

Act 3, Scene 2 A hall in the castle

(HAMLET and PLAYERS.)

HAMLET

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly* on the tongue.
 But if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief* the town crier spoke my lines.
 Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently,
 for in the very torrent, tempest, and (as I may say) whirlwind of your passion,
 you must acquire a smoothness.
 O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious* periwig pated* fellow tear a passion to tatters,
 to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings,
 who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumbshows and noise.
 Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor.
 Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance,
 that you overstep not the modesty of nature.
 For any thing so overdone is from the purpose of playing,
 whose end, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature:
 to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image,
 and the very age and body of the time* his form and pressure.*
 Now this overdone, or come tardy off,*
 though it make the unskillful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve,
 the censure* of the which one* must in your allowance overweigh a whole theatre of others.
 O, there be players that I have seen play, and heard others praise, and that highly,
 that neither having the accent of Christians, nor the gait* of Christian, pagan, nor no man,
 have so strutted and bellowed that I have thought some of nature's journeymen* had made men
 and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.
 Go, make you ready.

(Exeunt PLAYERS.)

(Enter POLONIUS, ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.)

How now, my lord? Will the King hear this piece of work?

LORD POLONIUS

And the Queen too, and that presently.

HAMLET

Bid the players make haste.

(Exit POLONIUS.)

Will you two help to hasten them?

trippingly - easily, *as lief* - rather, *robustious* - noisy, *periwig-pated* - wig wearing,
very age and body of the time - the true state of things as they are now, *pressure* - likeness (literally, impression made in wax), *come tardy off* - inadequately or timidly carried out, *censure* - disapproval,
one - one individual, *gait* - walk, *journeymen* - workmen not yet masters of their trade (not God)