching the roofs of those
houses down there! And gosh it's windy.
How did I only notice this just now??

*

The milky moon does watch yes, but
this time from the sky; from six days
away, apparently. Spit that out! says
my brain.

Anyway! Here we are, flames bopping
up and down -can you use birthday
cake candles as dinner candles?
Teetering from their blutac plinths they
are gloriously decadent and kind of
worrying. A big enough scrap of cali-
co acts as a tablecloth to really give
the thing some ceremony, but to be
honest the moon does that all on her
own. Romance and ceremony are
what she DOES. But wait!! I haven't
even mentioned the bloody food!

**

Well, needless to say it destroyed us
both. In a good way. Pork jowl, obsce-
nely orange eggs, black pepper and
tagliatelle, all tumbled together in a
squirm of ecstasy! Almost too sexful
a meal to act as an aphrodisiac...it
kind of stole the show. 'Oh baby, fill
me up (with carbonara)' says the
moon as she looks on enviously. For
she has never tasted carbonara you
see. Neither has the sea. These two
could do with sharing a candlelit meal
one of these days. Perhaps settle
their differences, enough push and
pull! Or maybe not enough! Pork jowl
pushes and pulls me, to be honest. (is
this the right time to be writing about
flesh?!)
Gimme your DYNAMIC JOWLS
Gimme your DYNAMIC THIGHS

Your eyes do look milky and mooni-
sh tonight, love. They reflect into the
golden white wine as it splashes and
laps against the edge of our inappro-
priate glasses. I think they're sherry
glasses, sorry. Thimbles of wine! Have
to drink about 20 to get sloshed.
Come into my bedroom, come into
my bedroom, come into my bedroom,
come into my bedroom

{LO}

2

in review

the day after i lost my virginity to a patriarchal societal
standard

i went to an art exhibition

showcasing three artists

i was going to write an art review

brought to you by:

my free pass (and my new status)

the theme was on love and sameness

one artist was a nudist

one painted in abstract

and the other painted windows

they were *in conversation*

i was told

but i couldn't sense their sameness

i was too focused on the fact that i couldn't feel a difference

between my legs

i felt prudish by the nudist bland by the abstract

and bored by the windows

i felt shaken to the urn

i was carrying a myth and it was **too heavy**

i didn't write the review

as i left, i was told that this was the last day

and that i was lucky to catch it

{NC}

Cold snap (or 'post-sex musings')

I lie down and imagine

a duck skinned back to

meat in a Chinese takeaway, tuxedo skin unpeeled and
sealed.

The female body

stripped.

Paint on a fence,

white.

His pale fingers,

his pale fingers inside me.

Reynard's. Stay close in the night.

We were going through a cold snap; you could get tipsy
after one beer.

My body became lager and was drunk

down all fizzy and screaming.

Hoppy too. Don't forget the hops.

Easter.

Valentine's.

Someone's heart chopped out of paper.

A clicking gas oven. Cuticles scraped back and bleeding.

His pale fingers spread square to hit.

I should like to forget that. catch it

{IL}

Winter Portrait

the moon is full and
illuminates a crooked
path frozen in ice

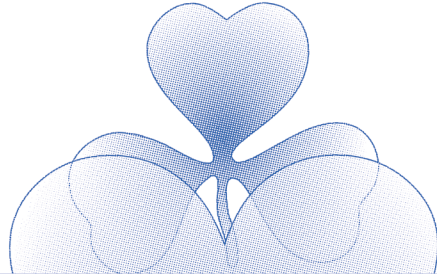
i think of all
the broken lives
i've tried to repair

memories blend together
as hours peel away
at my being,

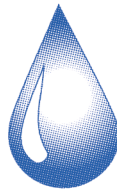
and like a watch
wound too tight
some springs
never recoil

i step into the night
and my breath
dancest

i become a ghost



I was sitting on my couch
I was stirring my dough to make an almond cake
I was a little preoccupied
I had a psychedelic rock playlist on
Then I hear a message on my computer
It was super loud because I had turned it up really
loud at the same time to listen to music
I read the message from a boy I had been dating for a while
He tells me that it's not a good idea to keep seeing each
other because he can't adapt to this situation where
I'm in transit,
First I continue to mix the dough
Then I hear the lyrics of the music playing on my computer
it's John Fahey, he says "Sorry, baby I can't call you over
the phone"
At this moment
I cried.



we are on iona &
have a scrap in the grocers
but it doesn't mtrr cos tho

imperialist citizenship declares war on
body-sense capabilities of white men
so they can declare war on the world
w/o feeling a thing

we love each other.

