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the Annotated Popular Edition of

The Tragedy of Ferrex and Porrex
(aka Gorboduc)

By Thomas Norton and

Thomas Sackville

First Published 1565

Featuring complete and easy-to-read annotations.

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THE TRAGEDY OF FERREX AND PORREX (aka GORBODUC)

By Thomas Norton and
Thomas Sackville

Written 1561

First Published 1565

First Authorized Publication 1570

set forth without addition or alteration but altogether as the same was shewed on stage before the Queenes' Maiestie about nine yeares past, *vz* the xvij. day of Januarie, 1561. by the gentlemen of the Inner Temple.

The Names of the Speakers.

Gorboduc, King of Great Britain.

Videna, Queen, and Wife to King Gorboduc.

Marcella, A Lady of the Queen's Privy Chamber.

Ferrex, Elder Son to King Gorboduc.

Porrex, Younger Son to King Gorboduc.

Hermon, A Parasite remaining with Ferrex.

Tyndar, A Parasite remaining with Porrex.

Eubulus, Secretary to the King.

Arostus, A Councillor to king Gorboduc.

Dordan, A Councillor assigned by the King to his Eldest Son Ferrex.

Philander, A Councillor assigned by the King to his Youngest Son Porrex.

(Both being of the old King's Council before.)

Clotyn, Duke of Cornwall.

Fergus, Duke of Albany.

Mandud, Duke of Loegriss.

Gwenard, Duke of Camberland.

Nuntius, A Messenger of the Elder Brother's Death.

Nuntius, A Messenger of Duke Fergus' rising in Arms.

Chorus:

Four Ancient and Sage Men of Britain.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAY

Ferrex and Porrex, or *Gorboduc*, tells the story of the legendary King Gorboduc, an ancient Briton who unwisely divided his realm into separate parts, each to be ruled by one of his two sons. Our play, appearing as it does so early in the Elizabethan era, is to some degree modeled on ancient Roman drama, and as such the "action" takes place off-stage; however, the verse is stately, and, though repetitive, is best experienced if you mouth the speeches to yourself, and become completely absorbed in the driving, relentless strict iambic pentameter.

NOTES ON THE TEXT

Our text of *Ferrex and Porrex* is adopted from John S. Farmer's edition of the play (cited at #3 below), which in turn is adopted from the 1570-1 quarto. I have reinstated some of the original spellings from the quarto.

NOTES ON THE ANNOTATIONS

Mention of Farmer, Adams, Creeth, Smith, Cunliffe and Cauthen in the annotations refers to the notes provided by these editors in their respective editions of our play, each cited fully below.

The most commonly cited sources are listed in the footnotes immediately below. The complete list of footnotes appears at the end of this play.

1. *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) online.

2. Crystal, David and Ben. *Shakespeare's Words*. London; New York: Penguin, 2002.
3. Farmer, John S., ed. *The Dramatic Writings of Richard Edwards, Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville*. London: Early English Drama Society, 1906.
4. Adams, Joseph Quincy, ed. *Chief Pre-Shakesperean Dramas*. Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1924.
5. Creeth, Edmund. *Tudor Plays: an Anthology of Early English Drama*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1966.
6. Evans, Sebastian, trans. Geoffrey of Monmouth. *Histories of the Kings of Britain*. London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1920.
12. Cunliffe, John W. *Early English Classical Tragedies*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912.
15. Cauthen, Jr., Irby B., ed. *Gorboduc or Ferrex and Porrex*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970.
16. Smith, L. Toumlin. *Gorboduc or Ferrex and Porrex*. Heilbronn: Verlag Von Gebr. Henninger, 1883.

A. The Historical Importance of the Play.

Gorboduc, or *Ferrex and Porrex*, is of historical importance for two reasons: (1) it is the first proper history play of the English stage, and (2) it is the first play to employ blank verse (verse without rhyming).³

Compared to the soon-to-come plays of Lyly, Marlowe and Shakespeare, *Gorboduc* is, as stage drama, a dud. None of the action takes place on stage - all occurrences are *described* by the characters rather than presented on-stage - and there is hardly any engaging "dialogue", as we understand the term today; the play is, instead, simply a collection of long set-speeches.

The play is best enjoyed if you think of it as poetry - though not without strong emotion - in a dramatic context; furthermore, if you mouth the speeches to yourself, you can fully experience the relentless, locomotive-like drive of the strict iambic pentameter; which though old-fashioned to us today, must have been exciting to those who saw this performance in a time when the classic stage productions of the era's greatest dramatists were still in an unimaginable - though near - future.

B. Earliest Printings of the Gorboduc.

The early publication history of *Gorboduc* is actually a little more interesting than is normally found in the plays of the Elizabethan era.

The Tragedy of Gorboduc was first published in a 1565 quarto. This edition, when compared to the quartos of other plays published in the 16th century, is a perfectly acceptable version of the play: it is clearly complete, and filled with numerous minor errors, which was par for the course in the Elizabethan era, and beyond.

The play was then republished in 1570-1, under the title *The Tragedy of Ferrex and Porrex*. What makes this edition unusual is the inclusion of a lengthy note from the publisher which points out that the 1565 edition was unauthorized, and in a lengthy and graphic metaphor, compares the pirated version to a violated maiden.

The note is so unusual that we have decided to include it in our edition of *Gorboduc* here. We have also decided to follow the later editors' tradition of using the 1570-1 edition as the basis for our text.

We may note here that according to the title page of the 1565 quarto, Thomas Norton wrote the first three acts of the play, and Thomas Sackville the final two.

C. Gorboduc and the 12th Century Monk.

Stories of the early Britons were being told by the early Middle Ages, and had even been collected in at least one long-lost tome. It was a 12th century monk, however, who wrote the definitive "history" of mythical Britain. This was Geoffrey of Monmouth (1100? - 1154), an educated man whose *Historia Regum Britanniae* (*History of the Kings of Britain*) brought under one cover the entire body of legend of the history of the British people, starting with the first Britons, who were fugitives from Troy, through the tale of Gorboduc (the subject of this play), and beyond. Geoffrey's *History* became famous all over Britain and Europe, and was primarily responsible for popularizing such well-known characters as King Arthur, Queen Guinevere and Merlin the Magician, whose romantic adventures still fascinate so many people today.¹⁷

D. Elizabethan Politics and Gorboduc.

Dramatists of the Elizabethan era and beyond generally - but not always - wisely avoided making overtly political points in their plays, in order to ensure that their plays passed the censor (who did not go into business until later in the 16th century) and did not offend their prickly monarchs. *Gorboduc*, however, is unique in that its primary message was clearly understood to be one which gave dynastic advice to Queen Elizabeth.

Gorboduc purported to demonstrate the dangers that could ensue if a monarch did not provide for an unambiguous succession; it sent a clear message that Elizabeth should either marry and have children or appoint a definite successor (Cunliffe, p.298).¹² The Virgin Queen, who had come to the throne in 1558, had almost immediately begun to consider various candidates for her hand, but of course no marriage ever took place.

E. Note on the Use of Archaisms in this Play.

The English language, from its very beginnings, has continually evolved, with new words and phrases constantly being added, even as others have dropped out. Such words and phrases no longer in use, which we may call *archaisms*, were frequently used by Elizabethan dramatists any time they wanted to give a feeling of "antiqueness" to the language. As *Gorboduc* takes place in a literally pre-historic time, Norton and Sackville have used a generous collection of archaic words to give their characters a colour of ancientness.

An excellent, if brief, discussion of archaisms used by Shakespeare can be found on page 22 of David and Ben Crystal's indispensable *Shakespeare's Words*.²

A list of many of the likely archaisms used in this play appears at the end of this edition.

F. Settings and Stage Directions.

The original quartos of *Gorboduc* do not provide scene settings to the play; all scene settings in this edition are adopted from the suggestions of Smith and Cunliffe.

The original quartos do not have any stage directions. Some stage directions have been added for purposes of clarity. Most of these additions are adopted from Farmer and Smith.

THE P[ublisher] TO THE READER.

1 WHERE this tragedy was for furniture of part of the
2 grand Christmas in the Inner-Temple, first written about

4 nine years ago by the Right Honourable Thomas, now
 Lord Buckhurst, and by T. Norton, and after shewed

6 before her Majesty, and never intended by the authors
 thereof to be published: yet one W.G., getting a copy
 thereof at some young man's hand that lacked a little

8 money and much discretion, in the last great plague,

10 an. 1565, about five years past, while the said Lord
 was out of England, and T. Norton far out of London,
 and neither of them both made privy, put it forth

12 exceedingly corrupted: even as if by means of a

 broker for hire, he should have enticed into his house

14 a fair maid and done her villainy, and after all to
 bescratched her face, torn her apparel, bewrayed and
16 disfigured her, and then thrust her out of doors
 dishonested.

18 In such plight, after long wandering, she came at

20 length home to the sight of her friends, who scant knew
 her but by a few tokens and marks remaining. They, the
22 authors I mean, though they were very much displeased
 that she so ran abroad without leave, whereby she
 caught her shame, as many wantons do, yet seeing the

24 case as it is remediless, have for common honesty and

Note from the Publisher: the title of the Note in the 1570 quarto reads only, *The P to the Reader*. The publisher, as indicated on the play's title page, was John Daye. We have separated the Note, which was originally published as one long paragraph, into smaller paragraphs to facilitate reading.

1-2: *Where...Inner-Temple* = *Gorboduc* was written for and presented as part of the Christmas festivities of the Inner Temple.

furniture = an adornment.¹

Inner Temple = one of the four Inns of Court (the Inner Temple, the Middle Temple, Gray's Inn and Lincoln's Inn), London's principle legal societies, which together still hold a monopoly on the admissions of barristers. The names also refer to the individual buildings which house the societies.^{1,20}

= ie. c. 1561.

4: *Lord Buckhurst* = ie. Thomas Sackville.

T. Norton = Thomas Norton.

shewed = shown, ie. presented.

= William Griffith, publisher of the 1565 quarto.

7: *at* = from.

lacked...discretion = the unknown pilferer of the play lacked both money and discretion.

