

Ophelia

from *Soliloquies: the lady doth indeed protest*, chris wind

O what a noble mind is here at last uncover'd!
The glass of fashion, the mold of form
Is quite dash'd against the stone;
The shattered pieces lie at my feet.
My thoughts, my feelings,
Once fixed, encased in crystal,
Breathe and blow in the quick'ning wind
Like petals. Once pale, now pulsing,
Rich, and rainbowed, come!
I beseech thee, attend and heed
As I the shards examine.

Laertes, brother, you insult to suggest
Hamlet's love impermanent
For his choice must be queen
As well as wife: Am I not worthy?
Further, you warn caution,
Lest I my 'chaste treasure open':
I am mistress of my self!
And since more than a man, I pay the cost,
Then more, not less, do I take such care.
Lastly, you say 'safety lies in fear':
I have grown weary of being afraid,
Of being made to feel afraid; I yearn
To meet the day and greet the night
Unafraid—as men are wont to do.
And I crave to love with opening arms—
So tell me not to hide my heart
Lest my desire lead him to abandon
Restraint, and madly ravish—would it be so?
(Or do you extend to all of your kind
Knowledge of your self alone?)

Father, your words are as out of tune.
You say I do not understand myself
And see me still an infant babe,
For by foil you would then appear the more mature:
Is contrast your only proof of wisdom and worth?
(Alas, all cowards and chameleons create their colour

From what is without, not what is within.)
And you instruct me to 'set my entreatments at a higher rate'
As if I am some prize! Do you think me a whore,
That my presence must be paid for?
Then you claim *he* may walk with a larger tether
(As if we were but animals!): Why do you grant him
More freedom than I?
Why does Laertes go to Paris (and not I)
When you know his simple mind so well
You sent another to be guardian?
I pray thee, Father, reconsider—
Is it because your own judgement is faulty
That you do not trust mine?
Hamlet is a fine man, soldier, scholar, courtier,
A prince! And I judge him to be sincere.
Is that not enough?
No, indeed, that is nothing, for lastly
You tell me to forsake him—forever!
For no other reason than your own mistrust
Of him, of me, that I'll become with child
(And thereby make you the greater fool—
You think not what it would make of me.)

To you both, I never sought your advice
Why do you 'press it upon me so?
Perhaps you feel your sex gives the right—
No. I'll give the reason: Projection is all.
Brother, your passions run without rule
So you tell your sister to reign hers.
And Father, you are a fool and master both,
Of fine words and deception's smile
So you counsel your daughter to believe none.

And now, Hamlet, no longer my lord
I have words that I have longed to deliver.
I pray you now, receive them.
The first time you came to me,
dishevell'd and distraught,
I was startled by your manner
And wanted dearly to explain my seeming change of heart
But I dared not. Yet to see you thus disturbed
I almost broke my vow and cried out
Love!

But caught my breath: your eyes,
It was your eyes that pierced my heart

With icy arrows poison-tipped,
And froze my tongue.

And when later, I returned your letters,
Could you not see I was commanded
By a will other than mine own?
My father's glance had soiled those pages,
And for that I almost willingly returned them
But to ask for more!
When finally I was permitted to reach out to you,
To speak with you, perchance to touch you—
Did you not see my hand tremble as I held
Our hearts between us? Could you not tell?
Did you not know? No, you did not.
Or could not. Perhaps would not.
And I wondered, what love is this
So blind to my state,
So focused on your own?
(You have the luxury of feigning
What I was truly fighting!)
You thought to fool with me:
I loved you, I loved you not,
Carelessly plucking the petals of my heart
One by one, finally crying out
'Get thee to a nunnery!'
Did you think me that cold, that bereft of desire?
Or, unable to have me, did you wish no one to?
Or did you think me pure, too pure for the arrant knave?
I pray thee, do not set me upon a pedestal,
An angel or a saint—allow me to be human:
I bleed, I desire— Is that it?
Desiring, am I thus *impure*, fit only for a 'nunnery'?

Then, sitting near to see the players,
Did you think yourself a member of the troupe
To be playing thus with me?
Your closeness, your words, taunting me—
For desire's restraint or for its absence?
I was as fever'd as you were cold.
But you could not see at all,
So much it pleased you to be the wronged,
Poor little Hamlet, hard done by

His uncle, his mother, his sweetheart.
There was a line, not unnoticed,
'A woman's love is brief':

The brevity of my love is but a measure
Of the weakness of yours.