the rinsed shadow falls away

cared for
by those communing
elsewhere.

wrists pinned to big ben police cudgel
spin the earth in twilight-thin shank

in release:

wakeful repose

a
balm
to frenzied
effort

{TB}

{VH}



blooms in
cycles wholly
different
to those birthed on this
continent

we are on iona &

the pagan sky

claps the strung chimes
of held hands
ocean
surrounds us &

throws itself forward

to await
its place in

memory.

in different meta
physics

we trade ice cream

the aural reach of trees draws day's slackening blue
ribs

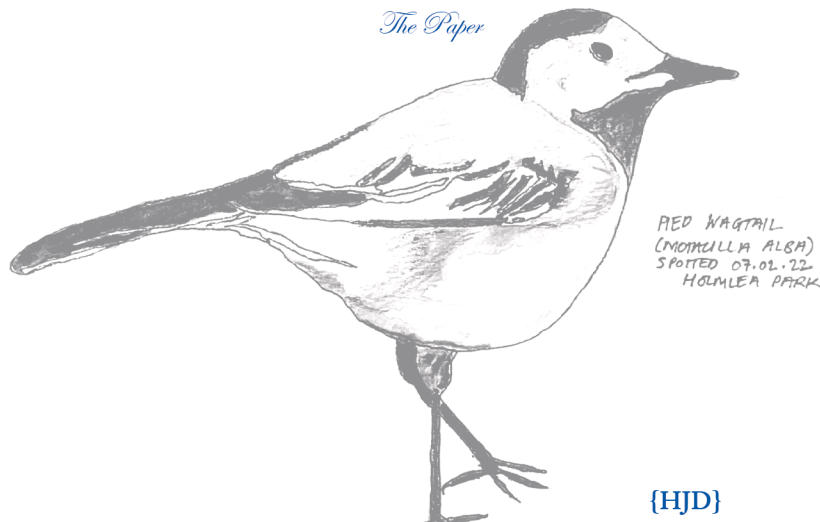
into hush black:

weep
iridescence:

i want to not exist: that is to say: to

rest with you at
how i feel rn.

{LP}



{HJD}

Contributors

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Dear Glasgow I miss you so much

Dear Glasgowl

I miss you so much
 I miss stumbling in the airports back door to the home of my old friend
 I miss the free newspapers in the terminal
 I miss hopping Glasgow Airport Express
 I miss getting off by Central Station
 I miss trundling along Argyle Street
 I miss drinking tea in the Willow Tea Rooms
 I miss being able to buy a copy of the Daily Worker
 I miss looking at guitars in Merchant City Music window
 I miss Calton Books
 I miss Glasgow Green
 I miss the Peoples Museum
 I miss Glasgow Women's Library
 I miss Bridgeton Umbrella on my way to buy the Herald
 I miss descending into the tube coming up at Hillhead
 I miss the great selection at Oxfam Books on Byers Road
 I miss rummaging unnoticed by Voltaire and Rousseau's cat
 I miss the order of Thistle Books
 I miss Robbie Burns in George Square
 I miss Waterstones five floors on Sauciehall Street
 I miss enjoying a play a pie and a pint at lunchtime
 I miss the curtain going up in Citizens Theatre
 I miss Scotstoun for Warriors and Leinster
 I miss that winning trip to Paradise
 I miss rambling along the Clyde
 I miss La Pasionaria with her arms high in the air
 I miss the equestrian Duke of Wellington and his traffic cone hat
 I miss Buchanan Bus Station for Fort William bus and the mountain track
 I miss returning back by Loch Lomond
 I miss my Weegie girl
 I miss you all
 Keep safe
 I will return soon to see you

{FM}

lilacs

my hands are rustling
 lilacs are everywhere

 and so is dawn
 and there it is, our story,
 your DNA cruises
 through leaves
 i swallow your ease
 and weeds wave and weave

 my hands are softening
 skin is everywhere

 and so is sap
 and here it is, a feeling,
 i lean against these
 signs, i ground
 into your kissing
 and grief and trees and
 birds and wishes
 gently breeze

 my hands are hustling
 you are everywhere

 and so am i
 hungry and hard
 sustainable and wild

changing and persistant
 like vine
 i rose,
 i remember, us
 standing
 in our flagrant hearts
 in the aroused sun
 in this aery moment
 i said:
 you're my kind

 silence was over

 my hands are lilacs
 love is everything

 love, a letter, all
 these years
 these hands
 like lilacs
 curled
 on a rustling picture;
 you are still everywhere
 and i do, love,
 i will remember,
 now is a different tree
 but your roots still grow

{EZ}