8-9: *the last...1565* = the plague referred to was the 1563 plague, which killed over 17,000 Londoners.²¹ **1565** was the year Griffith published *Gorboduc*.

= ie. Sackville.

11: *neither...privy* = without the knowledge of either author.
put it forth = published the play.

= ie. filled with errors.

13ff: in a most intense metaphor, which continues all the way to the end of this Note, the publisher compares the unauthorized printing of *Gorboduc* to the rape of a young maiden. The victim of the rape represents the play itself.

broker for hire = ie. pimp.

= an archaic usage of *to* to mean "asunder" or "to pieces" (Creeth, p.554).

= dirtied, defiled.^{5,9}

= dishonoured.¹⁵

= bad condition = *she* refers to both the play and the maiden.

= barely recognized.

= ie. by some evidence that proved it was her.

23: *caught her shame* = (1) lost her virginity, and (2) was published filled with errors.

wantons = loose women.

= ie. nothing could undo what had happened. = decency.

<p>shamefacedness <u>new appareled, trimmed and attired her</u></p>	<p>= literally cleaned up and gave her new clothes, and figuratively (referring to the authors) made the necessary corrections to the script.</p>
<p>26 in such form as she was before, in which better form since she hath come to <u>me</u>.</p>	<p>= ie. John Daye, the new publisher.</p>
<p>28 I have harboured her for her friends' sake and her own, and I do not doubt, her parents the authors will not now be discontent that she go abroad among you, good readers, so it be in honest company. For she is by my encouragement and others somewhat less ashamed of the <u>dishonesty</u> done to her because it was by <u>fraud and force</u>.</p>	<p>= ie. crime. = neither the girl nor the play could be blamed for what was done to them.</p>
<p>If she be welcome among you, and gently</p>	<p>35-46: as was frequently done in the plays of the era, the author expresses a hope that the audience will like the show. Normally, such an appeal was recited aloud to a live audience by a cast member who appears on stage alone in a play's <i>Prologue</i>, but here the audience is the play's readership.</p>
<p>36 entertained, in favour of the house from whence she is descended, and of her own nature courteously disposed to offend no man, her friends will thank you for it. If not, but that she shall be still <u>reproached</u> with her former <u>mishap</u>, or quarreled at by <u>envious</u> persons, she,</p>	<p>36-37: <i>the house...descended</i> = ie. the Inner Temple in London, where <i>Gorboduc</i> was originally performed.¹² = blamed, criticized. = calamity. = malicious.</p>
<p>40 poor gentlewoman, will surely <u>play Lucrece's part</u>, and</p>	<p>= ie. kill herself from shame. <i>Lucrece</i>, or <i>Lucretia</i>, was a famously virtuous Roman matron; she killed herself after she had been raped by the son of the Roman king Tarquinius.</p>
<p>42 of herself die for shame, and I shall wish that she had tarried still at home with me, where she was welcome: 44 for she did never put me to <u>more charge</u>, but this one <u>poor black gown lined with white</u> that I have now given 46 her to go abroad among you withal.</p>	<p>= ie. any great expense. = ie. the new edition of the published play.</p>

THE ARGUMENT OF THE TRAGEDY

1 GORBODUC, King of Britain, divided his realm in his
2 lifetime to his sons, Ferrex and Porrex. The sons fell to
dissension: the younger killed the elder; the mother that
4 more dearly loved the elder, for revenge killed the
younger. The people, moved with the cruelty of the
6 fact, rose in rebellion and slew both father and mother.
The nobility assembled, and most terribly destroyed the
8 rebels, and afterwards, for want of issue of the prince
whereby the succession of the crown became uncertain,
10 they fell to civil war, in which both they and many of
their issues were slain, and the land for a long time
12 almost desolate and miserably wasted.

The Argument: a complete summary of the plot. If you do not want to know what happens before you read the play, DO NOT READ the Argument.

= deed.

= ie. lack of an heir. = king.

= children, descendants.

ACT I

THE ORDER OF THE DUMB SHOW BEFORE THE FIRST ACT, AND THE SIGNIFICATION THEREOF.

1 First the music of violins begins to play, during
2 which comes in upon the stage six wild men clothed in
leaves; of whom the first bares in his neck a faggot of
4 small sticks, which they all, both severally and
together, assay with all their strengths to break, but it
6 cannot be broken by them. At the length one of them
plucks out one of the sticks and breaks it; and the rest
8 plucking out all the other sticks one after another,
do easily break them, the same being severed: which,
10 being conjoined, they had before attempted in vain.

12 After they do this, they depart the stage, and the music
ceases.

Hereby is signified that a state knit in unity doth
14 continue strong against all force; but, being divided,
is easily destroyed. As befell upon Duke Gorboduc
16 dividing his land to his two sons, which he before held
in monarchy, and upon the dissention of the brethren
18 to whom it was divided.

ACT I, SCENE I.

A Room in Gorboduc's Palace

Enter Videna and Ferrex.

The Dumb Show: Medieval and early Renaissance dramas may have been preceded by a *dumb show*, a brief pantomime that demonstrated ahead of the performance an allegorical representation of what was to happen, or the lessons to be drawn therefrom. A written explanation of the dumb show, as appears here, might have been handed out to the audience members so they could understand what otherwise would be meaningless to them.²⁴

Please note, *Gorboduc's* original Dumb Show descriptions were written in the past tense. The editor of this edition has changed the tense to the present to make them more comfortable for the contemporary reader. The paragraph breaks are the editor's as well.

= you may wish to note that each Dumb Show in the play is accompanied by a different instrument.
= primitive men, maybe early savage Britons.¹⁵
= carries about or on the back of his neck. = bundle.

4-6: *which they all...by them* = first each man individually (*severally*), then all the men together, try (*assay*) and fail to break the bundle of sticks as a whole.

9-10: the men could only break the sticks when they (the men) attempted to do so one stick at a time.
severed = separated, one at a time.
conjoined = bundled all together.

13-15: *a state...destroyed* = this sentiment appeared in Mark 3:25 and Matthew 12:25 of even the earliest English translations of the Bible, e.g. 1560's *Geneva Bible* (Matthew 12:25): "*But Iesus knew their thoughtes, and said to them, Euery kingdome deuided against it selfe, is brought to nought: and euery citie or house, deuided against it selfe, shall not stand.*"

= though referred to here as *duke*, Gorboduc is understood to have been a king of early Britain.

= sole absolute power.¹ = brothers.

Entering Characters: *Videna* is the queen of Britain and wife of King Gorboduc. *Ferrex* is the older of her two sons, and her favourite.

<p>1 Viden. The silent night that brings the quiet pause</p>	<p>1-6: Videna's opening speech is actually quite beautiful: though nighttime brings relief from the drudgery of her days, it does not alleviate her anxiety.</p>
<p>2 From painful <u>travails</u> of the weary day, Prolongs my <u>careful</u> thoughts, and makes me blame</p>	<p>= labours; travail is usually stressed on its first syllable: <i>TRA-vail</i>. = full of care, ie. anxious.</p>
<p>4 The <u>slow Aurore</u>, that so for love or shame Doth long delay to <u>shew</u> her <u>blushing</u> face;</p>	<p>4-5: Aurore, the Roman goddess of the dawn, is slow to appear, as if she is embarrassed by the grief her return brings to the queen. shew = the authors use shew throughout the play to mean show; shew was the preferred spelling through the 17th century. blushing = could refer both to Aurore's embarrassed countenance and the red colour of the dawn.</p>
<p>6 And now the day renews my <u>griefful</u> <u>plaint</u>.</p>	<p>= lamentation that is full of grief.²</p>
<p>8 Ferr. My gracious lady and my mother dear, Pardon my grief for your so grievèd mind, 10 To ask what cause tormenteth so <u>your</u> heart.</p>	<p>= Ferrex addresses his mother with the formal and respectful you, as is correct; Videna, in turn, addresses her son as thee, signifying both tender affection and her superior status as mother and queen.</p>
<p>12 Viden. So great a wrong, and <u>so unjust</u> <u>despite</u>, Without all cause, against all course of <u>kind</u>!</p>	<p>= "such an unfair act"; despite suggests a spiteful act.¹ = nature.</p>
<p>14 Ferr. Such causeless wrong and so unjust despite, 16 May have <u>redress</u>, or at the least, revenge.</p>	<p>= remedy, compensation.</p>
<p>18 Viden. Neither, my son; such is the <u>froward</u> will, The person such, such my <u>mishap</u> and <u>thine</u>.</p>	<p>18-19: "the person I am describing is so obstinate, that it is both my misfortune (mishap)² and yours (thine)." froward = unmanageable or ungovernable, or perverse.^{1,5}</p>
<p>20 Ferr. <u>Mine know I none</u>, but grief for your distress.</p>	<p>= "I know of no such misfortune (that affects me)".</p>
<p>22 Viden. Yes; mine for thine, my son: a father? no: 24 In <u>kind</u> a father, not in kindliness.</p>	<p>24: "he is by nature your father, but he is not very kind." In the Elizabethan era, the word kind was frequently used to refer to (1) familial relationship and (2) nature in general, in addition to its still-modern meaning of (3) friendly disposition. The multiple meanings of kind are employed repeatedly throughout the play, and often, as here, punned upon.</p>
<p>26 Ferr. My father? why? I know nothing at all, Wherein I have <u>misdone</u> unto his grace.</p>	<p>= done harm.¹</p>
<p>28 Viden. <u>Therefore</u>, the more <u>unkind</u> to thee and me: 30 For, knowing well, my son, the tender love That I have ever borne and bear to thee, 32 He, grieved thereat, is not content alone <u>To spoil thee of my sight</u>, my chiefest joy,</p>	<p>= "exactly, and that is why". = ie. "unkind he is". = ie. "to take you away from me"; many of the editors speculate that the line was printed erroneously, and should read spoil me of thy sight.</p>

