

We are the daughters of the Abominable Queens
The spirits of those who washed and scrubbed and rinsed
Who cooked and sewed and cleaned.

We made beds we did not lie in
And filled stomachs while ours were empty.

Provided sustenance
of body and mind to those above us
While we kept close to the ground
Scuttled through back passages, our bodies squeezed thin
to fit within
Corridors dim and narrow.
To fulfil the role intended by our sex we must not take up too much space.

Long before we were even conceived as thought we were condemned to subservience
A life determined by gender and wealth; or lack there of
Subjugated to reproduction
To nurture regardless of nature,
With no thought to ourselves
For women of our class must all times be selfless
Considering our - selves to be so - less than others
We cease to exist at all
The dissolution of her own identity
for the collective good of others
Is expected, of every servant, wife and mother.

We nursed the children of those cut from cloth much finer than our own,
Took the silver spoon from their lips and polished it until it shone
While our hands blistered and bled
And with that same spoon we fed
The mouths of their young.
Yet the taste of silver would never reach the surface of our tongue.

The anxiety
Of their class
Imposed values of personality onto our bodies,
Stitched into every inch of our skin
Reflected in wally tiles scrubbed white,
A stiff-upper-lip and a strong chin.
And aprons
kept pressed and pristine
Stains of our labour dissolved in bleach
For even our dirty work, to them, must appear to be clean.

So we stood with our faces turned to the wall
The secretive nature of our labour rarely acknowledged at all.
Anonymous may have been a woman
when in a Room of One's Own
But our anonymity was rarely a choice
Invisibility
as a worker, as a woman, as a witch
Offers protection
but also provides conditions necessary for exploitation of lives
Oppression is easier when the victims are nameless and faceless and don't have a voice.

Jenny Mathie Stewart was one of our own
Who in 1676 lay on the floor of Paisley Prison half-naked, unconscious and alone.
Congealed red rivers carved into her back by the force of a dozen lashes
Administered in the name of our Lord.

Jenny was accused of bewitching Sir George Maxwell of Pollok
by powers of the devil
Through witchcraft her demonic thoughts possessed him
Innocent women as vessel.

Mother, servant and midwife, Jenny was well accustomed to pain
and had cultivated a mind so strong it could divide from her body
Displacing dark thoughts as her flesh grew weak

With this innate power she withstood four torturous weeks.

Any being that can withstand the birth of a child has strength beyond measure,

A fact that is often

Denied or forgotten

The pains of her labour

The ultimate penance for the Sin of Eve

A biblical confession that they believe

The foundation of the human race is built upon female suffering.

His palms may have bled but our hands did too

Tied above our heads as flames licked our feet

We died a thousand times over on a cross with no arms

Yet while he was resurrected on the third day our bodies were buried so far into the ground

the sound

of our screams were swallowed whole

By the earth from which we arose

Four women and Jenny's own son were burned at the stake.

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust

In the name of the mother, the daughter and the unholy ghost.

Yet they will rise again through the resistance of others;

For all women are witches are servants are workers are lovers are healers are mothers.