

Not Such Stuff

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Cast (in order of featured appearance):

Lady MacBeth

Juliet

Kate

Portia

Regan

Ophelia

Marina

Miranda

Notes:

This is more a piece of interwoven soliloquies than a play per se, as there is no real action. I leave movement up to the actors and directors – enough not to make it visually boring, but not so much it distracts from the words.

Although the lines provide (usually) clear clues as to who's who, it might be helpful to have other clues, via costume, gesture, and set. For example...

Lady MacBeth could be rubbing her hands initially, but then flinging her fist into the air.

Juliet could be pacing on a balcony.

Kate could be wearing some kind of hooded shawl, pulling it back at the right moment to reveal her bruised face.

Portia could be holding law books, or standing at a lectern of sorts.

Regan could be sitting huddled into herself in the corner on the floor, speaking as a battered child.

Ophelia could be holding then tossing flowers.

Marina could be skipping around, singing and dancing, then at the end of her bit, she could lie down in a coffin-like pose (or actually climb into a bare wooden casket??).

Miranda could be standing on a clump of earth (the island).



Juliet:               Romeo, Romeo,  
                          Where the fuck art thou?

                          Have you stopped along the way  
                          To play at your stupid battle games?

                          Or have you changed your mind,  
                          And decided not to come  
                          Thinking me too 'easy' and thus insincere:  
                          What perversion of thought is this?  
                          Because I say what it is I want,  
                          Direct and forthright,  
                          You judge my desire false?

Kate:                 But for a man to be so bold is not a fault.

Juliet:               While the one who dallies,  
                          Says no to mean yes,  
                          You deem true and take her  
                          Seriously?  
                          Or perhaps you think to be 'easy' is to be unchaste:  
                          If so, you misjudge  
                          Yourself!  
                          Because I want you (I want you)

Ophelia:             Desiring, am I thus impure?

Juliet:               Does in no way mean  
                          I am a woman who wants every man.  
                          Do you think of yourself so poorly?  
                          Can you not accept that it is you who—  
                          That one look of yours makes me wet  
                          One touch sends a fire through every nerve

                          That it is you, standing there  
                          In your tights so tight  
  And your shirt  
  Carelessly open,  
                          Your chest—

                          Oh Romeo, Romeo,  
                          Wilt thou leave me so unsatisfied?  
                          'Tis true you asked the same last night

When you came  
And I bid you go  
—For you had come so ill-prepared!  
I bid you go to the Friar—  
Not for a marriage,  
'Tis but a farce:  
We say there will be no sex  
Until there is marriage  
Meaning until there is love;  
But if we marry at first sight,  
Then 'tis surely not a token of love  
But a license for sex.  
(Indeed, my mother's talk to me  
Of marriage  
Was as awkward as a first broaching  
Of the subject of sex!)  
And what need have we of a license—  
Better use can we make of a sheath!  
(The Friar, do you forget, is also a pharmacist!)

Yes, I bid you go  
But only to return—

Ophelia: I crave to love with opening arms.

Juliet: Return, Romeo, come—  
Part thy close curtain, love-perfuming night,  
As I will soon mine own unclasp,  
let fall,  
To offer sweetest heavens  
To my love, my Romeo, come—  
Steal upon catpaws silent in the night  
Follow my purr, come,  
Leap into my arms!  
Let us kiss once for every star in the sky  
A thousand times our lips shall meet!  
Let me feel your body  
move sleek along mine  
Let me touch you, Romeo, here and here  
(’Tis true, as spoken, strangers’ love is boldest!)  
Flutter your fingers upon my breast,  
Play with me love, at tug and nip  
’Till my body stiffens in arched

pleasure!  
Come, let me surround you  
Let me suck at the moon's liquid  
Till you clench and howl!  
Then lick me love,  
Seek my treasure with your teasing tongue  
Nibble the pearl in folds of oyster,  
My hands tearing at your head,  
Till I am gasping in wild heat,  
Come, now, thrust your hard desire  
reach deep in to me love—  
Let me feel your panting breath—  
Come night, loving black-silked night,  
Come take me, wake me,  
Make me cry out  
For more!  
Come, Romeo, come  
Come,  
Oh,  
Come!

Nurse laughs to see me so—

Lady MacBeth: Outperforming them in their own play.

