

Francis Hawling, “HAMLET’s Reflection in the Scene of the Gravedigger imitated”

Description

FRANCIS HAWLING

“HAMLET’s Reflection in the Scene of the Gravedigger imitated”

Sacred to the Memory of Mr. J. Lisset

All human Bliss, we liken to a Span,
How short is Friendship, and how frail is Man!
Fled is the Soul, no sordid Passion knew,
That Eye extinguish’d, ne’er had venal View, 5
The friendly Tongue, which frankly did impart
The honest Image, of an open Heart,
Now mute, and lost, consign’d to endless Night,
No more profit, and no more delight:
That gentle Hand, no more the Poor shall bless, 10
No more it minister to their Distress;
No more the Anguish of thy Breast be known,
To throb with tender Sorrows, not thy own:
What lively Joys in ev’ry Face awoke,
And call’d forth all the Heart, whene’er he spoke? 15
Where’s now the easy Joke, the pleasing Jest,
Which gave high flavour’d Life, that sprightly Zest;
The broad loud Laugh, did such Delight afford,
And spread a wanton Triumph round the Board:
Ah! Joys, that ever more must be deplor’d! 20
Ah! never, never more to be restor’d!
Remorseless Fate! how pitifully sunk,
A livid, senseless, putrifying Trunk:
Go, to the Thoughtless, to the Vicious preach,
Speak to the Vain, the Proud, Ambitious teach, 25
Tell to the Fair, to what their Beauties tend,
And all its Purpose show, and all its End;
View ev’ry Age, the present, and the past,
To this, the Great, and Wisest, come at last,
No mortal Pow’r, its firm Decree can shun,
‘Twas *Caesar*’s Fate, and *Ammon*’s mighty Son. 30

NOTES:

Title A reference to Act V scene 1 of William Shakespeare’s *The Tragedy of Hamlet*, where Hamlet questions

mortality and the nature of fate when mourning the loss of his love, Ophelia.

Dedication *Mr. J. Lisset* [Unable to trace.]

1 *Span* “A short space of time, esp. as the duration of human life” (*OED*).

4 *venal* “Connected or associated with sordid and unprincipled bargaining; subject to mercenary or corrupt influences” (*OED*).

7 *consign’d* “To commit” (*OED*).

16 *flavour’d* “A distinctive appealing or enlivening quality” (*OED*); *sprightly* “With spirit” (*OED*).

18 *wanton* “Unrestrained in merriment, jovial” (*OED*).

22 *putrifying* Alternate spelling of “putrefying,” “to cause to decompose with a foul smell” (*OED*); *Trunk* “A dead body or corpse” (*OED*).

30 *Caesar’s fate* Allusion to the death of the Roman dictator Gaius Julius Caesar who was murdered in the Roman Senate House by a group of nobles in March 15, 44 BCE (*Britannica*). Caesar is also referenced in the scene that this poem imitates: “Imperious Caesar, dead and turn’d to clay,/ Might stop a hole to keep the wind away” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, V.i.220-221); *Ammon’s mighty Son* Alexander the Great (356 BCE-323BCE), king of the ancient Greek kingdom of Macedon and conqueror of the Persian Empire.

Source: *A Miscellany of Original Poems on Various Subjects, Part I* (London, 1751), pp. 132-133. [Google Books]

Edited by Brittany Prodan