34	But thee, of thy birthright, and heritage,	= "but the king also wants to take away your birthright", ie. sole rule of Britain.
	Causeless, unkindly, and in wrongful <u>wise</u> ,	= way or manner.
36	Against all law and right he will <u>bereave</u> :	= "deprive (you)." ²
	Half of his kingdom he will give away.	
38		
	Ferr. To whom?	
40		
	Viden. Even to <u>Porrex his younger son</u> ;	= Porrex is thus also Ferrex's younger brother.
42	Whose growing pride I do so <u>sore</u> suspect,	= reluctantly or grievingly. ¹
	That being raised to equal rule with thee,	
44	Me thinks I see <u>his envious</u> heart to swell,	= ie. Porrex's. = malicious or spiteful.
	Filled with disdain and with ambitious hope.	
46	The end the gods do know, whose alters I	
	<u>Full oft have made</u> in vain, of <u>cattle slain</u> ,	
		47: Full oft have made = ie. "have often filled".
		cattle slain = note that our tale takes place in a pre-Christian Britain, where animal sacrifices are portrayed as the normal way of entreating the gods.
		Note also the line's rhyme of vain and slain ; as the authors wrote <i>Gorboduc</i> in the new style of blank verse - unrhymed lines - modern editors surmise that the few rhymes which appear in the play were written accidentally out of old habit.
48	To send the sacred smoke to Heaven's throne,	= turn out this away.
	For thee my son; if things do so <u>succeed</u> ,	= fearful. ¹ = ie. "distressingly suspects or fears (will happen)." ^{1,5}
50	As now my <u>jealous</u> mind <u>misdeemeth</u> <u>sore</u> .	
		= worried lamenting or moaning. ¹
52	Ferr. Madam, leave care and <u>careful</u> <u>plaint</u> for me!	
	Just hath my father been to every <u>wight</u> :	= "person"; by the mid-16th century, wight was already an archaic word. Our authors have deliberately filled this play with a number of archaisms to give the language a feeling of antiquity.
		= less common alternate form of injustice .
54	His first <u>unjustice</u> he will not extend	
	To me, I trust, that give no cause thereof;	
56	My brother's pride shall hurt himself, not me.	
58	Viden. So grant the gods! but yet thy father so	
	Hath firmly fixèd his unmovèd mind,	
60	That <u>plaints</u> and <u>prayers</u> can <u>no whit</u> avail;	= not a bit.
	For <u>those</u> have I <u>assayed</u> , but <u>even</u> this day,	61: those have I assayed = "I have tried (assayed) both <u>plaints</u> and <u>prayers</u> ".
		even = even is always pronounced as a one-syllable word, with the <i>v</i> essentially omitted, for purposes of meter: <i>e'en</i> .
62	He will endeavor to procure assent	= from. = foolish idea.
	<u>Of</u> all his council to his <u>fond</u> <u>device</u> .	We note here that in the quartos, advise and device are always written as advise and devise ; our edition employs the latter only when the words are used as verbs.
64		65: Their = ie. Gorboduc's counsellors'.
	Ferr. <u>Their</u> ancestors from <u>race</u> to <u>race</u> have born	race to race = generation to generation.
		65-66: born True faith = ie. remained loyal.
66	True faith to my forefathers and their <u>seed</u> :	= offspring, ie. descendants.

<p>68 I trust they <u>eke</u> will bear the like to me.</p> <p>70 Viden. There resteth all, but if they fail thereof, And if the end bring forth an ill <u>success</u>, 72 On them and <u>theirs</u> the mischief shall befall, And so I pray the gods <u>requite</u> it them!</p>	<p>= also (another archaism).</p> <p>= result,² not necessarily suggesting a positive outcome. = ie. the counsellors' families.</p>
<p>74 And so they will, for so <u>is wont to be</u> When lords and trusted rulers under kings, To please the present fancy of the <u>prince</u>,</p>	<p>72: Videna hopes that the gods will punish the king's counsellors if they do not try to talk him out of his mad scheme. requite = repay.</p> <p>= ie. "normally happens".</p>
<p>76 With wrong <u>transpose the course of governance</u>.</p> <p>78 Murders, mischief, or civil sword at length, Or mutual treason, or a just revenge, When right-succeeding line returns again</p>	<p>= king, monarch; the title of prince is frequently used to mean king. = change the proper order and system by which a nation is governed.</p> <p>77-78: Videna rues the civil strife that is assuredly attendant if the heir-apparent is deprived of his full birthright.</p>
<p>80 By <u>Jove's</u> just judgment and deserved wrath,</p> <p>82 Brings them to cruël and <u>reproachful</u> death, And <u>roots</u> their names and kindreds from the earth.</p>	<p>79-82: when the rightful heir regains the throne after a civil war, he will properly punish those who brought about the strife and discord.</p> <p>= Jove is the alternate named used for <i>Jupiter</i>, king of the gods. Note that the characters always refer to Jove by this, his Roman name, even though as the near descendants of the Trojans they should be using his Greek name <i>Zeus</i>; this is a reflection of the authors' training in Latin texts and the Latin language. Note the dramatic alliteration in the line.</p>
<p>84 Ferr. Mother, content you, you shall see the end.</p> <p>86 Viden. The end? thy end I fear, Jove end me first!</p>	<p>= deserved.¹ = ie. uproots.</p>
<p>88 [Exeunt.]</p> <p>ACT I, SCENE II.</p> <p><i>The King's Council Chamber.</i></p> <p><i>Enter Gorboduc, Arostus, Philander and Eubulus.</i></p>	<p>86: the line contains a good example of the figure of speech known as <i>antacclasis</i>, in which a word, here end, takes on different meanings in each of its appearances.</p>
<p>1 Gorb. My lords, whose grave advice and faithful aid 2 Have long upheld my honour and my realm, 3 And brought me to this age from <u>tender years</u>, 4 Guiding so great <u>estate</u> with great renown; 5 Now <u>more importeth me, than erst</u>, to use 6 Your faith and wisdom, whereby yet I reign; That when by death my life and rule shall cease,</p>	<p>Entering Characters: King Gorboduc enters with his advisors. Eubulus is identified as the king's secretary, meaning he is Gorboduc's special confidant.³</p> <p>= ie. "my younger days". = ie. a kingdom. = "it is more necessary for me than ever before (erst)".</p>

8 The kingdom yet may with unbroken course
 10 Have certain prince, by whose undoubted right,
 Your wealth and peace may stand in quiet stay:
 12 And eke that they, whom nature hath prepared
 In time to take my place in princely seat,
 14 While in their father's time their pliant youth
 Yields to the frame of skilful governance,
 May so be taught and trained in noble arts,

16 As what their fathers which have reigned before
 Have with great fame derivèd down to them,
 18 With honour they may leave unto their seed:
 And not be thought for their unworthy life,
 20 And for their lawless swarving out of kind,

Worthy to lose what law and kind them gave:
 22 But that they may preserve the common peace,
 The cause that first began and still maintains
 24 The lineal course of kings' inheritance,
 For me, for mine, for you, and for the state,
 26 Whereof both I and you have charge and care,
 Thus do I mean to use your wonted faith
 28 To me and mine, and to your native land.
 My lords, be plain, without all wry respect,
 30 Or poisonous craft to speak in pleasing wise,

Lest as the blame of ill succeeding things
 32 Shall light on you, so light the harms also.

34 **Aros.** Your good acceptance so, most noble king,
 Of such our faithfulness, as heretofore
 36 We have employed in duties to your grace,
 And to this realm whole worthy head you are,
 38 Well proves that neither you mistrust at all,
 Nor we shall need no boasting wise to shew
 40 Our truth to you, nor yet our wakeful care

For you, for yours, and for our native land.
 42 Wherefore, O King, I speak for one as all,
Sith all as one do bare you egal faith:
 44 Doubt not to use our counsels and our aids
 Whose honours, goods, and lives, are whole avowed
 46 To serve, to aid, and to defend your grace.

48 **Gorb.** My lords, I thank you all. This is the case:
 Ye know the gods, who have the sovereign care
 50 For kings, for kingdoms, and for common weals,
 Gave me two sons in my more lusty age,
 52 Who now in my decaying years are grown
 Well towards riper state of mind and strength,

= ie. "a settled or legitimate king or succession".²
 = condition.⁴
 = moreover. = ie. Gorboduc's two sons.

13-15: "while I am alive, my sons are young enough to be
 trained and molded to prepare them to govern well."
pliant (line 13) = submissive or moldable.¹

= ie. ancestors.
 = passed down.¹
 = offspring, descendants.

20: *swarving* = swerving; *swarve* was more commonly
 used than was *swerve* in the 16th century.
kind = proper course of nature.

= accustomed loyalty.

29-30: Gorboduc wants the counsellors' advice plainly and
 honestly, "without crookedly seeking to favour me"
 (Smith, p. 13).¹⁶
all wry respect = "any distorted quality"¹ or "ill-
 natured regard".⁵
in pleasing wise = flattery.

31-32: "otherwise both the blame for what goes wrong, and
 the ills that will follow as a consequence, will land on
 (*light on*) you."

35-36: *as heretofore...grace* = "which we have always
 employed previously to serve you".
 = leader.

= "manner"; note the line's double negative.
 = loyalty, allegiance. = the sense is "watchful", or "vigi-
 lant".¹

= ie. "for all of us".
 = since. = equal;³ *egal* dropped out of regular use by 1600.
 = hesitate.¹

= "here is the situation".

= the common welfare.
 = more vigorous, ie. younger.

= more mature.