Juliet: (Though mother would faint,  
Still confusing innocence with ignorance)  
Young love, she mutters, fanning my face;  
But I protest, 'tis not love,  
Not of ones so young,  
Nor of ones just met—  
Let us be clear:  
Yours was an artful come-on  
("Let lips do what hands do")  
For a classic pick-up—  
'Tis young lust, I tell her true:  
I want sex

Kate: Surely in a man this is much applauded.

Juliet: With a desire pure as the lace on my bodice;  
She clucks to hear me talk so,  
And I would persist—

But what's in a name?  
That which we call making love  
By any other name  
Feels as good.

Kate: With great disturbance, I hear it said  
My story doth much to entertain,  
'Tis light and with a happy end,  
In short, 'tis thought a comedy!

Dost thou laugh to see a shrew?  
Indeed, I pray thee, what is a shrew?

Kate: What am I that I be so named?

Juliet: What perversion of thought is this?  
Because I say what it is I want—

Kate: 'Tis said I am froward and I vow 'tis true—  
But for a man to be so bold is not a fault.  
And some doth complain o' my scolding tongue—  
Then I am wisely critical, not content  
With any and all. Others bewail  
I am wilful, with strong spirits—  
But I see a woman may be made a fool  
If she hath not a spirit to resist,  
And surely in a man this is much applauded.  
Further, 'tis said, I am bitter and bad-tempered—  
I pray thee, what is the standard of measure?  
'Tis true I am not mild, but neither is my father  
Yet none doth therefore curse *his* name.  
I am more strained than pleasant, I confess  
But methinks perchance you would be too:  
To be auctioned off as a piece of chattel,  
To know the suitors who come  
Court your father's wealth—  
'Tis not my mind to smile at greed;

Portia: That *I* am not allowed to choose—

Kate: And to know that my father will give his money  
To a man who is a stranger  
'Fore he will give it to his own daughter—

Ophelia: Am I not worthy?

Kate: How shall I be sweet under that offense?  
I ask again, then, what is a shrew?



Observe and see that any man  
Not favoured by a certain woman  
Will fall to insult and slander anon.  
Witness Hortensio, who once called her jewel,  
Doth declare Bianca a disdainful haggard  
As soon as she prefers another.  
Thus, all I have done to gain this name  
Is fail to praise and stroke men's pride.

Perhaps thou dost laugh to see me tamed?  
I think it sad to make all alike,  
To force the spirited to be subdued.  
Do you find it amusing to see me starved  
Of food and sleep 'till I am giddy,  
Weak of mind and body? To see me subject  
To Petruchio's emotional whips and whims:  
He presents a feast then throws it out  
Or allows instead another to eat.  
He gives me a beautiful cap and gown  
Then rips it to shreds before my eyes.  
He offers me everything then takes it away.  
Back and forth, up and down—to be sure,  
It overcomes,  
This confusion, fear, and exhaustion.  
To see me tamed.

Miranda: 'Tis a dream perchance of many a small boy.

Kate: Only a man blinded by some grand fantasy  
Would call me tamed.  
Any woman is suspect.  
My final speech is odd, unexpected.  
One can see neither reason nor cause  
For this absolute and sudden change.  
'Tis true. One sees it not.  
For it lies in an unwritten scene.  
Heed not that speech of obedience and submission—  
'Twas made with Petruchio near  
And therefore under unspoken threat.

Ophelia: Could you not see I was commanded  
By a will other than my own?

Kate: Did ye not notice Act Four?

Portia: Look again.

Kate: In scene one, my arrival, he begins his plan,  
Depriving me of food and sleep.  
By scene three, my body is weak and begging,  
Though my spirit still resists.  
He toys with me, dismisses the tailor,  
And announces anon we are to travel  
To my father's house. On the road  
In scene five, it is a mere eleven lines  
'Till I submit and agree with his every word.  
Did you not wonder what happened between,  
While the men bought and sold my sister?  
I was beaten.  
And I mean not to speak in metaphor.  
You know well that Petruchio strikes  
His other servants, doth it surprise thee then  
That he struck me? Over and again—  
He locked the room, 'trusted Grumio as guard—  
And therefore, on the road, to my father's house,  
You see, that was my escape:  
I could not have left alone,  
His servants in league, under similar fear,  
And even if I got away, perchance along the—  
At least Petruchio was only one.

