ON HEAT
CHRISTY DAVIDS
The poet of *on heat* is the Catullus of the Anthropocene, the Sappho of Animal Studies. Equally sardonic and passionate, Davids resituates the ancient drama of human eros in the context of its mammalian physiology. In doing so, she shows that the line between human and animal is nowhere more blurred than when we’re DTF. Are rituals of courtship and hooking up nature or culture? And what about the signals we send each other in the course of getting physical? How much control do we actually exercise over our gendered experiences of getting it on? By juxtaposing aspects of human and animal arousal, Davids shows that the burn of sexual desire makes a pleasurable mess of any easy answer to the question of where in us human and mammal begin and end. —Brian Teare

The more time I spend with Christy Davids’ *on heat*, the more impressed I am by the intellect and sweep of its critique. The piece exposes the impossible bind of human female sexuality through a series of jarring juxtapositions of image and text. She implicates the audience: I am at once penetrator and penetrated. Through it all the speaker conducts the experience, bears witness to her own being—it is she, her very existence, that suggests some hope of breaking free. —Allison Cobb
ON HEAT
CHRISTY DAVIDS
CONTENTS

(cap)able.......................... 1
mood ................................ 3
color ............................... 5
signal .............................. 7
receptivity ......................... 9
ardor .............................. 11
stir .................................. 13
teaser animal ...................... 15
mark ................................. 17
make heat .......................... 19
contract ........................... 21
blind .................................. 23
if you can't stand the.......... 25
domesticate ......................... 27
rewild ............................... 29
April is the cruellest month, breeding
—T.S. Eliot
of being heated
to become inflamed

exciting* / immolation**

*desert animals and their full eyelashes,
like camels

**for example: I bat my lashes
show receptivity / to flirt / big
eyes close to open to invite by
fanning to close to open not to
keep out inevitable sand / but
lashes for fluttering for flirting
fanning bats inflame personal
heat lashes open / close / heat
the heat is on, on the street /
inside your head, on every beat / and the beat's so loud,
deep inside
inspire with ardor
inflame
produce sensation

(rage and/or passion)*

*observing male ibexes brute it out, I recognize
the melancholy masculinity wreaks**

**great knotty horns
broad bearded
faces impossible cliff
collisions because
like water or food
mates are resources
to be fought over, too

panic spraying
the pressure’s high, just to stay alive /
‘cause the heat is on
to blush
on the
inside
to flush
on the
outside

mood swings
receptive tail placement
caught up in the action I've been looking out for you /

oh-wo-ho,
oh-wo-ho
magazines advise that in order to indicate *hey, you wanna get outta here* I should open my mouth like so and make direct eye contact like so and lift my eyebrows like so and tilt my head toward the door like so and repeatedly raise and lower my brows like so*

*make the body into an arrow but into an arrow / woman I point toward the door with my arrow body in order to gesture towards sex /
be a deixis

< distractibility heightened alertness >
coming on heat
coming on heat
coming on heat
coming on heat
coming on heat
coming on heat
coming on heat
coming on heat
on heat
on heat
on heat
on heat
on heat
coming
coming
coming
coming
coming
coming
coming on heat
coming on heat
coming on heat
coming on heat
coming on heat
coming on heat
coming / coming
swollen vulva
whelping
the heat is on, the heat is on, the heat is on / 

oh it's on the street, the heat is on
I can burn with passion and / or* disease
to burn is a kind of heat

*I can catch crabs; creature / disease; the latter is not called crabbing, tho I don’t see why it couldn’t be**

**female blue crabs mate once in their lifetimes in warm water in submerged vegetation in low salinity once her shell softens and she becomes receptive. crab to crab embracing is involved for several (2-7) days for information on what follows successful copulation and spawning for female blue crabs see creature file named “The Unknown Habits of Non-mating Yet Living Female Species”
oh-wo-ho, oh-wo-ho / caught up in the action I've been looking out for you /

oh-wo-ho, oh-wo-ho
to feel hot
condition* of bodily heat
increased molecular motion
to frequent
communicate heat
make hot
raise