54	To take in hand some greater princely <u>charge</u> . As yet they live and spend [<u>their</u>] hopeful days	= responsibility. = in this edition, words in brackets were present in the 1565, but absent from the 1570, quarto, and reinstated by the editors.
56	With me and with their mother here in court: Their age now asketh other place and trade,	= ie. "they are old enough now that they should take on another position and occupation". ¹⁶
58	And <u>mine</u> also doth ask another change; Theirs to more <u>travail</u> , mine to greater ease.	= ie. "my age".
60	When fatal death shall end my mortal life, My purpose is to leave unto them <u>twain</u>	= work.
62	The realm divided into two <u>sondry</u> parts:	= two.
64	The one, <u>Ferrex</u> mine elder son shall have, The other, shall the other <u>Porrex</u> rule.	62: this line appears as printed here with an extra syllable in both of the earliest quartos; Farmer emends <i>into two</i> to <i>in two</i> . <i>sondry</i> = sundry, ie. separate; <i>sondry</i> is the earlier form, but by the mid-16th century <i>sundry</i> was in more common use.
66	That both my purpose may more firmly stand, And <u>eke</u> that they may better rule their charge, I mean forthwith to place them in <u>the same</u> :	63-64: the authors were not mindful of where the names of <i>Ferrex</i> and <i>Porrex</i> appear in the metered lines of the play: sometimes, as in line 63, it seems the second syllable is stressed (<i>Fer-REX</i>), and other times, as in line 64, the first (<i>POR-rex</i>).
68	That in my life they may both learn to rule, And I may joy to see their ruling well.	= also.
70	This is in sum what I would have <u>ye</u> weigh: First, whether ye <u>allow</u> my whole <u>device</u> , And think it good for me, for them, for you, And for our country, mother of us all:	= ie. the same rank, equal shares.
72	And if ye like it, and allow it well, Then for their guiding and their governance, Show forth such means of <u>circumstance</u> , As ye think <u>meet</u> to be both known and <u>kept</u> .	= as Gorboduc is addressing all his advisors, he uses the old plural pronoun <i>ye</i> . = approve. = idea.
74		76-77: "provide me with recommendations as would be fitting (<i>meet</i>) and which should be observed (<i>kept</i>)." <i>circumstance</i> = details ¹ or implementation. ⁵ Note that two syllables seem to have dropped out of line 76.
76		
78	<u>Lo</u> , this is all; now tell me your advice.	= behold.
80	<u>Aros</u> . And this is much, and asketh great advice; But for my part, my sovereign lord and king, This do I think: your majesty doth know, How under you in justice and in peace, Great wealth and honour long we have enjoyed; So as we cannot seem with greedy minds To wish for change of prince or governance: But if we like your purpose and device, Our liking must be <u>deemèd</u> to proceed <u>Of</u> rightful reason, and of heedful care, Not for ourselves, but for <u>our common state</u> ,	82-86: "if we do advise you to step down, you know we are not doing it for any selfish reason, since we have all thrived materially and in honour while serving you."
82		= judged.
84		= from.
86		= ie. "the kingdom that is all of ours".
88		
90		

Sith our own state doth need no better change:

92 I think in all as erst your grace has said.
 First, when you shall unload your agèd mind
 94 Of heavy care and troubles manifold,
 And lay the same upon my lords your sons,
 96 Whose growing years may bear the burden long,
 (And long I pray the gods to grant it so)
 98 And in your life while you shall so behold
 Their rule, their virtues, and their noble deeds,
 100 Such as their kind behighteth to us all;
 Great be the profits that shall grow thereof,
 102 Your age in quiet shall the longer last,
 Your lasting age shall be their longer stay:
 104 For cares of kings, that rule as you have ruled
 For public wealth and not for private joy,
 106 Do waste man's life, and hasten crooked age
 With furrowed face and with enfeebled limbs,
 108 To draw on creeping death a swifter pace.
 They two, yet young, shall bear the parted reign
 110 With greater ease than one, now old, alone
 Can wield the whole, for whom much harder is
 112 With lessened strength the double weight to bear.
 Your eye, your counsel, and the grave regard
 114 Of father, yea, of such as father's name,
 Now at beginning of their sondered reign
 116 When it is hazard of their whole success,
 Shall bridle so their force of youthful heats,
 118 And so restrain the rage of insolence
 Which most assails the young and noble minds,
 120 And so shall guide and train in tempered stay
 Their yet green bending wits with reverent awe,
 122 As now inured with virtues at the first.
 Custom, O king, shall bring delightfulness.
 124 By use of virtue, vice shall grow in hate;
 But if you so dispose it, that the day
 126 Which ends your life, shall first begin their reign,
 Great is the peril, what will be the end,
 128 When such beginning of such liberties

Void of such stays as in your life do lie,
 130 Shall leave them free to randon of their will,

132 An open prey to traitorous flattery,
 The greatest pestilence of noble youth:

134 Which peril shall be past, if in your life,
 Their tempered youth with agèd father's awe
 Be brought in ure of skilful stayèdness;

136 And in your life, their lives disposèd so,

91: ie. "since our personal circumstances require no improvement."
 = previously or first.

= nature promises or assures.^{5,16}

= means of support.¹

= the anxieties or worries.

= welfare.¹

108: death seems to quicken its pace when a man is older.¹²

= separate, split.

= the sense is "still vulnerable regarding".

117: "will act to control their youthful passions".

= moderate restraint.

= ie. "inexperienced but pliable minds or mental capacities".

= accustomed.

= misbehaviour shall be increasingly despised.

125-6: "but if you wait until you die to hand over your rule to them".

128: "when they suddenly find they can do completely as they wish".

= without. = checks.

= act without restraint.²

131-2: Elizabethan drama is filled with flattering and self-serving sycophants as are described in these two lines.

traitorous = should be pronounced with two syllables throughout the play: *trait-'rous*.

133-5: "if you are alive when the boys are made kings, you will be able to prevent any flatterers from leading them down the wrong path, and instead you will accustom them to pursuing wise policies."

in ure = into use.

stayèdness = constancy,⁵ or gravity or firmness.¹⁶

138 Shall length your noble life in joyfulness.
 Thus think I that your grace hath wisely thought,
 And that your tender care of common weal
 140 Hath bred this thought, so to divide your land,
 And plant your sons to bear the present rule
 142 While you yet live to see their ruling well,
 That you may longer live by joy therein.
 144 What further means behooveful are and meet,

 At greater leisure may your grace devise,
 146 When all have said; and when we be agreed
 If this be best to part the realm in twain,
 148 And place your sons in present government:
 Whereof, as I have plainly said my mind,
 150 So would I hear the rest of all my lords.

 152 **Phil.** In part I think as hath been said before,
 In part again my mind is otherwise.
 154 As for dividing of this realm in twain,
 And lotting out the same in egal parts,
 156 To either of my lords your grace's sons,
That think I best for this your realm's behoof,
 158 For profit and advancement of your sons,
 And for your comfort and your honour eke:
 160 But so to place them while your life do last,
 To yield to them your royal governance,
 162 To be above them only in the name
 Of father, not in kingly state also,
 164 I think not good for you, for them, nor us.
 This kingdom since the bloody civil field,
 166 Where Morgan slain did yield his conquered part
 Unto his cousin's sword in Camberland,

168 Containeth all that whilom did suffice
 Three noble sons of your forefather Brute:

= lengthen.
 = thought this through, ie. decided.

= ie. which are both necessary or desirable (*behooveful*)³
 and appropriate (*meet*).

= "once all of us advisors have had our say".
 = divide. = two.

= dividing, allotting. = equal.

= ie. "I think that is best". = benefit.²

= also.

= ie. "but not also as an actively ruling monarch".

166-7: a reference to the story told by Geoffrey of Monmouth of two cousins, *Morgan* and *Cunedag*, who rebelled against their common aunt, Cordela, who was sole sovereign of ancient Britain. Having captured and removed the reigning queen from power, Morgan and Cunedag divided rule of Britain, Morgan ruling north of the Humber River, his cousin ruling to its south.

Encouraged to try to take all of Britain for himself, Morgan invaded the south, but his army was destroyed by Cunedag's. Cunedag pursued the fleeing Morgan until finally catching up with him in Wales (ie. *Camberland*, named after its first sole king *Camber*, a son of Brute: see the note below at line 169), where he slew him. Cunedag ruled the whole island for 33 years. Gorboduc was among his descendants (Evans, p. 34-35).

= at one time.

= *Brute* was the legendary first king of Britain. According to Geoffrey, Brute was the great-grandson of Aeneas, the Trojan hero and prince who, after the sack of Troy by the Greeks, escaped and settled in Italy to found Rome. Brute travelled to Greece, where he settled in with the descendants of the survivors of the race of Trojans.

After a series of wars with the Greeks, Brute escaped with the Trojans, and after many adventures settled in Britain, which was uninhabited "save only of a few giants."

170	So your two sons, it may suffice also;	Brute named the island after himself, founded the city of New Troy (later London), and when he finally died left Britain to be ruled successfully in separate pieces by his three sons (Evans, pp. 3-23).
	The <u>mo</u> the stronger, if they <u>gree</u> in one:	170: "since Brute's three sons successfully ruled a divided Britain, so too can your two sons."
172	The smaller <u>compass</u> that the realm doth hold The easier is the <u>sway</u> thereof to wield;	171f: Philander argues that there are advantages to having two kings ruling separate, smaller kingdoms, <i>if</i> the individual kings are in amity; to line 181, he describes the many benefits such an arrangement may have. <i>mo</i> = more. <i>gree</i> = agree.
174	The nearer justice to the wrongèd poor,	= space or area. = influence or control.
176	The smaller <u>charge</u> , and yet enough for one.	174: the sense is that in a smaller realm, a king will be more likely to hear about and thus be able to correct injustices committed against the weaker members of society.
176	And when the region is divided so	= responsibility.
178	That <u>brethren</u> be the lords of either part,	= brothers.
178	Such strength doth nature knit between them both,	= separate.
180	In <u>sondry</u> bodies by conjoinèd love,	
180	That not as two, but one of doubled force,	
182	Each is to other as a sure defense;	
182	The nobleness and glory of the one,	
184	Doth <u>sharp</u> the courage of the other's mind	= sharpen.
184	With virtuous envy to contend for praise:	184: a friendly competition arises as to which of the two sovereigns can be more virtuous.
186	And such an <u>egalness</u> hath nature made,	= equality.
186	Between the brethren of one father's seed,	
186	As an <u>unkindly</u> wrong it seems to be,	187-193: a younger son may resent the entire kingship falling to his older brother, when nature otherwise made them equals. <i>unkindly</i> = unnatural.
188	To throw the brother subject <u>under feet</u> Of him, whose peer he is by course of <u>kind</u> :	= ie. under the rule of (his older brother). = nature.
190	And nature that did make this egalness,	190-3: Nature is personified as sowing dissension or discontent in a younger brother.
192	Oft so <u>repineth</u> at so great a wrong,	= complains, feels dissatisfaction. ²
192	That oft <u>she</u> raiseth up a grudging grief	= ie. Nature.
194	In younger brethren at the elder's state:	
194	Whereby both towns and kingdoms have been razed,	194-5: ie. which has led to destructive civil wars.
196	And famous stocks of royal blood destroyed:	
196	The brother, that should be the brother's aid,	= vigilant.
198	And have a <u>wakeful</u> care for his defense,	
198	<u>Gapes</u> for his death, and blames the lingering years	198-9: the younger brother impatiently yearns (<i>gapes</i>) ² for his brother's death, so that he may become king.
200	That draws not forth his end with faster course;	
200	And oft impatient of so long delays,	
200	With hateful slaughter he <u>prevents the Fates</u> ,	= anticipates (<i>prevents</i>) the actions of the <i>Fates</i> ; the <i>Fates</i> were the three sister-goddesses who determined the length of

