

NANCY SHAW & CATRIONA STRANG / Lamentarama

for Henry Purcell

no explanation no heat no light
—Samuel Beckett

Overture

All easily escaped
past grasp, past date

and still I, the grating go-
ound beloved, all moonshone
like the grey sweet reaching
liver-all, the impossible
crisp-foot air

Lamentarama: Act 1

Enter Belinda and Dido

BELINDA: A ring, a rope, a rush

DIDO: Now a grim number grits
 the light-shed
 (no wafting here)
 and no echoes

Enter the All-Girls Chorus

BELINDA: All these women coming to
 afflict us, me among them,
 thronged and armed

all bearing down and milk-
sprayed rising
and descending!

CHORUS: But fleshier and encroaching:
every cut, bruise, and scar
each stitch and every fucking bomb—all unrecorded
we now sing:
(*they sing*)
and the arms still like mad
encroach we to the fair
each cloud increases
complaint, but looks admit
no disclosure there—which storm
attains again? We know lux
rarely permits (and here you also
smile—the pleasure, the property)

a gust in us would tender
or skull, like an entered one
just as the strong's history rocks with misfortune

so peace and we are foreigners

DIDO: Is this was me?
I've learned to
have, so rationally my breast
can lend a hand.
I'd just as well allow a melt
like you (poor
unhappy softly)
but just now I can't hear you.

BELINDA: (*becoming repeatedly part of the choir*)

As if to avenge but
not avenge, all furies
away—we now await
the unspoken, unrewarded
not even neglected: we are
alarmed, we will
not rise, our danger
lingers

(*enter Aeneas, glittering*)

AENEAS: My likes only
like you, I
never, never worry:
girl, this life is
your way, with
flowers igniting—
meets become met
oh proceed the
sound yard!

Dancing.

BELINDA (*to Dido*): See that, how
divine form is!

DIDO: If could would please me, I—
Me with I—
I'm in love with a worried county

AENEAS (*to Dido*): You have
no exit, let me
smile, you cut

causes, little
chases of destiny

CHORUS: (*elbowing in*)

Love transfers
the only point
rings mention (that is
terrible in the
heart) and she
of this cannot
but feast

AENEAS: A case of the hero
happens once again!
not in despair
the facts get off

Dances. A Glittering Cacophony.

CHORUS: Rumours disappear
The day is
his own. Here we
rock and beauty lets in
order to the last little
chasers. The conquest
continues to love
itself.

Dance.

CHORUS: And the new
well-shadowed triumph
of love and
beauty at last

lets us in
litter coursers
little cuts
you little chasers.

DIDO: If it could only
please me; still I'm in
love with worry.

CHORUS: Love only transfers
points; our existence rips
material (oh terrible
heat) and she
cannot but.

AENEAS: My sympathies. Anyhow,
the fact you're desperate
gets me off. This Trojan
happens once again!

Dance.

BELINDA: The conquest continues
to love the language
that denies it.

Refrain: Act 1

THE TORMENTERS: one possessed colour
a thousand deep shafts
their hair disorder

THE EXILES: boomed back
allow us to settle here
cold flanks our
blood stained ribbons
summon up in
speeches of fear
and shaky locks

THE TORMENTERS: our theory of the dead
flocking drifts
a glorious wretch
rolling in surf
honey cakes
hacked face snatching

THE EXILES: you mutilated our testimony
the way ahead
now divided
suffer fraudulent
flames of war
the fleet skirmished
raggy crock

THE TORMENTORS: The Latins, The Fates
infected our purpose
purchased black locks
kindred bolts
triple plumed gold

crisp lace
howling for blood
against a tall needle
of flint

THE EXILES: drummed a dusty plain
 the Trojans flee
 Arcadia's brute
 and glinted shore
 of arduous bones

Act 2: Lamentarama

DIDO: did I express my astonishment
 when struck and swarmed
 though the instance
 could be easily verified
 in treatises

AENEAS: I cannot recount with discretion
 or prove in a series of facts
 accounting for
 the origin of our pleasantries
 yet I am forced to yield
 a deadly morsel
 my meager diet
 prescribed in vain