But what then to do? Whither should I go?  
If I confess to father, would he believe me?

Miranda: Why has she no mother?

Kate: He cannot, for he has given the dowry—  
It and I belong to Petruchio,  
And he has not the money to sell me to another  
(Even if that be possible).  
I cannot live at home forever,  
(Would that he take me back)  
He'd be the laughing stock of the town,  
A married then unmarried shrew.  
I cannot go out on my own—  
I have no money, and it is only to be made

As strumpet.

- Miranda: You are my only alternative.
- Kate: No, that marriage had to be, whatever the price.
- Marina: I did not escape.
- Kate: And, I'd already enough humiliation:  
To go and then come back would be worse  
Far worse than it was not going,  
No one else would have me,
- Portia: There is really not a one worth choosing.
- Kate: And I shall not dance barefoot,  
Nor shall Bianca be made to wait again.  
Is't not then the answer  
To submit while he is near and pretend to be his  
So at all other times, I can truly be mine own?  
Having house and food is much—
- Marina: For room and board.
- Kate: And anon, I trust, he will travel oft away—  
'Twas a bargain: prisoner to him  
For freedom from the rest.
- Miranda: It is you I am to see as my saviour.
- Kate: Lip service was all—usually—  
And if a word spoken against my will  
Can stop a blow against my body—  
Well, you heard the speech.
- Regan: He was a man who needed to be worshipped.
- Kate: Yet soft, 'twas not all false:  
Carefully I say women are simple  
To offer war when they are bound to serve,  
Love and obey. And they *are* bound.
- Regan: To obey, to honour, to love.

Ophelia: To obey, to submit, to accept.

Kate: But not by God or nature, no—  
By commerce and social custom alone  
Is thy husband thy lord, thy life, thy keeper.  
Remember that, I pray thee.

Juliet: 'Tis but a farce.

Kate: Is't not then tragedy, to name me shrew?  
And worse, to seek to tame such a one?  
Worse still is't to call the end gay;  
But the worst tragedy is to be entertained by it,  
To take it not seriously,  
Indeed to call it, my story, comedy.

(But fast, I'll tell thee the comedy:  
Hast thou forgotten 'twas a play within a play?  
Remember ye not Sly, the drunkard, and the noble man?  
The old version ends not with me  
But with Sly, just as it began,  
Showing clearly this story was part of a dream.  
To be sure, a sick dream, and a dangerous one too,  
Nevertheless, 'twas a male fantasy:  
To be honourable, to be wealthy, to be powerful.  
But recall, alas, 'twas also a joke,  
Played on the drunkard by the other:  
And to be sure, that women should be  
So obedient and submissive to men—  
Aye, that *'tis* a laugh!)

Portia: If I'm the one with the property  
 You'd think I'd be the buyer  
 Not the bought;

Kate: Auctioned off as a piece of chattel.

Portia: A lot of faith my father has in me:  
 He distrusts my ability to judge, to discriminate—  
 A decision made by chance,  
 A decision inevitably and ultimately irrational,  
 Is preferable to a decision made by me.

Ophelia: Am I not worthy?

Portia: But no, you say,  
 The decision was not to be by chance  
 But choice, and thus reveal the suitor's character.  
 That is, he who chose lead would be wise,  
 To forsake appearance, and realize its irrelevance;  
 True, but you forget the inscription:  
 To choose lead, to choose 'to give and hazard all'  
 Is to my mind *not* wise,  
 For its foolish risk (all!);  
 Is it not better to choose silver,  
 And 'get what one deserves'?  
 It seems to me a mature perspective;  
 So, to judge by appearance  
 (And thus forsake appearance)  
 Or to judge by words  
 —That is the choice.  
 Words have meaning,  
 And unless the words be false or deceiving,  
 Is it not better to judge according to content,  
 Than to judge according to form  
 To substance, rather than pretence?  
 So if it was to be a test of character,  
 'Twas thus a poor test,  
 For who was to guess what my father intended:  
 The form did contradict the content;  
 And so choice becomes chance, after all.

