From Act I, Scene ii:

Ham. O! that this too too solid flesh would melt,

Thaw and resolve itself into a dew;

Or that the Everlasting had not fix’d

His canon ’gainst self-slaughter! O God! O God!

How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable

Seem to me all the uses of this world.

Fie on ’t! O fie! ’tis an unweeded garden,

That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature

Possess it merely. That it should come to this!

But two months dead: nay, not so much, not two:

So excellent a king; that was, to this,

Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother

That he might not beteem the winds of heaven Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!

Must I remember? why, she would hang on him,

As if increase of appetite had grown

By what it fed on; and yet, within a month,

Let me not think on ’t: Frailty, thy name is woman! A little month; or ere those shoes were old

With which she follow’d my poor father’s body,

Like Niobe, all tears; why she, even she,—

O God! a beast, that wants discourse of reason,

Would have mourn’d longer,—married with mine uncle,

My father’s brother, but no more like my father

Than I to Hercules: within a month,

Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears

Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,

She married. O! most wicked speed, to post

With such dexterity to incestuous sheets.

It is not nor it cannot come to good;

But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue!

From Act II, Scene ii:

Ham. I have of late,—but wherefore I know not,—lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o’erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form, in moving, how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not me; no, nor woman neither, though, by your smiling, you seem to say so.

From Act II, Scene ii:

I have heard,

That guilty creatures sitting at a play

Have by the very cunning of the scene

Been struck so to the soul that presently

They have proclaim’d their malefactions;

For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak

With most miraculous organ. I’ll have these players

Play something like the murder of my father

Before mine uncle; I’ll observe his looks;

I’ll tent him to the quick: if he but blench

I know my course. The spirit that I have seen

May be the devil: and the devil hath power

To assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps

Out of my weakness and my melancholy—

As he is very potent with such spirits—

Abuses me to damn me. I’ll have grounds

More relative than this: the play’s the thing

Wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the king.

From Act III, Scene ii:

Ham. Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue; but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus; but use all gently: for in the very torrent, tempest, and—as I may say—whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance, that may give it smoothness. O! it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise: I would have such a fellow whipped for o’er-doing Termagant; it out-herods Herod: pray you, avoid it.

First Play. I warrant your honour.

Ham. Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor: suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o’erstep not the modesty of nature; for anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as ’twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.

From Act IV, Scene v:

Oph. Say you? nay, pray you, mark.

He is dead and gone, lady,

He is dead and gone;

At his head a grass-green turf;

At his heels a stone.

O, ho!

Queen. Nay, but Ophelia,—

Oph. Pray you, mark.

White his shroud as the mountain snow,—

*[Enter KING.]*

Queen. Alas! look here, my lord.

Oph.

Larded with ’sweet flower;

Which bewept to the grave did go

With true-love showers.

King. How do you, pretty lady?

Oph. Well, God ’ild you! They say the owl was a baker’s daughter. Lord! we know what we are, but know not what we may be. God be at your table! King. Conceit upon her father.

Oph. Pray you, let’s have no words of this; but when they ask you what it means, say you this:

To-morrow is Saint Valentine’s day,

All in the morning betime,

And I a maid at your window,

To be your Valentine:

Then up he rose, and donn’d his clothes,

And dupp’d the chamber door;

Let in the maid, that out a maid

Never departed more.

King. Pretty Ophelia!

Oph. Indeed, la! without an oath, I’ll make an end on ’t:

By Gis and by Saint Charity,

Alack, and fie for shame!

Young men will do ’t, if they come to ’t;

By Cock they are to blame.

Quoth she, before you tumbled me,

You promis’d me to wed:

So would I ha’ done, by yonder sun,

An thou hadst not come to my bed.

King. How long hath she been thus?

Oph. I hope all will be well. We must be patient: but I cannot choose but weep, to think they should lay him i’ the cold ground. My brother shall know of it: and so I thank you for your good counsel. Come, my coach! Good-night, ladies; good-night, sweet ladies; good-night, good-night. [Exit.]

From Act V, Scene i:

First Clo. Here’s a skull now; this skull hath lain you i’ the earth three-and-twenty years.

Ham. Whose was it?

First Clo. A whoreson mad fellow’s it was: whose do you think it was?

Ham. Nay, I know not.

First Clo. A pestilence on him for a mad rogue! a’ poured a flagon of Rhenish on my head once. This same skull, sir, was Yorick’s skull, the king’s jester.

Ham. This!

First Clo. E’en that.

Ham. Let me see.—[Takes the skull.]—Alas! poor Yorick. I knew him, Horatio; a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy; he hath borne me on his back a thousand times; and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is! my gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now, to mock your own grinning? quite chapfallen? Now get you to my lady’s chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come; make her laugh at that. Prithee, Horatio, tell me one thing.

Hor. What’s that, my lord?

Ham. Dost thou think Alexander looked o’ this fashion i’ the earth?

Hor. E’en so.

Ham. And smelt so? pah! [Puts down the skull.

Hor. E’en so, my lord.

Ham. To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole?

Hor. ’Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so.

Ham. No, faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it; as thus: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam, and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel?

Imperious Cæsar, dead and turn’d to clay,

Might stop a hole to keep the wind away:

O! that that earth, which kept the world in aw

Should patch a wall to expel the winter’s flaw.