

The Bard Blitz: *Hamlet* extracts

Extract One: Hamlet – ‘O that this too too solid flesh...Must I remember?’ (1.2.129-143)

129 HAMLET O that this too too solid flesh would melt,
130 Thaw and resolve itself into a dew,
131 Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
132 His canon 'gainst self-slaughter. O God, God,
133 How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
134 Seem to me all the uses of this world!
135 Fie on't, ah fie, 'tis an unweeded garden
136 That grows to seed, things rank and gross in nature
137 Possess it merely. That it should come to this!
138 But two months dead – nay not so much, not two –
139 So excellent a king, that was to this
140 Hyperion to a satyr, so loving to my mother
141 That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
142 Visit her face too roughly – heaven and earth,
143 Must I remember?

(1.2.129-143)

The wider text for context purposes includes 1.2.76-159.

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Extract Two: Hamlet – ‘I will tell you why...by your smiling you seem to say so’ (2.2.278-292)

278 HAMLET I will tell you why. So shall my anticipation prevent your
279 discovery, and your secrecy to the king and queen moult no feather.
280 I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth, forgone
282 all custom of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily with my
282 disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile
283 promontory; this most excellent canopy the air, look you, this brave
284 o’erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden
285 fire – why, it appeareth no other thing to me but a foul and pestilent
286 congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is a man! How noble
287 in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express
288 and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how
289 like a god! The beauty of the world, the paragon of animals – and
290 yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not
291 me – no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to
292 say so.

(2.2.278-292)

The wider text for context purposes includes 2.2.253-303.

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Extract Three: Polonius – ‘It shall do well...Your wisdom best shall think.’ (3.1.170-181)

170 POLONIUS It shall do well. But yet do I believe

171 The origin and commencement of his grief

172 Sprung from neglected love. How now Ophelia?

173 You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet said,

174 We heard it all. My lord, do as you please,

175 But if you hold it fit, after the play,

176 Let his queen mother all alone entreat him

177 To show his grief. Let her be round with him,

178 And I'll be placed, so please you, in the ear

179 Of all their conference. If she find him not,

180 To England send him; or confine him where

181 Your wisdom best shall think.

(3.1.170-181)

The wider text for context purposes includes 3.1.144-182.

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Extract Four: Claudius – ‘Oh my offence is rank...To wash it white as snow’ and ‘Oh wretched state!...All may be well.’ (3.3.36-46, 67-72)

36 Oh my offence is rank, it smells to heaven;
37 It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,
38 A brother's murder. Pray can I not,
39 Though inclination be as sharp as will.
40 My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,
41 And like a man to double business bound,
42 I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
43 And both neglect. What if this cursèd hand
44 Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,
45 Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
46 To wash it white as snow?

...

67 Oh wretched state! Oh bosom black as death!
68 Oh limèd soul that struggling to be free
69 Art more engaged! Help, angels! – Make assay:
70 Bow stubborn knees, and heart with strings of steel
71 Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe.
72 All may be well.

(3.3.36-46, 67-72)

The wider text for context purposes includes 3.3.27-98.

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Extract Five: Gertrude – ‘There is a willow grows askant...To muddy death.’ (4.7.166-183)

166 GERTRUDE There is a willow grows askant a brook,
167 That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream.
168 Therewith fantastic garlands did she make,
169 Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples,
170 That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
171 But our cold maids do dead men’s fingers call them.
172 There on the pendant boughs her coronet weeds
173 Clamb’ring to hang, an envious sliver broke,
174 When down her weedy trophies and herself
175 Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide,
176 And mermaid-like awhile they bore her up,
177 Which time she chanted snatches of old lauds
178 As one incapable of her own distress,
179 Or like a creature native and indued
180 Unto that element. But long it could not be
181 Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
182 Pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay
183 To muddy death.

(4.7.166-183)

The wider text for context purposes includes 4.7.138-194.