O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
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 his aspect*,
A broken voice, and his whole function* suitings
With forms to his conceit and all for nothing!
For Hecuba!
What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
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 appall 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,
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! 'S wounds,* I should take it: for it cannot be
But I am pigeon-liver'd* and lack gall*
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, kindles* villain!
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,
And fall a-cursing, like a very drab*,
A stallion*! Fie upon't! foh!
About*, my brain! Hum—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 flinch*,
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.  

1A 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.
2Pigeons 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.
3Hamlet is referring to the ghost of his father he saw earlier.