

Lee, Sophia. *Almeyda: Queen of Granada*. Ed. Diego Saglia, with an Introduction by Angela Wright. [British Women Playwrights around 1800](#). 15 July 1999. [31/10/2003.]

<http://www-sul.stanford.edu/mirrors/romnet/wp1800/editions/mysterious/queen.html>

Act V

Scene 2

[The Council assemble round the Canopy of State. Almeyda is led on, veiled; she draws the veil at length aside, and, looking majestically around, speaks.]

Almeyda

When late I closed these lips, I fully purposed,
Never again to break the awful silence,
Or view the light of Heav'n, or face of man.—
Why then am I dragg'd forth, a spectacle?
What cruel eye would dive into this heart—
This broken heart, to mark the early ravage?
—*I* wither in the sun—chill in the breeze;
Yet the sun runs his wonted course in glory!
The vernal breeze invigorates the world!
And all the change is *here*!
[pressing her heart.]

Abdallah [soothingly.]

Lamenting still?
Alas! that such a beauteous form should prove
Only the soul's sad sepulchre! Yet oft,
In woman, (mutable in all beside)
Love fixes ev'n to frenzy!

Almeyda [replying to an imaginary question.]

Idle question!
Why did I love? As well might you demand,
Why I saw light!—why waked my soul to knowledge?
Like light—like knowledge, in my infant sense,
Sunk imperceptible the tender impulse!
—Alonzo first partook each little care,
And doubled ev'ry joy! Ah, dear were both,
While crowns and sceptres yet were idle playthings!

Abdallah

Inventive malady, which wounds yet charms us!

[aside.] There is too much of *method* in this frenzy.
Would I had never trusted the event!

Almeyda [appearing to listen, and trembling.]
Hold—hide me!
Save me from this inward horror!
—Hark! hear ye not the murd'ers feet approaching?
—That death-devoting voice! Ev'n now they come—
They rush upon my love!—Oh! spare him, spare him!
—Dar'st thou, inhuman?—He's a monarch's heir!
Off, ruffians! nor profane that gallant form—
Oh! for a giant's arm, to wrest him from you!
—*Now, now*, the steep rocks echo with his fall,
And the rude surge entombs him!—Oh, Alonzo!

Abdallah
Ever Alonzo! He is all her cry.—

Nourassin
Recal your erring sense, unhappy princess!
Nor dwell for ever on these gloomy fictions.—

Almeyda
Away, away!—nor venture to console me—
—*Thou* hast not known to blend thy heart with his,
In faith indissoluble, and true passion—
I was that wretch—the visited of Heav'n!—
But, oh! the dire proportion of my mis'ry!—
—Still must I seek him on the river's brink:
Of seasons—time—of heat—of cold, regardless!
—Or do I err; or does the surge return him?
Swoln—maim'd, defac'd! no charm—no grace is left,
Of all fond fancy worshipp'd.—Scarce my heart,
In this disfigured corse, can know Alonzo!
—Turn, hapless father! turn thine eyes away,
Nor trace the dreadful secret! Oh, that I,
Like you, could *hope* a little while his coming,
—Start at his fancied footstep—hear his voice,
And die, at last, in blessed, blessed ignorance!

Abdallah
Mark, how this wildness shakes her!—In such transport
She cannot yield the crown.

Nourassin
Yet will we try her.
—Those faithful subjects, who but pray'd to pass,
Beneath Almeyda's sway, their years in peace,
Behold, with grief, the malady that shakes
Her nobler faculties; they supplicate

That she to abler hands resign her pow'r,
And in retirement soothe her soul's soft sorrows.

Almeyda

—Soft! give me time to breathe.—A moment's thought.—

[They tender her the Regalia.]

Th'imperial wreath, with which, in one short day,
These throbbing temples have been overweigh'd,
I unregretting yield.—Thou gaudy emblem

[Laying her hand on the Crown.]

Of nature's ample round! In thy small circle
Lies all that man desires, and, oh! much more
Than man can e'er enjoy, unless he finds
Heav'n's own supreme delight the bliss of blessing!
How hast thou mark'd my fate with endless horror!
—Hence, from my dim eyes, take the brilliant evil,
And give the promis'd solitude!

