

Ophelia Talketh Back

by *Illiria Osum*

after Shakespeare and Atwood

A likely madness: the boy-king unwed,
unfeeling but in his search for his father's
revenge. He thinks I do not know, but I
have never been so stupid as I feign.

*Rosemary for remembrance, rue in place
of sorrow.* Do remember, love, to come
again into my bed. Lament, my love,
and in your sorrow, become a king. Reign.
—Zounds, but the verse is narrow. Ten syllables
per line is all I'm granted? Thinking
iambs only is the limit. Am I
relegated then to sonnets and their
ilk? I can't. I won't. I ask, demand for
something else. Remember me. I'll rue no more.

Unpeel me from
the corset of my
language.

If Hamlet is mad,

then Gertrude is a murderous whore.

If Gertrude is a murderous whore,

then Ophelia is borderline.

If Ophelia is borderline,

she made the whole thing up because she's got attachment problems and

therapy won't be invented for another few hundred years, not to mention

Freud's a cuck, I mean, a cock, I mean, a crook.

If Ophelia made the whole thing up—

No, no, no.

That too is a form.

I won't have it

release me from my twice-womanned body |
deflowered by my own hand | *rue and rosemary hey nonny nonny* | *violets and*

pansies hey nonny nonny | my prince erected I mean elected to his position by
the grace of God | I long at last to be formless | return me from the endless
hysterical shriek of my backwards position | get thee to a nunnery you said |
well get thee from missionary asshole | speaking of assholes I thought you were
studying Greek at university | you'd think you and Horatio would have practiced
| fraternitas | that's Latin isn't it | I never learned but my mother's tongue |
instead you come fumbling into me at the witching hour | your mouth a prudish
bud closed tight in refusal | in the hour that by hystorical right should be mine |
only this need only this once you say each time | and each time I float from you
in amniotic serenity | if a man's home is his castle then the castle is a woman's
battlefield | if a woman's battlefield is the castle and the castle is a man's home
then the woman's body is also a battlefield | QED | oh that's Latin too | a
woman's body is ruled by Latin and Greek though we cannot speak them |
FEMINA: how does the skin conform | γυναικός: how does the womb perform |
my uniform embodied | ruled for all my life by tongues denied me | though you
spoke five languages Hamlet you were no cunning linguist | *rue and rosemary*
hey nonny nonny | madness is an armor granted to the tongueless and stolen
by Freud