That *I* am not allowed to choose  
 Is in principle, intolerable,

But in practice, just as well—  
For there is really not a one worth choosing:  
A prince who boasts of his precious Porsche  
And can fix it himself;  
The County Palatine, who believes  
A real man never smiles;  
Falconbridge, a pin-up boy  
With a mind as two-dimensional;  
A Scottish Lord interested in nothing  
But a good fight;  
An alcoholic (the duke's nephew, yes);  
The Prince of Morocco, a blood-thirsty Rambo;  
And Bassanio, attracted by wealth and beauty,  
Willing in a moment to sacrifice his wife for his friend.  
There is not one.

If I so despise men,  
Why did I disguise as one?  
'Twas not my choice:  
Shakespeare (a man) created my costume

Ophelia: To wear my thoughts like garments,  
Fitting to the fashions of time and place,

Portia: (And that of Viola and Rosalind),  
And in his cowardice, he refused to challenge the reality  
That to be able to interact  
Without having to defend against  
Sexual or romantic intentions,  
One must be male;  
That to be taken seriously,  
And to be exempt from compliments that essentially trivialize  
One must be male;  
That to be effective at an endeavour  
Of the intellectual arts,  
One must be male;  
That to be dominant, influential, powerful,  
One must be male  
In patterns of appearance, behaviour, speech, and thought

Kate: I pray thee, what is the standard of measure?

Portia: —Patterns of thought?

But didn't I put forward  
The feminine concept of mercy over justice?  
Didn't care and compassion win over fairness?  
No, look again:  
The Duke first pleaded for mercy, not I;  
*My* case was won on a technicality,  
On the letter of the law.  
(Though it is worth mention  
That recourse to such a legal loophole  
Was my last resort.)  
The masculist mode won out;  
But this is not surprising in a masculist court.

Where there is no challenge,  
There can be no change.  
For when the disguise is finally revealed  
It is not recognized  
That to be what I was (what I am)

Ophelia: I am more and different than what you want to see.

Portia: One can be female—

Miranda: This disregard of what is true  
Can only issue from a mind deprav'd.

Portia: It is recognized only that I *am* female.  
And their response concerns only themselves—

Ophelia: What love is this, so blind to my state?

Portia: Relief, that they won't be cuckolds.

Regan:                   What you have to wonder is  
Why our father favoured Cordelia.

Kate:                    Any woman is suspect.

Regan:                   He was a man who needed to be worshipped  
But, as the story goes,  
Cordelia was not one to flatter  
And praise. So why then?

                              It is simple—she's young.  
(That is to say, younger.)  
And like most men,

Marina:                 ...ordinary men...

Regan:   our father prefers  
His women to be childish.

Ophelia:                Is contrast your only proof of wisdom and worth?

Regan:                   (Or shall I say, children.)

                              At first he favoured Goneril;  
Then as soon as I was old enough  
(Eight or nine years),  
He turned his affection to me;  
When Cordelia became 'of age'  
He ignored me and—

  At first it was play,  
Tickling games that made me giggle,  
Then sometimes it hurt, but he was my father  
And he had the right  
To reprimand (though I didn't always understand  
My transgression); as a daughter  
I was bound by a duty

Kate:                    What then to do? Whither should I go?

Regan:                   To obey, to honour, to love,

Ophelia:                To obey, to submit, to accept...

Regan:                   As Cordelia so clearly expressed—



There is that bond  
That binds.

Ophelia: I was the more deceived.

Regan: But soon it always hurt,  
And time after time I would scream until nurse came  
To hush up my cries and my bleeding  
And lead me limping from the King's chambers.

Miranda: Why has she no mother?

Regan: Like the hymen of my innocence  
That bond is now broken.

Ophelia: I have grown weary of being afraid.

Regan: Cordelia, alas, cannot remember

Marina: I don't remember the second day, at all.

Regan: And thus is still in favour;  
I, however, cannot forget.

I hear you protest:  
This is not at all suggested in the play!  
No. It isn't. Not at all.

Kate: 'Tis true, one sees it not.

Regan: But Lear was a man, and a king,  
And both are desperate  
For power, control, male progeny:

Kate: 'Twas a male fantasy—a sick dream—

Regan: He had three daughters, and no longer a wife,  
To provide these services,  
He had three daughters;  
And we know that one in every six—

But no, there is nothing in the play

Kate: For it lies in an unwritten scene.

Regan: To suggest any of this.

Ophelia: 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—

Juliet: To offer sweetest heavens...

Ophelia: 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 as still an infant babe,

Portia: To be taken seriously.