202 And heaps a just reward for brother's blood,
 204 With endless vengeance on his stock for aye.
 Such mischiefs here are wisely met withal;

206 If egal state may nourish egal love,
 Where none hath cause to grudge the other's good,
 But now the head to stoop beneath them both,

208 Ne kind, ne reason, ne good order bears.
 And oft it hath been seen, where nature's course
 210 Hath been perverted in disordered wise,
 When fathers cease to know that they should rule,
 212 And children cease to know they should obey:
 And often over-kindly tenderness
 214 Is mother of unkindly stubbornness.
 I speak not this in envy or reproach,
 216 As if I grudged the glory of your sons,
 Whose honour I beseech the gods increase:
 218 Nor yet as if I thought there did remain
 So filthy cankers in their noble breasts,
 220 Whom I esteem (which is their greatest praise)
Undoubted children of so good a king;
 222 Only I mean to shew by certain rules,
 Which kind hath graft within the mind of man,
 224 That nature hath her order and her course,
 Which, being broken, doth corrupt the state
 226 Of minds and things even in the best of all.
 My lords, your sons may learn to rule of you;
 228 Your own example in your noble court
 Is fittest guider of their youthful years,
 230 If you desire to seek some present joy
 By sight of their well ruling in your life,
 232 See them obey, so shall you see them rule:
 Who so obeyeth not with humbleness,
 234 Will rule with outrage and with insolence.
 Long may they rule, I do beseech the gods;
 236 But long may they learn, ere they begin to rule.

If kind and Fates would suffer, I would wish
 238 Them agèd princes and immortal kings.
 Wherefore, most noble king, I well assent
 240 Between your sons that you divide your realm,
 And as in kind, so match them in degree:

the lives of humans. Philander means that the younger may act to kill the elder before the latter's rightful lifetime is played out.

202: "and receives appropriate punishment for spilling his brother's blood".

= descendants. = forever.

204: *here* = ie. "with this decision to split the kingdom".

met = prevented, anticipated.

withal = altogether.¹

207f: Philander now changes tack: one cannot be sure that such perfect harmony will arise if two sons are given their own kingdoms while the father simultaneously and officially retires.

the head...both = when the king reduces his own rank so that it is lower than that of his sons.¹²

208: *ne...ne* = neither...nor.

= manner

= "tenderness beyond nature" (Smith, p. 20).¹⁶

= "leads to", metaphorically.

= malice.

= the earliest usage of *grudge* - in the 15th century - was as a verb (meaning "to begrudge"), not a noun.¹

= cancers, corruption.

= unsuspected.

= nature. = grafted, implanted.

= from.

236: "but hopefully they will have a long time to learn, before they rule alone." The line has an extra syllable: its first word (*But*) may be stressed or deleted.

= see the note at line 201 above. = allow.

= ie. "them to live to be".

= "nature has done".

242	But while the gods prolong your royal life, <u>Prolong your reign</u> ; for thereto live you here,	= Philander argues that Gorboduc should continue to reign as king so long as he lives.
244	And therefore have the gods so long <u>forborn</u> To <u>join you to themselves</u> , that still you might	= held off.
246	Be prince and father of our common weal: They, when they see your children <u>ripe</u> to rule,	= euphemism for "let you die".
248	Will make them room, and will remove you hence, That yours, in right ensuing of your life,	= mature enough.
250	May rightly honour your immortal name.	248: "will make room amongst themselves so you may join them in Heaven". 249: "so that your children, having rightfully followed you on the throne".
252	Eubu. Your <u>wonted</u> true regard of <u>faithful</u> hearts Makes me, O king, the bolder to presume	152-250: Philander's unbroken speech of 99 lines and 757 words is a whopper, but the play will conclude with even an even longer one!
254	To speak what I conceive within my breast; Although <u>the same do not</u> agree at all	= accustomed. = loyal.
256	With that which <u>other here my lords</u> have said, Nor which yourself have seemèd best to like.	= "what I conceive does not". = "the other lords who are here". ¹²
258	Pardon I crave, and that my words be deemed To flow from hearty <u>zeal unto</u> your grace,	= ie. care over the welfare of.
260	And to the safety of your common weal. To part your realm unto my lords your sons,	= nor.
262	I think not good for you, <u>ne</u> yet for them, But worst of all, for this our native land:	265: see the note at lines 13-15 above in Act I's Dumb Show.
264	For with one land, one single rule is best: Divided reigns do make divided hearts;	269: an early reference to the common notion of the world being a stage on which all people play a part . We find an earlier formulation of this metaphor in Nicholas Udall's 1548 <i>Paraphrase of Erasmus</i> : "ye haue a parte to playe in the stage of the whole worlde". It would be several decades before Shakespeare's more quotable "All the world's a stage, etc." appeared.
266	But peace preserves the country and the prince. Such is in man the greedy mind to reign,	
268	So great is his desire to climb aloft, In worldly stage the stateliest parts to bear,	
270	That faith and justice and all <u>kindly</u> love, <u>Do yield unto</u> desire of sovereignty,	= familial. = ie. all take second place to.
272	Where egal state doth raise an egal hope To win <u>the thing</u> that either would attain.	= ie. sole rule over the nation
274	Your grace rememb'reth how in passèd years, The mighty Brute, first <u>prince</u> of all this land,	= king.
276	Possessed the same and ruled it well <u>in one</u> : He, thinking that the <u>compass did suffice</u>	= alone, by himself. = ie. the range or size of the nation was large enough.
278	For his three sons three kingdoms <u>eke</u> to make, Cut it in three, as you would now in twain:	= moreover.
280	But how much British blood hath since been spilt To join again the <u>sondered</u> unity?	= separated.
282	What princes slain before their timely hour? What waste of towns and people in the land?	
284	What treasons heaped on murders and on spoils?	

286 Whose just revenge even yet is scarcely ceased,
Ruthful remembrance is yet raw in mind.

288 The gods forbid the like to chance again:
And you, O king, give not the cause thereof.
My Lord Ferrex your elder son, perhaps
290 Whom kind and custom gives a rightful hope
To be your heir and to succeed your reign,
292 Shall think that he doth suffer greater wrong
Than he perchance will bear, if power serve.

294 Porrex the younger, so upraised in state,
Perhaps in courage will be raised also,

296 If flattery then, which fails not to assail

The tender minds of yet unskilful youth,
298 In one shall kindle and increase disdain,
And envy in the other's heart enflame:
300 This fire shall waste their love, their lives, their land,
And ruthless ruin shall destroy them both.
302 I wish not this, O King, so to befall,
But fear the thing, that I do most abhor.

304 Give no beginning to so dreadful end;
Keep them in order and obedience;
306 And let them both by now obeying you,
Learn such behavior as beseems their state;
308 The elder, mildness in his governance,
The younger, a yielding contentedness;
310 And keep them near unto your presence still,
That they, restrained by the awe of you,
312 May live in compass of well-tempered stay,
And pass the perils of their youthful years.

314 Your aged life draws on to feebler time,
Wherein you shall less able be to bear
316 The travails that in youth you have sustained,
Both in your person's and your realm's defense.
318 If planting now your sons in furder parts,

You send them furder from your present reach,
320 Less shall you know how they themselves demean:

Traitorous corrupters of their pliant youth
322 Shall have unspied a much more free access;

And if ambition and inflamed disdain
324 Shall arm the one, the other, or them both,
To civil war, or to usurping pride,
326 Late shall you rue that you ne recked before.

= pitiable, grief-causing.¹ Note the nice alliteration in this line.
= happen.

= ie. "succeed you in".

= **power** is pronounced in two syllables here for the first and only time; throughout the remainder of the play, **power** should be pronounced in a single syllable.

= ambition.²

296-9: Eubulus warns Gorboduc of the dire consequences that may result from self-serving advisors leading his sons down the wrong path.

= lacking in judgment or knowledge.^{3,16}

298: ie. cause disdain in the elder towards the younger.

= ie. the younger one's.

303: an early version of Shakespeare's more familiar "In time we hate that which we often fear", from *Antony and Cleopatra*.

= is fitting to.

= ie. acceptance that the elder is the sole ruler.

= limit. = restraint.

313: another allusion to the notion that maturity will bestow on the boys the ability to rule more wisely and with moderation.

= work.

= ie. in far-away locations.

furder = less commonly used alternate form of **further**.

= govern or behave themselves.¹

321-2: ie. those who would mislead them with malicious advice will have easier access to them if they are un-
seen (**unspied**) by you".

= in the end. = did not consider or heed (my warning).¹

Good is, I grant, of all to hope the best,

328 But not to live still dreadless of the worst.
So trust the one, that th' other be forseen.

330 Arm not unskilfulness with princely power;
But you that long have wisely ruled the reins
332 Of royalty within your noble realm,
So hold them, while the gods for our avails
334 Shall stretch the thread of your prolonged days.

Too soon he clamb into the flaming car,
336 Whose want of skill did set the earth on fire.