Nourassin

Our laws,
With your own hand, require you to resign it,
To this your heir.—

Almeyda

To him! Oh, horrible!
—Kill me, but shew not to my eyes that monster!
—Shakes not the earth beneath his bloody feet?
And sleeps in peace the thunder?

Abdallah

Alas! alas!
You see she knows me not!

Almeyda

Oh! would I did not!
Is there no help? Alas, I'm at his mercy!
His *mercy*, said I? 'Tis a word he knows not.
—But, pray you, call no murd'ers—I will die,
Without one struggle—only have a grave
May decently receive me, when my heart
Completes his crimes, and bursts with this convulsion!

Abdallah

The strong necessity o'er-rules all form!
—I must assume that crown she neither knows,
Duly, to wear or yield!—

Nourassin

Yet stay, my lord,
This is mere malady—She may be won.

Almeyda

Oh, mem'ry! thou return'st in all thy horrors!—
—Alas I am not mad, but miserable!
—Pity this anguish—pause, oh pause, one moment!
And from the fearful height where reason totters,
Ready to plunge into the bright obscure,
Yet give me leisure slowly to recall her!
—Awful supreme, support me! thou who know'st,
All I *have* suffer'd! all I yet *must* suffer!
Suspend this cruel sense of my misfortunes!
—Expunge the woman from this bleeding bosom;
Oh fill it wholly with those nobler duties,
Which supercede ev'n self, and awe at once
Each human grief to silence!

Abdallah

Wherefore gaze ye?
—This is a frenzy equals ev'n her own!
—Like the wild fires of the conflicting elements,
These *flashes of the soul*, oft break the night,
The long, *long*, night, which falls thus on a maniac.

Nourassin

Yet hear the Queen, Abdallah—her discourse,
Sounds not like frenzy!

Almeyda

Rather *truth*, and *reason*—
—My dismal fate's accomplish'd!—Man nor Heav'n,
Can mitigate its horrors!—yet for you,
For you, unvers'd in suff'ring, still I feel—
Nor dare I delegate the pow'r I hold,
To him I *know* incapable of pity—
—To him, who would perpetuate, and extend,
The miseries I ever must groan under!

Abdallah [in a transport of rage.]

Fool'd—fool'd at last! 'tis well—I have deserv'd it,
In trusting to a woman—

Almeyda

Ye, who hear me,
Know all the merit of this painful effort!
—For *you* I yet will live—for *you* will reign,
And tho' my secret soul shall seek the grave,
Ev'n to the hour that gives me to Alonzo,
Yet shall the ling'ring interval be mark'd,
By many an act of equity, and honor—
—I here deliberately impeach Abdallah,
Of blackest treason to his lawful sov'reign!
—To crown his sins a nobler victim fell!—

Oh! deed too horrible for thought!—Oh deed!
Which ear hath never heard, nor voice yet utter'd!

Abdallah

Spare all thy eloquence! and this recital!
—The evil thou'st escap'd, now seizes me,
And makes my brain, like my wild soul, one chaos!
—I do avow the intent, ev'n of that deed,
Tho' of the fact I'm guiltless—yet I'll try,
Thus to deserve thy charge!—

Nourassin

Seize on his sword!

[he is disarm'd.]

Orasmyn [enters and draws to guard his father.]

How now? Presumptuous man!

Almeyda

Ah! *he* too here!
For me there is nor justice then, nor hope!

Abdallah [gasping on the shoulder of his son.]

Orasmyn! thou hadst nearly lost a father!
—No proud Almeyda!
For thee alone I liv'd not! hadst thou seen
No more than I intended for thy knowledge,
Thou hadst been happy!—happy with Orasmyn!
I would have giv'n thee him—my life's best hope,
In whom I centre all my pride—my glory!
—Yet at this awful crisis of existence,
No more will I dissemble my true motive!
—To crown his youthful brow with that bright wreath
Injurious fortune bade him only look on,
Has been the single object of my life!

Orasmyn

He scorns the gift—nor thinks he hears a father.
—Recall your better self, and calm this transport!