Ophelia: 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?

Portia: One must be male.

Ophelia: 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?

Portia: A lot of faith my father has in me.

Ophelia: 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—

Miranda: The male as authority.

Ophelia: 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.

Portia: Words have meaning.

Ophelia: 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!

Juliet: For more!

Ophelia: 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:

Miranda: I am a person.

Ophelia: 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,  
That '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.

Kate: That 'tis a laugh.

Juliet: Let us be clear.

Ophelia: I would as easily say that because my father  
Is a cowardly fool, so you are too.  
(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,  
I loved you!                      And I am pained to admit  
My father dead and Laertes now abroad,  
Nothing could prevent the consummation  
Of our love and our desire.  
I said yes, my father's blood on your fingers  
To be mixed with my own maidenhood blood,  
And I said yes, to prove my love,  
To show you finally what I truly felt,  
To erase that past of forced and frigid distance.  
Love's restraint hath increased its fire, I say yes  
To make you believe, make you see

This is what I am to you, this is what you are to me,  
And nothing less, I say yes to love you.  
Taking you in my arms, gently, tenderly,  
Soothing your passion 'till another took its place,  
All night we held fast, all night we loved.

And in the morning, love,  
In the morning I awake and you are not there.  
My bed is empty and I fear I have dreamt  
But no—I hear it said you have left for England.  
What news is this?  
You left no word, no explanation,  
And I beat my breast flinging myself down,  
Wondering have you played with me yet again?  
I love you, I love you not!  
Perhaps they tell true and I took to my bed  
My father's murderer, and not my love.  
He has left, and I am the fool,  
No, there must be a reason, I resist—  
But then you send a letter to Horatio  
And there is none for me.  
Tormented, I wander for days, how should I  
Your true love know from another one?  
Now you seem dead and gone  
And I a maid at your window,  
To be your Valentine;  
But up he rose and donned his clothes  
And dugged the chamber door,  
Let in the maid, that out a maid  
Never departed more.  
Young men will do't, if they come to it  
By cock, they are to blame.  
And will 'a not come again?  
I wander'd thus a while, alas,

Kate: To be sure, it overcomes.

Ophelia: They thought me a poor virgin,  
Loosed by insanity, mourning for my father;

Lady MacBeth: Call us mad? 'Tis a tale  
Told by idiots, full of sound and fury  
Signifying nothing.



Ophelia: 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.

Miranda: A preoccupation with self.

Ophelia: 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.

Kate: A male fantasy.

Ophelia: 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.

Lady MacBeth: You didn't kill yourself!

Ophelia: To your disadvantage it is  
That clowns, idiots, and other asses  
Are believed before a woman's word.  
Go,

Portia: Look again,

Ophelia: 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

Kate: Methinks perchance you would be too.

Ophelia: 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 ghastlier 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.

Kate: Remember that, I pray thee.

Ophelia: 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,  
I have seen what I have seen, to see what I see  
A single dogrose, rubied and free.)

Marina: I was not released untouched  
I did not escape from the brothel  
To a life of self-support teaching music and dance.

No.  
I was sold as a virgin for a very high price

Ophelia: As if I was a some prize.

Marina: Seven times on that first day.

Regan: It hurt.

Marina: Raped and ripped by ordinary men  
Then sewed up tight by a profiteering pimp,  
To be convincingly torn apart again.  
Seven times on that first day.

I don't remember the second day, at all.

Regan: I, however, cannot forget.

Marina: But after I was thus initiated, broken in,  
Broken,  
I was put into regular service with the other three.  
Mounted, ridden, beaten, gored,

Kate: Beaten.

Marina: Gouged, maimed, ploughed, rutted,

Miranda: I am a person!

Marina: –ravished.  
Continuously.

Regan: Time after time I would scream.

Marina: For room and board.

Ophelia: Am I not worthy?

Marina: The Mayor would come often

Seeking a cure for his syphilis.  
'How much for a dozen virgins?'

Miranda: For only if a virgin...

Marina: He would laugh and grin broadly.

Regan: Like most men.

Kate: Do you find it amusing?

Marina: I would suffice, no virgin,  
But still a year under twelve.

In time, my sores were open, bleeding,  
My eyes reddened, the fever came,

Ophelia: I could not free myself soon enough.

Marina: I could not eat for days,  
-I did become insane.

