

Hamlet's Soliloquy: O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I! (2.2)

Now I am alone. O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I! (520)

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
That from her working all his visage wann'd,
Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
With forms to his conceit? and all for nothing!
For Hecuba!

What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba, (530)

That he should weep for her? What would he do,
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 appal the free,
Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed
The very faculties of eyes and ears. Yet I,
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak,
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause, (540)

And can say nothing; no, not for a king,
Upon whose property and most dear life
A damn'd defeat was made. Am I a coward?
Who calls me villain? breaks my pate across?
Plucks off my beard, and blows it in my face?
Tweaks me by the nose? gives me the lie i' the throat,
As deep as to the lungs? who does me this?
Ha!

'Swounds, I should take it: for it cannot be
But I am pigeon-liver'd and lack gall (550)
To make oppression bitter, or ere this
I should have fatted all the region kites
With this slave's offal: bloody, bawdy villain!
Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!
O, vengeance!
Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,

General gist =

521. **peasant slave**, wretched bondman.

523. **But in ... passion**, under the influence of an imaginary passion.

524. **Could force ... conceit**, could so constrain his soul into sympathy with the idea which he had made his own in interpreting it.

525. **That from ... wann'd**, that, from the emotion of his soul, his face became pale;

526. **Tears ... aspect**, that tears showed themselves in his eyes, frenzy possessed his looks.

527. 8. **A broken ... conceit**, that his voice became broken with sobs, and all the faculties of his body took shape from the idea in his mind.

530, 1. **What's Hecuba ... her?** what relation is there between Hecuba and him that he should so sympathize with her woes? i.e. there is no such relation.

532. **cue**, indication, prompting;

534. **And cleave ... speech**, and split the ears of his audience with the horror of his words.

535. **Make mad ... free**, drive those conscious of guilt to madness, and fill with terror even those whose conscience was clear of guilt.

536, 7. **Confound ears**, utterly bewilder the ignorant, and so amaze spectators and hearers that they would not know whether their faculties were their own, whether they were not under some horrible hallucination.

539. **muddy-mettled**, dull-brained, sluggish-natured; **peak**, allow my resolution to fade into nothing;

540. **John-a-dreams**, i.e. John of dreams, = a sluggish, sleepy, fellow **unpregnant of my cause**, with a mind that as yet no idea of how to act

542. **property**, everything that belonged to him;

543. **A damn'd ... made**, ruin was brought down by most accursed means.

544. **Who calls me villain?** does any one call me villain? i.e. anyone might do so without fear of consequences, **breaks ... across?** breaks my head from one side to the other

545. **blows it in my face**, gives it to the wind to blow it into my face,

546. **Tweaks**, pulls; a word always used in a contemptuous sense.

546, 7. **gives me ... lungs**, there were various gradations of giving the lie; as the simple "Thou liest"; then "Thou liest in the throat"; "Thou liest in the throat like a rogue"; "Thou liest in the throat like a rogue as thou art"; here the lie is given deeper still, in the lungs; **who does me this?** is there anyone who does this to me?

549. **'Swounds, I should take it**, by God's wounds I should accept the insult without retaliating.

549-51. **for it ... bitter**, for clearly I must have the liver of a pigeon (i.e. he no more courageous than the timid pigeon), and be utterly wanting in that spirit which feels and resents an injury; the liver was of old supposed to be the seat of courage, passion, love, etc

552. **fatted**, fattened; **all the region kites**, all the kites of this region

553. **offal**, rubbish

554. **Remorseless**, pitiless **kindless**, without natural feeling.

556. **most brave**, said ironically. .