Almeyda

This artifice, Orasmyn, is too late—
—Rather act like him—own the glorious sin,
And still preserve *one* merit in thy candour!

Orasmyn

How? how have I deserved the bitter taunt?
How wrong'd my sov'reign ev'n in secret thought?
Or dared obtrude one selfish view before her?
—If in this hour of wildness, and confusion,

I joy to see her renovated reason,
Proud to confirm her pow'r, to guard her person,
—If this be treason, purify my heart—
—To thee I render gladly up the sword,
Upon whose point no blood ere yet congeal'd,
Save of thy foes!

Almeyda

Long, long, with glory wear it—
—I blush to have aspers'd a soul so noble.

Abdallah [scornfully surveying him.]

Thou traitor to *thyself*!—my soul disclaims thee!
Thou hast foredoom'd thy sire, by basely bowing
Thus to thy heart's fond minion!—hence, and leave me.

Orasmyn

Ne'er can he err, whose monitor is virtue!
Revere her awful pow'r, which saves at once,
Thy life my father—sweet Almeyda's reason,
And ev'n Orasmyn's honour—fly to the gate,
And guide Alonzo hither—oh recall
The *last fond hope* that beat within thy heart,
Ere yet its darling object vanish'd from thee!
[Gives a ring to an attendant who departs.]

Almeyda [faint and trembling.]

Dread to awake the thought—lost! lost! and murder'd!

Orasmyn

The grave itself, has render'd up, ere now
A guiltless inmate!—

Almeyda

Does my sense deceive me?
—Is he not dead—repeat that little sentence—
Let my soul live one moment on the hope,
And take, each envied ensign of dominion—
—For could I crown thee with the radiant gems,
That sprinkle o'er the blue expanse above,
'Twere recompence too poor!—but, oh! I fear,
I fear, thou trifled with my heart's fond anguish!
—Drawn a gay meteor o'er my gloomy fate,
Which only shews its blackness!

Orasmyn

—To appearance—

Almeyda

Appearance, saidst thou?—Think, ere yet again
One breath escape thee, on the verge of being

My soul now hovers, and a single word
May make her quite immortal!

Orasmyn

If to know

Alonzo lives, can crown thy days with pleasure,

Be happy, ever happy!—for I savedThe only lover I was born to envy!

[She looks doubtfully, then sinks fainting in his arms.]

Abdallah

This is a folly that transcends example!

—Oh! for a pang at once to pierce them both!

Orasmyn

Her life seems gone—soft—bend her gently forward.

Abdallah

And hop'st thou then, ungrateful boy, to save her?

Orasmyn

Wake not within my soul a thought so killing!

—Call ev'ry aid—

Abdallah

Forbear the useless trouble—

'Tis not in medicine to prolong her being—

A subtle poison sleeps in ev'ry pore,

And steals her from herself—no human art,

Can bid her breathe one hour!

Orasmyn [throwing himself in an agony at her feet.]

Thou injur'd angel!

Could the life-blood congealing in these veins,

Extend thy years, and give thee all thy wishes;

Ev'n with the fierceness of that fatal savage,

I dare not call my father, would I gash

Each purple artery, and urge the current!—

—Thou gav'st me being!—tho' my soul abhors,

The tainted blessing! yet to thee I turn,

In this tremendous moment!—hear, and pity!

Blot not at once thy honour, nor defame,

E're yet he soar to glory, that loved son,

Who ne'er till now offended.—

Abdallah

Need'st thou learn,

I do not easily fix my decrees,

But never know to change them.—

Almeyda

Why, Orasmyn,
Wilt thou thus plead for the poor life I heed not?
—Life, the frail blossom of eternity!
Which shrinks and shivers, in the vernal breeze,
And sheds its purple bloom with ev'ry show'r
—Until the embryo fruit, arrived at fullness,
Shakes its soft shelter to the dust?—Most happy,
Who ripen first! and quit this mortal coil,
Unblighted, and unbroken!—

Orasmyn

Is it thus,
Celestial spirit! thus, thou'dst give me comfort?
Oh! more we need thy example, than thy precepts!
My father! have I then no influence with thee?
Long hast thou studied nature's baleful secrets,
And well thou know'st their antidotes—

Abdallah [with bitterness.]

