

HAMLET I am but mad north-north-west. When the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw.

*Enter Polonius.*

POLONIUS Well be with you, gentlemen.

HAMLET Hark you, Guildenstern – and you too – at each ear a hearer. That great baby you see there is not yet out of his swaddling clouts.

ROSENCRANTZ Happily he is the second time come to them, for they say an old man is twice a child.

HAMLET I will prophesy he comes to tell me of the players. Mark it. – You say right, sir; a Monday morning, 'twas then indeed.

POLONIUS My lord, I have news to tell you.

HAMLET My lord, I have news to tell you. When Roscius was an actor in Rome –

POLONIUS The actors are come hither, my lord.

HAMLET Buzz, buzz.

POLONIUS Upon my honor –

HAMLET Then came each actor on his ass –

POLONIUS The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral; scene individable, or poem unlimited. Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men.

(II ii: 369 – 392)

HAMLET

Com'st

thou to beard me in Denmark? – What, my young lady and mistress? By'r Lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last by the altitude of a chopine. Pray God your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not cracked within the ring. – Masters, you are all welcome. We'll e'en to't like French falconers, fly at anything we see. We'll have a speech straight. Come, give us a taste of your quality. Come, a passionate speech.

PLAYER What speech, my good lord?

HAMLET I heard thee speak me a speech once, but it was never acted, or if it was, not above once, for the play, I remember, pleased not the million; 'twas caviary to the general, but it was (as I received it, and others, whose judgments in such matters cried in the top of mine) an excellent play, well digested in the scenes, set down with as much modesty as cunning. I remember one said there were no sallets in the lines to make the matter savory, nor no matter in the phrase that might indict the author of affectation, but called it an honest method, as wholesome as sweet, and by very much more handsome than fine.

(II ii: 413 – 434)

HAMLET

'The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms,  
Black as his purpose, did the night resemble  
When he lay couchèd in the ominous horse,  
Hath now this dread and black complexion smeared  
With heraldry more dismal. Head to foot  
Now is he total gules, horridly tricked  
With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons,  
Baked and impasted with the parching streets,  
That lend a tyrannous and a damnèd light  
To their lord's murder. Roasted in wrath and fire,  
And thus o'ersizèd with coagulate gore,  
With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus  
Old grandsire Priam seeks.'

(II ii: 440 – 452)

PLAYER

Then senseless Ilium,

Seeming to feel this blow, with flaming top  
Stoops to his base, and with a hideous crash  
Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear. For lo! his sword,  
Which was declining on the milky head  
Of reverend Priam, seemed i' th' air to stick.  
So as a painted tyrant Pyrrhus stood,  
And like a neutral to his will and matter  
Did nothing.

But as we often see, against some storm,  
A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,  
The bold winds speechless, and the orb below  
As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder  
Doth rend the region, so after Pyrrhus' pause,  
Arousdèd vengeance sets him new awork,  
And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall  
On Mars' armor, forged for proof eterne,  
With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword  
Now falls on Priam.

Out, out, thou strumpet Fortune! All you gods,  
In general synod take away her power,  
Break all the spokes and fellies from her wheel,  
And bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven,  
As low as to the fiends.'

POLONIUS This is too long.

HAMLET It shall to the barber's, with your beard. –  
Prithee say on. He's for a jig or a tale of bawdry, or he  
sleeps. Say on; come to Hecuba.

(II ii: 462 – 489)