Pray, what is the source
Of your sudden loss of faith in me?
You think I betrayed you, used you,
Played pawn of the King and Queen:
But they merely sought to learn
The cause of your madness,
A knowledge I too desired—
(Was it your love for me?)
Why did you doubt me so?
Ah—'your mother, your sweetheart'—
Your mother is unfaithful therefore I must be;
Your mother fickle, therefore I fickle;
Your mother's love brief, mine too.
Hamlet, I am as different from your mother
As I am from you.
Like the child who calls all furry creatures 'dogs'
You think that because we share sex
We share all else as well.
I would as easily say that because my father
Is a cowardly fool, so too are you.
(An opinion not unworthy of consideration, now—
Perhaps it was you who used me—
Your lusty talk not for my ears but for theirs,
So they might conclude your madness unrequited love—
A perfect decoy for your petty plan
Of avenging unrequited hate.)

And then that second time you came to me,
Disturbed and in despair, you burst into my chamber
As I lie in bed still flushed and confused—
That night you come to me, so full of delighted rage,
Your uncle's guilt finally exposed,
But your inability to kill the King persisting
And frustrating your filial duty, your honour,
You tell me then you have killed my father,
Mistaking him for another, and though racked
With the pain of love for your mother
You effect a turbulent reconciliation,

Burning still you babble on of your father
That he appeared to you again.
Thus you come to me, all empty and full too—
And what am I to do but take you in my arms,
Take you to my bed, calm you, comfort you,

Loosed by insanity, mourning for my father;
But they did not know in whose bed
You lie the night before—
For that sanity makes, out of silly songs.

I hear it told a suicide:

A heart twice broken by grief
Over a father's death and a love lost.
Alas, it seems men like to believe
They are the center of the universe
For all members of my sex.
But some of us are made
Of stuff more strong and independent.
My life was affected by you, 'tis true,
But not extinguished because of you.
And so, there arises a new thought:
Despair over a young unmarried pregnancy.
While more flattering than the former,
This, alas, is also untrue—
Hamlet was thirty and I was no Juliet;
And, with a simple sheath, a douche of zinc—

The truth, let it be known,
Is not suicide at all.
To your disadvantage it is
That clowns, idiots, and other asses
Are believed before a woman's word.

Go, heed the Queen
And not the clown: It was an accident.
As I was perched in a tree sorting my mind,
I fell into the water, my dress billowed out,
And heavy as it quickly became,
it weighted me down.
Who would realize but another woman?
Forsooth indeed 'twas the damned dress!
Against the farthingale, several petticoats,
And my kirtle, velvet and voluminous,

I had but little chance.
Struggling with tens of tiny buttons and ties,
I could not get it off in time.

No, I could not free myself soon enough—
For I was the more deceived
To obey, to submit, to accept.
To wear my thoughts like garments
Fitting to the fashions of time and place

But that hinder and hide the self.
'Tis sad we seldom know what we are
And less what we may be.

But I do know now what I think:

Again, projection is all.
Hamlet, you tried to cast off your desire,
That constant source of frustration—
But alas you could not, and so instead
You sought to strip me of mine.
In your diversion with revenge and hatred,
You realized your love for me was brief—
And so you accused me and mine of brevity.
In your heart, loving your mother instead,
You were the unfaithful one—
And so called me fickle.
Incapable of strong belief and trust,
Doubting, vacillating, questioning all—
You take the mirror for glass and see me instead.
Guilty of dissembling and deceiving
With a mockery of madness and *The Mousetrap*—
You call upon my face-painting with disgust.
And last, you punish me for acting
With simple allegiance and obedience
To my duty toward my father—
Yet you have done the very same,
Pursuing to a far ghashtier end
The duty to yours.

Laertes, Polonius, Hamlet—

Everything you are that displeases you,
Everything that you cannot look at in yourself,
You have projected upon me, you see in me.
Well I have cast that glass in splinters upon the floor!
I am more and different than what you want to see.
The mold is broken, no more to be filled
With your frustrated dreams and fearful dreads.

(Soft, I have garlands still of flowers sweet—
No fennel, nor columbine,
The violets have withered,
And the daisies have been plucked.
There is some rue for all,
And for Hamlet, here's rosemary:
I did love you once.
And here is pansies, that's for thoughts.

And for myself,

'T'have seen what I have seen, to see what I see

A single dogrose, rubied and free.)