*or—the way
I fill up jeans
the inevitability

desire to leave house / yard / pen
adopting receptive body posture
I tried for a while
to cultivate that

_freshly fucked_ look / got good
good at staging it on others lots

of hairspray and crudely applied
black eyeliner this / linguistically

_pre-DTF / mussing a manifestation
of one’s down-ness with fucking

outward / also / a look disconnected
from wanting actual fucking

or having been just fucked*
instead simulating the look

of willingness via curated
weathering / disarrangement

mock-wear of the perfectly im-
perfect tousle aroused smear

*as a consequence of
being ridden the hair
on the tail and rump is
fluffed up rubbed or
matted / skin may be
exposed / the legs and
flanks may be smeared
with mud or manure
the heat is on,
the heat is on,
the heat is on /

oh it's on
the street,

the heat is on /

the shadows high on the darker side
like a long shadow stain holding tightly to the ground carpet for survival for 

production proof—if ephemeral —of any existence / ever
behind those doors, it’s a wilder ride /
you can make a break, you can win or lose /
that’s a chance you take, when the heat’s on you /
when the heat is on when the heat is on
grow       hot
to contract heat
to        rouse*

*a man wields a pair of over-sized pliers while pacing the train platform; whipping the tool like a cowboy his lasso / showy behavior, a display, a performance. I could have done without him deciding to follow me into the car I walked all the way / away / down the platform to enter, the car I chose in order to avoid him**

**he positions himself / ready / in the narrow doorway with me / facing / focused and shifting his tool. knowing it was impossible to look at him back since my body will always gesture open even when I’m closing it / even when I’m not looking  

nervousness  vaginal mucus
oh-wo-ho, oh-wo-ho / caught up in the action I've been looking out for you / oh-wo-ho, oh-wo-ho
sexual skitter / hop to
curve one’s body (to) be close*

(or) avoid closeness: to rebuff closure**

*that coy and no are so sonically
near / the closeness of anger
and flirtation or how they are mistaken

**standing there I try to leave / my body facing away from his body;
he refuses to see how my body shapes itself to language no
(tell me can you feel it)  (tell me can you feel it)  (tell me can you feel it)
but I can fit
my swollen
vulva inside
a pair of jeans
even if my
heart is throb-
ing in my
pants I still
have pants
on over parts
that may or
may not be
throbbing
or swollen
or wanting
receptive

heightened affection
restlessness
oh it's on the street, the heat is on
[if you can’t stand the]

heat get out of the paddock
bar
cage
embrace
pen
bedroom
diorama
crate
tenderness
stall
reliquary
carrier
coffee shop
wild
coop
furnace
habitat
cycle

genital sniffing
decreased appetite
it's on the street /
the heat is on, the heat
is on, the heat is on
at what moment
do I give in / over
to the act I learn to suffer
[politely at the hands of others]*

give in / over to
the act I learn
to suffer politely
at the hands of others

*captivities:
  hand-tamed / imprinted (eg: human or animal) / domesticated / a tolerant animal / pen raised (eg: still wants some human distance) / gate-girded / wild (eg: unadulterated)

genital exposure
calling / vocalizing
yeah
it's
on
the
street
/
the
heat
is
on
to run swiftly over
to produce sensation*
    to excite
    to contract**

*to (be)
come to
to seek
liberatory
cohere

**unsurprisingly
courtship for these
animals sometimes
presents difficulties
FIN


CHRISTY DAVIDS is a poet and teacher who often listens to the Beach Boys in a way that can only be described as aspirational. She is an assistant editor at The Conversant, and co-curates the Philadelphia-based reading series Charmed Instruments. Some of her work can be found in VOLT, Open House, Boog City, Bedfellows, and the Poetry Foundation’s Harriet among others.