Time and example of your noble grace,
338 Shall teach your sons both to obey and rule;
When time hath taught them, time shall make them
place,
340 The place that now is full: and so I pray
Long it remain, to comfort of us all.
342

Gorb. I take your faithful hearts in thankful part:
344 But sith I see no cause to draw my mind,

To fear the nature of my loving sons,
346 Or to misdeem that envy or disdain
Can there work hate, where nature planteth love;
348 In one self purpose do I still abide:

My love extendeth egally to both,
350 My land sufficeth for them both also.
Humber shall part the marches of their realms:

352 The southern part the elder shall possess,
The northern shall Porrex the younger rule.

= the still common phrase *hope for the best* first appeared in the early 15th century.¹

= should be pronounced in two syllables: *tho-ther*. Wherever *the* and *to* should be abbreviated to *th'* and *t'* for the sake of the meter, we will do so; the quartos always spell them out.

= "do not arm ignorance (*unskilfulness*)".
331-2: more nice alliteration appears in these two lines.

= benefit, good.
334: an allusion to "the *thread* of life" spun by the Fates; when the Fate known as Atropos cuts one's thread, one's life ends.

335-6: a reference to *Phaeton*, a son of Apollo, the sun god. As an adolescent, Phaeton begged his father to let him drive the chariot that pulled the sun across the sky for one day. Apollo reluctantly acquiesced, but warned his son to be careful. Phaeton could not control the horses, and would have crashed onto the earth, had not Zeus killed him first with a thunderbolt.⁷
clamb = archaic form of "climbed", the latter which does not appear in English letters until the 1560's.
car = we note that the 1565 quarto here printed *cart*, which is just as satisfactory as *car*.
want = lack.

339: *time* will mature them, and time will determine the appropriate moment to set them on the throne.

The Advisors' Positions: it may behoove us to summarize the positions of the advisors, as the excessive length of the speeches may have dulled our memories:
(1) *Arostus* agrees with the king, that he should retire and divide the kingdom for his sons;
(2) *Philander* allows for Gorboduc dividing the kingdom, but believes he should continue to rule until he dies;
(3) *Eubulus* feels strongly that dividing the kingdom will lead to disaster.

= since. = ie. "allow my mind to be pulled towards other opinions".
= wrongly believe.

348: "I am still determined to do as I wish".
self = same or sole.^{1,5}
349: "since I love them both equally".

351: "the Humber River shall be the boundary between their separate kingdoms".
We may note that the Humber River once cut further across central England than it does today.¹⁸
marches = frontier, border.¹

354 In quiet I will pass mine aged days,
 Free from the travail and the painful cares
 356 That hasten age upon the worthiest kings.
 But lest the fraud, that ye do seem to fear

358 Of flattering tongues, corrupt their tender youth,
 And writhe them to the ways of youthful lust,
 360 To climbing pride, or to revenging hate;
 Or to neglecting of their careful charge,
 362 Lewdly to live in wanton recklessness;
 Or to oppressing of the rightful cause;
 364 Or not to wreak the wrongs done to the poor,
 To tread down truth, or favour false deceit;
 366 I mean to join to either of my sons
 Someone of those whose long approved faith
 368 And wisdom tried may well assure my heart:
 That mining fraud shall find no way to creep
 370 Into their fenced ears with grave advice.

This is the end; and so I pray you all
 372 To bear my sons the love and loyalty
 That I have found within your faithful breasts.

374 **Aros.** You, nor your sons, our sovereign lord, shall want
 376 Our faith and service while our lives do last.

378 [Exeunt.]

380 **Chorus.** When settled stay doth hold the royal throne
 In steadfast place by known and doubtless right,
 382 And chiefly when descent on one alone
 Make single and unparted reign to light;

384 Each change of course unjoints the whole estate,

And yields it thrall to ruin by debate.

= deceit; the description in lines 357-360 is of sycophants misleading the young kings with ideas of grandeur and power.

= ie. turn or incline,¹ or twist.⁵ = ambition.⁵

= ie. responsibility which requires great care.
 = basely.³

= avenge¹ or punish.⁵

366-8: Gorboduc will assigned an experienced advisor to keep an eye on and wisely counsel his sons.

= the sense is "undermining".

370: the sense is that the ears, thanks to the presence of a wise counsellor, are defended (**fenced**) against insidious advice with good advice.¹⁶

= read as "neither you". = lack

End of the Acts: Acts I-IV in *Gorboduc* are each followed by a *Chorus*, a kind of epilogue, presenting some final thoughts and lessons to be drawn from the action so far.

The *Names of the Speakers* of the Choruses, as listed at the beginning of the play, consists of *Four Ancient and Sage Men of Britain*: a different *Sage Man* speaks at the end of each of the first four Acts, while the fifth and final Act contains no Chorus.

The Chorus' Entrance and Rhyme Scheme: the entrance of the Chorus is not indicated in the original editions.

The Choruses of Acts I, II, and IV are written in six-line stanzas with the rhyme scheme *ab-ab-cc*. Such a scheme is now known as the *Venus and Adonis* stanza, since Shakespeare used this form in his 1593 published poem *Venus and Adonis*;¹⁹ of course, as can be seen, the existence of the form predates the Bard.

= conditions.

= undoubted.

382-3: "and especially when the royal throne settles on (**lights on**) one heir alone".

384: **change of course** = alteration to the proper course of things.

unjoints = dislocates.¹

estate = kingdom.

385: **thrall** = the normal meaning would be "captive" or

386
 388 The strength that knit by fast accord in one,
 Against all foreign power of mighty foes
 390 Could of itself defend itself alone;
Disjoinèd once, the former force doth lose.
 The sticks, that sondered brake so soon in twain,
 392 In faggot bound attempted were in vain.
 394 Oft tender mind that leads the partial eye
 Of erring parents in their children's love,
 396 Destroys the wrongly lovèd child thereby:

This doth the proud son of Apollo prove,
 398 Who, rashly set in chariot of his sire,
 Inflamed the parchèd earth with Heaven's fire.
 400
 And this great king, that doth divide his land,
 402 And change the course of his descending crown,
 And yields the reign into his children's hand;
 404 From blissful state of joy and great renown,
 A mirror shall become to princes all,

406 To learn to shun the cause of such a fall.

END OF ACT I.

"slave", though the sense here seems to be simply "subject".

debate = strife.⁴

= ie. but once separated. = ie. loosen, referring to the force or bond that should *knit* (line 387) sibling rulers.
 = ie. when separated. = broke. The reference is to the allegorical sticks of Act I's introductory Dumb Show.

394-6: briefly, parents can ruin their child by being too indulgent.

Oft = often.

partial = biased.

397-9: a second allusion to the famous and oft-cited myth of Phaeton; see lines 335-6 above.

= hereditary.⁵

= example or warning; the early meaning of *mirror* as "an exemplar" actually may have predated its usual meaning of a reflective surface.¹

ACT II.

THE ORDER AND SIGNIFICATION OF THE DUMB SHOW BEFORE THE SECOND ACT.

1 First, the music of cornets begins to play, during
2 which comes in upon the stage a king accompanied
3 with a number of his nobility and gentlemen. And
4 after he has placed himself in a chair of estate
5 prepared for him, there comes and kneels before him a
6 grave and aged gentleman and offers up a cup unto
7 him of wine in a glass, which the king refuses. After
8 him comes a brave and lusty young gentleman and

presents the king with a cup of gold filled with poison,

10 which the king accepts, and drinking the same,
11 immediately falls down dead upon the stage, and so is
12 carried thence away by his lords and gentlemen, and
13 then the music ceases.

14 Hereby is signified that as glass by nature holdeth
15 no poison, but is clear and may easily be seen through,
16 ne boweth by any art: so a faithful counsellor holdeth

17 no treason, but is plain and open, ne yieldeth to any
18 indiscreet affection, but giveth wholesome counsel,
19 which the ill-advised prince refuseth. The delightful
20 gold filled with poison betokeneth flattery, which
21 under fair seeming of pleasant words beareth deadly
22 poison, which destroyeth the prince that receiveth it.
23 As befell in the two brethren Ferrex and Porrex, who,
24 refusing the wholesome advice of grave court
25 counsellors, credited these young parasites, and
26 brought to themselves death and destruction thereby.

ACT II, SCENE I.

The Court of Ferrex.

Enter Ferrex, Hermon and Dordan.

1 **Ferr.** I marvel much what reason led the king

= throne.

= ie. who.

= well-dressed.⁴ = robust.

= from a Latin proverb: *bibere venenum in auro* = "drink
poison from a cup of gold", which suggests that evil can lurk
in an attractive source.

= from there, ie. from the stage.

= inherently.

= ie. "nor can it be bent by man's efforts."³
art = ie. the ability of man to modify nature.

17-18: **ne yieldeth...affection** = ie. "and does not allow
his advice to be influenced by any injudicious bias".²

= symbolizes.

= attractive appearance, ie. deceptive sound.

= "listened to their flattering advisors (instead)".

Entering Characters: **Hermon** is a follower of **Ferrex**
(who we remember is the king's elder son) and a flattering
sycophant, typically called a *parasite*. His job is to lead
Ferrex (the new king of the southern half of Britain) astray
with malevolent advice. **Dordan** is a trusted advisor assigned
by King Gorboduc to keep watch over Ferrex, and protect
him from the foolish counsel he is likely to receive from
men like Hermon.

Note how Gorboduc has already divided his kingdom
between the Acts; in fact, no action at all takes place on the
stage throughout the play, all activity occurring between
scenes.