DIDO: Thus I mimic
 Is it not strange
 the act of cutting
 invested with
 tender touches
 given unannounced

AENEAS: tonic conquers all
soaked admirably
suited and
held dear

DIDO: my use does not stop
in the ruins of
souls sold at
staggering figures
as a pound grounded
on a pedestal pierced
with little holes

AENEAS: I took on a similar weight
my admirable charity
ground, milled
in glimmering maintenance

Lamentarama: Act 3

DIDO'S SOLILOQUY: a denial of fortune
deliberately vow
without doubt
or plead to
the contrary
in overtones

verbal dares
epistolary
conundrums
the gradual
dismantling
of ballads

I remember
the old days
spread with
delicate flesh

wipe down
and wipe
down again

celebrate for
weeks, eyes
proud in
dismembered
triumph, prepped
skinned
and branded

I keep company
among the
favored seed
sober brine
peeled in solicitude
a still pricey
analysis
the marriage
is clearly politic

Lamentarama: Act 4

DIDO: (*now especially precarious*)

I'll parry for all those offered
up disconsolate derailed
consolation – I dare
you, shiny – *this is*
the last time
I can speak
of it:
fraudulent care (a politic
mirage), all those unjustly
grieving—a hundred
deep—the hacked
and mutilated, the
subjugated, the glory
that lies, so few
return, I have
very little to lose

BELINDA: She's adrift
in no homeland
arms outstretched, secure,
foaming, bold,
and resolute, here there's
no return: since when
do the fraudulent
care?

DIDO: No hope
No homeland
No security

AENEAS: I can't bear
to leave her
there

CHORUS: We can't bear
to leave here and there

Lamentarama: Act 4
Refrain:

THE FURIES: for an emphasis on freedom
take the unilateral road
as a bleak coast
skittish caste
not immune
to tabled
panic

as mire spreads
basic sermons are tailored
couched always
on the stage of inaugurals
no banquet will last forever

THE FATES: vain bitterness saves
fettered morals
the inconvenience
their dissention
their historical sweep
is not so modest
the calculation
hammered

THE FURIES: those who have shown
devotion to death
somewhere
defy
net expectations
sacrifice swiftly
advancing doubt
who can be against this?

THE FATES: the first pundit to loose in a season
locked out,
slammed
a ditch wake
looming thaw
budge
stalked
dwindling gape
an even fraction
in dispute of a
ring
with spite

Lamentarama: The Final Act

AENEAS: (*musings*) Yet I am
my own radius.

DIDO: Pony! In my remembered
courage I announce
lodge-dirge and
rudder-rails (my erratic
coil's cordial)
but no more. I,

I'm a cramped
storm-agent, a belted
exit I'm sick
at the thought of
"Now Magistrate"
and swiftly stitch-legislate (remember:
courage) so here's
my question: can we
turn and yet
still remember?

CHORUS: (*in the way of an echo*)
One practical, the other much too terrible
for this open air.

BELINDA: these hills, this
flavour, I'm fair
game, I could flame
exactly to the sport
of recovery. Here
Aeneas found his
destination, exerted it
—exactly—
and afterwards continued.

AENEAS: You ought to see them
after-state, in my wake.
I have, in fact,
too much delayed.

The Dancing of Dido

DIDO: Can any sound recommend
this mass of vein
and complaint? Motion
must follow our storm, sorrow's
sorrow's matrix. See, women,
where the lake bereft
appears: such a prince
of the left-away cast-off shreds
as the death of a fly.

BELINDA: Box me in here and
remember, even wings
forget falling, softly
softening, but I
remember what I remaindered
from this soil.

Lamentarama: Epilogue

THE MISERIES: the conspiracy is nearly as vast
as the crackling of entrails

AN UNDERWRITER: the numbers crisp
a few flicks hasten
ten years of contact

THE MISERIES: what of those who
decide too rapidly
planked with glowering tally
are you fast enough

AN UNDERWRITER: are you
a month behind
run the names
don't be fooled
by their locution
shipping torture
tapered lard

THE MISERIES: imagine everything seared and shoddy
skin side down
like fine drops on foliage
rendered fat
manic bristle
mastering accents

AN UNDERWRITER: I would have to say
contrary to your
sentimental account