

Words, words, words

Polonius: What do you read, my lord?

Hamlet: Words, words, words

(*Hamlet*, Act 2, scene 2)

Letters and sounds
Representing thoughts
Rhythmic, resonant, resounding.
Words let us
Dream about our lives,
Make meaning of our lives,
Add meaning to our lives.
Like water over stones on the bed
Of a slow trickling stream, words can
Sing,
And like the bells from the loftiest cathedral,
Ring out,
Allowing us to say what we can be
And be what we can say.
We can orbit the sun and the moon, carried
Away on our grand thoughts,
Using them to forge paths, and build bridges
Connecting us
To each other.

But words are also
Disturbing, damaging, dark,
So much so that there are some
That we cannot bring ourselves
To write them
Lest we give them power,
Causing so much pain that freedom of speech
Is governed by hate laws--
You do not have the right
To use words that infringe
On my rights.

Yet everyday we hear them-
On the playground,
In the grocery store
And coming from the open windows
Of our neighbours' houses in the dark of night.
So close.
The voices of those who know better,
Those who pledged to love, honour and cherish:
Abusing, belittling, crushing,.

And what do we do?
We turn away,
Thinking it better
Left unsaid
That we are
Afraid to get involved,
Afraid of the
Consequences
Afraid to admit our
Embarrassment
That this is happening
In our community,
Brought up to respect
Other people's privacy.

And so we carry on,
Nodding silently
As we pass on the street
Not admitting
What we both know,
Because
For our shame
And complacency
There are no words.