2 4	My father, thus <u>without all my desert</u> , To <u>reave</u> me half the kingdom which by course Of law and nature should remain to me.	= "without my having done anything to deserve it". = deprive or rob.
6	Herm. If you with stubborn and untamèd pride	6-14: Hermon argues that it would have made sense to deny Ferrex his birthright only if he had done something to deserve such treatment; he enumerates several examples of such unworthy behavior.
8	Had stood against him in rebelling <u>wise</u> ; Or if with <u>grudging mind</u> you had <u>envied</u> So slow a sliding of his agèd years;	= manner. = displayed resentment towards. ² 9: ie. the long and lingering life of his father, so that the throne would have been too slow to descend to Ferrex.
10	Or sought before your time to haste the course Of fatal death upon his royal head;	10-11: haste...head = hasten Gorboduc's death, perhaps a euphemism for "murder him".
12 14	Or stained your <u>stock</u> with murder of your kin; Some face of reason might perhaps have seemed To yield some likely cause to spoil ye thus.	= family tree. ²
16	Ferr. The <u>wreakful</u> gods pour on my cursèd head	16-23: this speech is one long sentence, whose point only becomes clear at the end: Ferrex wishes a number of curses upon himself, <i>if</i> he ever once held a malicious thought against his father. wreakful = avenging.
18	Eternal plagues and never dying woes; The <u>hellish prince</u> <u>adjudge</u> my damnèd <u>ghost</u>	18: the hellish prince is Pluto, the god and ruler of the underworld; technically, however, Pluto did not make the individual decisions about the punishments to be assigned to individual souls (ghost = soul or spirit); such decisions were made by the judges Rhadamanthys, Minos and Aiaikos, three men who were famous for establishing law and order during their lives on earth. ⁷ adjudge = sentence.
	To <u>Tantal's</u> thirst, or proud <u>Ixion's</u> wheel,	19: Ferrex alludes to some famous stories from mythology: (1) Tantalus , a son of Zeus, revealed secrets told him by the king of the gods, and for this indiscretion was punished by being placed in a lake to suffer permanent thirst and hunger; whenever he reached for the water around him or the fruit hanging from the branches above him, they would shrink away from him. Our word <i>tantalize</i> derives from his name. (2) Ixion's father-in-law tried to extort Ixion's wedding presents from him, and in revenge Ixion invited the man to his home, wherein he caused him to fall into a pit filled with fire; Ixion was pardoned by Zeus, who invited him to a feast, but Ixion repaid his host by trying to seduce Zeus' wife Hera. He was punished by being tied by his hands and feet to a wheel which forever spun around in the underworld. ⁸
20	Or cruël <u>gripe</u> to gnaw my growing heart,	= vulture. ¹ The reference in this line is to the myth of Tityus , a giant who tried to rape the mortal woman Leto (the future mother of Helen of Troy); Zeus killed him with a bolt of lightning, and he was punished in hell by being tied to the ground (he covered nine acres) and having two vultures continuously eat his liver, which always grew back. ⁸

22 To during torments and unquenchèd flames;
 If ever I conceived so foul a thought,
 To wish his end of life, or yet of reign.

24 **Dord.** Ne yet your father, O most noble prince,
 26 Did ever think so foul a thing of you:
 For he, with more than father's tender love,
 28 While yet the Fates do lend him life to rule,
 (Who long might live to see your ruling well)
 30 To you, my lord, and to his other son,
 Lo, he resigns his realm and royalty;
 32 Which never would so wise a prince have done,
 If he had once misdeemed that in your heart
 34 There ever lodgèd so unkind a thought.
 But tender love, my lord, and settled trust
 36 Of your good nature, and your noble mind,
 Made him to place you thus in royal throne,
 38 And now to give you half his realm to guide;
 Yea, and that half which in abounding store
 40 Of things that serve to make a wealthy realm,
 In stately cities, and in fruitful soil,
 42 In temperate breathing of the milder Heaven,
 In things of needful use, which friendly sea
 44 Transports by traffic from the foreign parts,
 In flowing wealth, in honour and in force,
 46 Doth pass the double value of the part
 That Porrex hath allotted to his reign.
 48 Such is your case, such is your father's love.

50 **Ferr.** Ah love, my friends? love wrongs not whom he
 loves.

52 **Dord.** Ne yet he wrongeth you, that giveth you
 So large a reign, ere that the course of time
 54 Bring you to kingdom by descended right,
 Which time perhaps might end your time before.

56 **Ferr.** Is this no wrong, say you, to reave from me
 58 My native right of half so great a realm?
 And thus to match his younger son with me
 60 In egal power, and in as great degree?
 Yea, and what son? The son whose swelling pride
 62 Would never yield one point of reverence,
 When I the elder and apparent heir

64 Stood in the likelihood to possess the whole;

Yea, and that son which from his childish age
 66 Envieth my honour, and doth hate my life.

= ie. enduring.

= "your father neither"; Dordan tries to soften the hurt caused by Gorboduc's decision to divide Britain.

28-29: another reference to the sister-goddesses who determine each individual's lifespan.

= mistakenly thought.¹

39-47: Dordan notes that Ferrex has received the much wealthier southern half of Britain to rule; Cunliffe observes that these lines also flatter the audience in their patriotic "glorification of England."

= surpass.

52-55: a clever argument: Ferrex should actually be grateful to have received a kingdom to rule *before* his father died, which is how events normally would proceed; in fact, it is even possible that Ferrex might have pre-deceased his father, in which case he *never* would have been king!

57f: Ferrex basically ignores Dordan's arguments.

= equal. = rank.

= ie. which.

63: ie. the **heir apparent**, which refers to the heir whose claim cannot be superseded by the birth of another, normally the eldest son of the king.

64: the apparent extra syllable in this line is not addressed by any of the editors; **likelihood** may be pronounced in two syllables: *like-l'hood*.

61-66: according to Ferrex, Porrex has always been resentful of his having been born the younger son, and envious that Ferrex would be the next king; because he has not behaved

68 What will he now do, when his pride, his rage,
The mindful malice of his grudging heart,
70 Is armed with force, with wealth, and kingly state?

Herm. Was this not wrong? Yea, ill-advised wrong

72 To give so mad a man so sharp a sword,
To so great peril of so great mishap,
74 Wide open thus to set so large a way.

76 **Dord.** Alas, my lord, what grievful thing is this,
That of your brother you can think so ill?
78 I never saw him utter likely sign
Whereby a man might see or once misdeem
80 Such hate of you, ne such unyielding pride:
Ill is their counsel, shameful be their end,
82 That raising such mistrustful fear in you,
Sowing the seed of such unkindly hate,
84 Travail by reason to destroy you both.
Wise is your brother and of noble hope,
86 Worthy to wield a large and mighty realm;
So much a stronger friend have you thereby,
88 Whose strength is your strength, if you gree in one.

90 **Herm.** If nature and the gods had pinchèd so
Their flowing bounty, and their noble gifts
92 Of princely qualities from you my lord,
And poured them all at once in wasteful wise
94 Upon your father's younger son alone;

Perhaps there be, that in your prejudice

96 Would say that birth should yield to worthiness:

But sith in each good gift and princely art
98 Ye are his match, and in the chief of all –
In mildness and in sober governance –
100 Ye far surmount; and sith there is in you
Sufficing skill and hopeful towardness

102 To wield the whole, and match your elders' praise,

I see no cause why ye should lose the half,
104 Ne would I with you yield to such a loss:

Lest your mild sufferance of so great a wrong
106 Be deemèd cowardice and simple dread,
Which shall give courage to the fiery head
108 Of your young brother to invade the whole.
While yet therefore sticks in the people's mind

in a dignified manner, nor accepted his fate, Porrex does not deserve to have a share in ruling Britain.

= unforgetting.¹⁶

71-74: Hermon wonders what crazy thing Porrex might do, now that he is so powerful.

= ie. so great a weapon as his own kingdom.

= risk or danger. = misfortune.

78-80: Dordan flatly contradicts Ferrex's description of a bitter younger brother.

= nor.

= strive.

= ie. act in harmony.

= been stingy or ungenerous with.⁹

93-94: ie. "if the gods had given all the qualities desirable in a king to your brother, and none to you".

wasteful wise = a wasteful manner.

= "there would be those who". = "to your detriment".

96: "would say that you, who should be king based on your birth, should yield the throne to your brother based on his superior **worthiness**".

= since. = ie. skill required to be a good king.

= equal. = ie. most important quality of all in a ruler.

= "are far superior".

= an expectant willingness or desire.

102: **wield** = reign over.

match...praise = ie. "be equal to the praise your elders heap upon you".

104: Hermon finally comes right out and explicitly advises Ferrex to not accept this division of the kingdom.

= acceptance.

= judged, reckoned. = "fear".

106-7: a rhyming couplet has snuck into the blank verse.

109-119: Ferrex should anticipate Porrex and attack him

110 The loathèd wrong of your disheritance;

And ere your brother have by settled power,

112 By guileful cloak of an alluring show,
Got him some force and favour in this realm;

114 And while the noble queen your mother lives,
To work and practice all for your avail;
116 Attempt redress by arms, and wreak yourselves
Upon his life that gaineth by your loss,
118 Who now to shame of you, and grieve of us,
In your own kingdom triumphs over you:
120 Shew now your courage meet for kingly state,
That they which have avowed to spend their goods,
122 Their lands, their lives, and honours in your cause,
May be the bolder to maintain your part
124 When they do see that coward fear in you
Shall not betray ne fail their faithful hearts.
126 If once the death of Porrex end the strife,
And pay the price of his usurpèd reign,
128 Your mother shall persuade the angry king,
The lords your friends eke shall appease his rage;
130 For they be wise, and well they can foresee
That ere long time your agèd father's death
132 Will bring a time when you shall well requite
Their friendly favour, or their hateful spite,
134 Yea, or their slackness to advance your cause.

“Wise men do not so hang on passing state
136 Of present princes, chiefly in their age,
But they will further cast their reaching eye,
138 To view and weigh the times and reigns to come.”

Ne is it likely, though the king be wroth,
140 That he yet will, or that the realm will bear,
Extreme revenge upon his only son:
142 Or if he would, what one is he that dare
Be minister to such an enterprize?

144 And here you be now placèd in your own,
Amid your friends, your vassals and your strength:
146 We shall defend and keep your person safe
Till either counsel turn his tender mind,

first while he, Ferrex, still has the advantage.

109-110: "while the wrong done to you is still fresh in people's minds".

= before.

112-3: the sense is that Porrex, an illegitimate king, might, given enough time, be able to convince enough people to accept him as their ruler simply by acting the part, and as a result gain enough support to be able to raise an army to resist Ferrex.

guileful cloak = deceiving disguise.²

alluring show = attractive playing of the part.

114-5: Hermon is aware that Ferrex is his mother's favourite.