And shortly thereafter,  
I died.

Lady MacBeth: They killed you.

Marina: (No music. No dance.)

Miranda: Why has she no mother?  
Why have I no mother?  
Nor Ophelia, Portia, Kate, Cordelia, Hermia,  
Indeed, none but Juliet?  
I'll tell thee:  
'Tis an obsession with the male.

Portia: One must be male.

Miranda: Consider Prospero, my good father,  
'The male as authority'–  
For 'tis to you, father, I must direct my questions  
There being none other to answer,  
'Cept Caliban who though half beast  
Is also (perchance moreso) male.  
(And when there arrive a multitude of others,  
Strangers to the island from the ship come asunder,  
They are too, alack, every one of them male.)  
You doth also seem to be 'the male as power'–  
You are parent and thus hold the natural virtue of veto  
Further, you are conjurer, with unnatural force as well.  
Lastly you are 'the male as protector'–  
For from you comes my safety from hazard and harm  
(Though it seems needed only against others of your kind.)

Next consider Ferdinand,  
It is you I am to see as my saviour,  
You have knowledge of the other world,  
You will release me from the power and authority  
Of my father. You are my only alternative.  
But since you are a man, you are not an alternative  
At all.

'Tis odd this single stress on male–

Ophelia: Alas it seems men like to believe  
They are the center of the universe.

Miranda: The island is a reversal, not a reflection:  
For 'tis women who are responsible for the young,  
'Tis they who manage their education,  
Their care and survival–not men.  
This disregard of what is true

Can only issue from a mind deprav'd  
And clouded over by sickness—  
I fear 'tis envy of the womb:  
Bereft of female affect, denied female influence,  
I am totally fashioned, created by man—  
'Tis a dream perchance of many a small boy  
Playing with his penis one day  
And crying out the next that he has no breasts.  
(Yet 'tis not so simple: this jealousy  
Of the ultimate power, the power of creation,  
Raises the woman to great importance  
And yet at the same time there seems to be  
A preoccupation with self that  
Excludes the woman to insignificance.)

Forsooth, 'tis a dream indeed  
For I am not a vessel to be filled with your desires;

Ophelia: The mold is broken.

Miranda: That you think me so is plain:  
Ferdinand, it is clear you are interested  
Only in my ability to reproduce,  
For only if a virgin would you make me queen.  
(Queer logic this—if it's progeny you want,  
Better to choose one proven  
Than one untried and perhaps unable.)  
You are no better than Caliban  
Who in arrogance sought to people the isle  
With copies of himself, and Stephano  
The would-be king desiring also to propagate.  
Father, you too are of the same,  
For when giving, selling me to Ferdinand  
You paraded as my greatest value  
My virgin-knot.

Ophelia: As if I am some prize!

Miranda: Moreover, not only into my body but into my soul too  
Would you thrust your desires:  
Seeking purity and goodness but failing to attain  
These qualities yourself, you hoist them upon me;  
Aghast at the pain and responsibility of knowledge,

You would have me remain ignorant;  
And guilty with experience, you declare me innocent;  
Despising your own ugliness, you demand beauty in me  
And humiliated by the ravages of time passing,  
You wish me to be forever young.

But I am not a ship at sea  
To be directed by your hand at the helm:  
I have my own course,

Ophelia: I am mistress of my self!

Miranda: And will not be what you wanted to be  
And could not become.

Kate: A woman may be made a fool  
If she hath not a spirit to resist.

Miranda: 'Tis said *The Tempest* is a fitting summation  
Of all the rest; if that be true  
Then by rule of logic, all the rest  
Is unrealistic and unbalanced:  
For there are two sexes in the world,

Portia: One can be female.

Miranda: Of equal representation in quality and quantity.  
'Tis said I am the ultimate conception of Woman:

Ophelia: I pray thee, do not set me upon a pedestal.

Miranda: Young, beautiful, innocent, pure—  
Is this what you want?  
Then 'tis no flesh and blood you want,  
For flesh ages as the years pass;  
And it is not always, not often, beautiful.  
And 'tis not mind, heart, and soul you want,  
For the mind thinks, the heart feels,  
And the soul moves by its own stars.  
What you seem to want is something insubstantial,  
Something of the air perchance.  
Alas, look again, for I am a person  
And not such stuff as dreams are made on.