But thou,
Again perhaps would'st scorn the tainted gift,
Again despise the giver!

Orasmyn

Oh! my father!
To this, how little were the life I owe you!

Abdallah

I have not been accustomed to deny thee—
[Gives a ring to an attendant, who goes out.]

Orasmyn [turning with softness to Almeyda.]

How often did I tell thee I had saved him!
—Ev'n when thy reason, like a frightened bird,
Forsook the home round which it fondly flutter'd!
—Yet, oh Almeyda! not in vain thou'st suffer'd!
That fatal passion which thy beauty caused,
By all these miseries chastized to friendship,
Retains its essence only, and appears,
Like the cold lustre of a winter sun,
When all its glow, and purple vapors faded!

Abdallah

To her devoted, he nor hears, nor sees me—
—Ah! should he dare despise—Oh Mahomet!
To be the scorn of those for whom we sin—
—This, this, is disappointment's consummation.
[Attendant brings him a goblet.]
Orasmyn, from the memorable hour,
Thy voice first hail'd me sire, ev'n unto this

I've granted all thy pray'rs!
The good I wish myself, be thine Almeyda!
I taste the draught, that thou may'st fearless share it!

Orasmyn [presenting the bowl.]
Oh! do not hesitate a single moment.
Hardly can I respire with apprehension—

Almeyda [fainting.]
If this be death, how falsely do we fear it!
Care, pain, and sorrow, fade before the calm,
The holy calm o'er-shadowing ev'ry sense!—
—Methinks, without a crime, at once to 'scape,
The dreadful past, and all the doubtful future,
Were to accomplish early life's great purpose!

Orasmyn
Oh! spare me all the guilt, the grief,—the horror,
Live, sweet Almeyda, live, tho' for another!

Almeyda
Oh! that this potent essence were compounded,
Of herbs might purify alike the soul,
And lull it to a deep, a long repose.—
[Drinks the antidote.]

Abdallah
Oh, transport! glory! Oh! tremendous triumph!
Sons may forget, but Mahomet remembers!
He has not scorn'd my pray'r, nor quite renounc'd me
—Prophetic was thy voice; for *thou* shalt find
A long repose indeed! *This* was the poison
Which I with an indignant pleasure shared—
—I had, alas! no other means to die:
Nor would I fall inglorious—unlamented.—
—Almeyda, proud Almeyda! ev'n *thy* love,
In all the plenitude of rank and beauty,
Shall grace my obsequies! and thou, ungrateful!
Attend us, a *true* mourner.

Orasmyn
Speech is lost!—
—A deed like this bursts the great chord of nature,
And makes this gorgeous world but one vast ruin!

Abdallah
Already do I feel the subtle essence—
It rages onward, like the fires of Etna,
And nature withers ere it yet approaches.—
—Ah! she too sinks. Upon the lip of beauty!
Mortality now lays his livid finger!

—This—This is glorious mischief! and I joy
To die, the moment life has lost its value.

Orasmyn

But thus to blend me in so black a deed—
—Make *me* the minister of my own destruction!
Oh! I have, guiltless, cropt creation's rose,
And shook its crimson glories to the dust!
—Lift not those gracious eyes again to me,
Thou soft perfection! I no more dare meet them.
—No, never dare I hope thou shouldst forgive
Th'unparallell'd credulity!—and *he*—
Yet, nature, yet thou wring'st me!

Abdallah [fiercely shaking him off.]

Hence! begone—
Fawn on thy minion! but no more approach
The sire thou hast disgrac'd—betray'd—abandon'd!
—Ev'n as I lov'd thee once, so now I loathe thee!
Oh! how I long to shut out life itself,
Since I with life can shut out thy rememb'rance!
—Bear me, I pray you, to the Guadalquiver—
[turns to the attendants.]
Plunge, plunge me in at once! My liver's calcined!
—Oh, find some sudden means to quench this fire,
Ere yet my eye-strings crack!—Away, Away!

[Abdallah is borne off.]