

## Hamlet's Soliloquy, Act II, Scene ii

O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!	550
Is it not monstrous that this player here,	
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,	
Could force his soul so to his own conceit*	*imagination
That from her working all his visage* wann'd,*	*face/*paled
Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect*,	*mood
A broken voice, and his whole function* suiting	*the whole operation of his body
With forms to his conceit? and all for nothing!	
For Hecuba! <sup>1</sup>	
What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,	
That he should weep for her? What would he do,	560
Had he the motive and the cue for passion	
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears	
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,	
Make mad the guilty and appall the free,	
Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed	565
The very faculties of eyes and ears. Yet I,	
A dull and muddy-mettled* rascal, peak,	*dull spirited
Like John-a-dreams*, unpregnant* of my cause,	* a sleepy fellow/not filled with
And can say nothing; no, not for a king,	
Upon whose property and most dear life	570
A damn'd defeat was made. Am I a coward?	
Who calls me villain? breaks my pate* across?	*head
Plucks off my beard, and blows it in my face?	
Tweaks me by the nose? gives me the lie i' the throat*,	*calls me a liar
As deep as to the lungs? who does me this?	575
Ha! 'Swounds,* I should take it: for it cannot be	* God's wounds (a curse)
But I am pigeon-liver'd <sup>2</sup> and lack gall*	*unable to take resentment
To make oppression bitter, or ere this	
I should have fatted* all the region kites*	*made fat/local crows or ravens
With this slave's offal*: bloody, bawdy villain!	*guts, internal organs
Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindles* villain!	*unnatural
Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,	
That I, the son of a dear father murder'd,	
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,	
Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words,	585
And fall a-cursing, like a very drab*,	*prostitute
A stallion*! Fie upon't! foh!	*male prostitute
About*, my brain! Hum—I have heard	*to work
That guilty creatures sitting at a play	
Have by the very cunning of the scene	
Been struck so to the soul that presently*	*immediately
They have proclaim'd their malefactions;	590
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		595
Before mine uncle: I'll observe his looks;		
I'll tent him to the quick: if he but blench*,	*flinch	
I know my course. The spirit that I have seen <sup>3</sup>		
May be the devil: and the devil hath power		600
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	*more closely related	
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.		605

<sup>1</sup>A character from the story of the Trojan war; she is one of the characters described in the speech by the player that Hamlet is responding to.

<sup>2</sup>Pigeons and doves were believed to be mild and to lack "gall," one of the four "humours" that make up the body in the current belief. Gall controlled the ability to be irritated. If you had no gall, you couldn't be irritated by others.

<sup>3</sup>Hamlet is referring to the ghost of his father he saw earlier.