= scheme. = benefit.

= revenge.

= fit.

= "those who". = vowed, promised.

= nor deceive.¹⁶

= will also work to mollify.

131-4: Hermon cleverly points out that Gorboduc's counsellors will, out of self-interest, recognize that Gorboduc's eventual death will put them at Ferrex's mercy no matter what, so they will work hard to get the king to accept Ferrex's removal of Porrex; specifically, Ferrex could be expected to reward (*requite*) them for taking his side - or punish them if they don't!

135-138: Adams notes that in the 16th century, quotation marks were used to "emphasize sententious passages", meaning that the included speech indicates sentiments of accepted wisdom or were in the nature of aphorisms: such passages, of which there are several in the play, sound as if the speakers are quoting authority.

= irate or moved to great anger.¹

= ie. "who would dare".

143: "be the one to carry out such an assignment?"

minister = agent.

= ie. "the good advice of his counsellors sways Gorboduc's

148 Or age, or sorrow end his weary days.
 But if the fear of gods, and secret grudge
 150 Of nature's law, repining at the fact,

152 Withhold your courage from so great attempt,
 Know ye, that lust of kingdoms hath no law,

154 The gods do bear and well allow in kings
 The things [that] they abhor in rascal routs.
 "When kings on slender quarrels run to wars,
 156 And then in cruël and unkindly wise
 Command thefts, rapes, murder of innocents,
 158 To spoil of towns, and reigns of mighty realms;
 Think you such princes do suppress themselves
 160 Subject to laws of kind, and fear of gods?"
 Murders, and violent thefts in private men

162 Are heinous crimes and full of foul reproach:
 Yet none offence, but decked with glorious name
 164 Of noble conquests in the hands of kings.
 But if you like not yet so hot device,

166 Ne list to take such vantage of the time,
 But, though with peril of your own estate,
 168 You will not be the first that shall invade;
 Assemble yet your force for your defense,
 170 And for your safety stand upon your guard.

172 **Dord.** Oh, Heaven! was there ever heard or known
 So wicked counsel to a noble prince?
 174 Let me, my lord, disclose unto your grace
 This heinous tale, what mischief it contains;
 176 Your father's death, your brother's, and your own,
 Your present murder, and eternal shame.
 178 Hear me, O king, and suffer not to sink
 So high a treason in your princely breast.

180
 182 **Ferr.** The mighty gods forbid that ever I
 Should once conceive such mischief in my heart.
 Although my brother hath bereft my realm,
 184 And bear perhaps to me an hateful mind,
 Shall I revenge it with his death therefore?
 186 Or shall I so destroy my father's life
 That gave me life? The gods forbid, I say,
 188 Cease you to speak so anymore to me. –
Ne you, my friend, with answer once repeat
 190 So foul a tale: in silence let it die.
 What lord or subject shall have hope at all

yielding or pliant (*tender*) mind"

150: "nature turns with pain or shrinks (*repines*) from the deed (*fact*) of killing one's brother" (Smith, p. 36).¹⁶
nature's law = ie. the law against killing one's kin.

151-2: ie. "if you lack the courage to attack your brother, you should remember that greed for a kingdom, ie. the ambition to rule, knows or acknowledges no rules of fair play." Hermon will repeatedly make the point that when it comes to winning a kingdom, Ferrex should not expect his brother to adhere to the niceties of ethical behaviour.

= approve.³

= worthless rabble.²

= slight pretexts.

= manner.

= "limit their behaviour so as to remain".

= nature or familial relations.

= ie. those not serving any public office, or at least those who are not kings.

= ie. are not considered offensive or criminal.

165: ie. "but if you are uncomfortable with such an extreme scheme (*hot device*)".

166: "nor wish (*list*) to take advantage of this propitious moment".

= "danger of losing your own kingdom".¹

169-170: Hermon argues that even if Ferrex refuses to invade Porrex's half of Britain and kill him, then at a minimum he should raise an army that will be prepared to defend him when Porrex invades *his* half.

174-5: Dordan will predict what will happen if Ferrex follows Hermon's advice.

= "deprived me of".

= ie. Hermon.

= Ferrex now addresses Dordan.

191-5: if Ferrex kills his brother, how could any of his sub-

192 That under me they safely shall enjoy
Their goods, their honours, lands and liberties,
194 With whom neither one only brother dear,
Ne father dearer, could enjoy their lives?
196 But sith I fear my younger brother's rage,
And sith perhaps some other man may give

198 Some like advice, to move his grudging head
At mine estate, which counsel may perchance
200 Take greater force with him, than this with me;
I will in secret so prepare myself,
202 As, if his malice or his lust to reign
Break forth in arms or sudden violence,
204 I may withstand his rage, and keep mine own.

206 **Dord.** I fear the fatal time now draweth on
When civil hate shall end the noble line
208 Of famous Brute, and of his royal seed: –
Great Jove, defend the mischiefs now at hand!
210 O that the secretary's wise advice

Had erst been heard when he besought the king
212 Not to divide his land, nor send his sons
To further parts from presence of his court,
214 Ne yet to yield to them his governance.
Lo, such are they now in the royal throne
216 As was rash Phaëton in Phoebus' car;
Ne then the fiery steeds did draw the flame
218 With wilder randon through the kindled skies,

Then traitorous counsel now will whirl about
220 The youthful heads of these unskilful kings.
But I hereof their father will inform;
222 The reverence of him perhaps shall stay
The growing mischiefs while they yet are green:
224 If this help not, then woe unto themselves,
The prince, the people, the divided land!
226

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT II, SCENE II.

The Court of Porrex.

Enter Porrex, Tyndar, and Philander.

jects ever live without fear for their own lives?

= nor.

197-8: *sith...advice* = ie. "since one of Ferrex's counsellors may give him the same bad advice Hermon gives me".

= envious or resentful.¹

= "my kingdom".

= ie. be more successfully persuasive.

= so that.⁵

205: Ferrex and Hermon likely exit the stage here before Dordan speaks.

= ie. civil war.

= prevent³ or "ward off".¹⁶

= ie. Eubulus' recommendation that Gorboduc not divide the kingdom as he did.

= first. = ie. heeded.

= distant lands.

216-8: another allusion to *Phaeton's* well-known failure to drive the sun across the sky. Phaeton, as the son of the great Olympian god Apollo, of course is being compared to Ferrex and Porrex, referencing their inability to "control" or manage the country as their father did. *Phoebus* is an alternate name for Apollo, the god of the sun.

wilder randon = uncontrolled course.^{9,16}

kindled = inflamed, ie. brightened by the sun.

= foolish or ignorant.¹

= prevent.

= "incipient" or "just beginning".

Entering Characters: *Porrex* is Ferrex's younger brother, and now king of the northern half of Britain. *Tyndar* is Porrex's own personal sycophant, and *Philander* his wise advisor, assigned by Gorboduc to remain by his side. This

1 **Porr.** And is it thus? And doth he so prepare
 2 Against his brother as his mortal foe?
 And now while yet his agèd father lives?
 4 Neither regards he him, nor fears he me?
 War would he have? and he shall have it so.

6
 7 **Tyn.** I saw myself the great preparèd store
 8 Of horse, of armour, and of weapons there;
 Ne bring I to my lord reported tales
 10 Without the ground of seen and searchèd truth.

Lo, secret quarrels run about his court
 12 To bring the name of you, my lord, in hate.
 Each man almost can now debate the cause
 14 And ask a reason of so great a wrong,
 Why he so noble and so wise a prince
 16 Is as, unworthy, reft his heritage?
 And why the king, misled by crafty means,
 18 Divided thus his land from course of right?
 The wiser sort hold down their grievful heads;

20 Each man withdraws from talk and company
 Of those that have been known to favour you:
 22 To hide the mischief of their meaning there,
 Rumours are spread of your preparing here.
 24 The rascal numbers of [th'] unskilful sort
 Are filled with monstrous tales of you and yours.
 26 In secret I was counseled by my friends
 To haste me thence, and brought you, as you know,
 28 Letters from those that both can truly tell,
 And would not write unless they knew it well.

30
 31 **Phil.** My lord, yet ere you move unkindly war,
 32 Send to your brother to demand the cause:
 Perhaps some traitorous tales have filled his ears
 34 With false reports against your noble grace;
 Which once disclosed shall end the growing strife,
 36 That else not stayed with wise foresight in time,
 Shall hazard both your kingdoms and your lives:
 38 Send to your father eke, he shall appease
 Your kindled minds, and rid you of this fear.

40
 41 **Porr.** Rid me of fear? I fear him not at all;

42 Ne will to him, ne to my father send.
 If danger were for one to tarry there,
 44 Think ye it safety to return again?
 In mischiefs, such as Ferrex now intends,

scene's parallels with the previous scene involving Ferrex and his counsellors are obvious.

1-2: **And doth...foe?** = Ferrex's intention to raise an army in secret has clearly failed.
 = "does Ferrex have any regard for his father".

7f: Tyndar has acted as Porrex's spy.

9-10: Tyndar explains that he himself investigated and confirmed the rumors swirling around Ferrex's kingdom, and thus what he reports should be believed.

= robbed of.
 = ie. Gorboduc.

19: As the sycophants have won over Ferrex with their bad advice, the wiser men of Ferrex's realm are hanging their heads in sorrow.

24: "the worthless (*rascal*) members of the ignorant (*unskilful*) classes (*sort*)".
 = "get myself out of there quickly".

= before. = "instigate this unnatural war", "unnatural" because it would be against his own brother.

= stopped.
 = risk.
 = also.

= Philander's unfortunate decision to attribute *fear* as the driving force of Porrex's anxiety prompts a defensive reaction from Porrex, and the result is that he does not hear Philander's primary arguments.

43-44: "if it were dangerous for any one of my partisans to remain in Ferrex's kingdom now, are you so foolish as to think it would be safe for someone to return there?"

<p>46</p> <p>48</p> <p>50</p> <p>52</p> <p>54</p> <p>56</p> <p>58</p> <p>60</p> <p>62</p> <p>64</p> <p>66</p> <p>68</p> <p>70</p> <p>72</p> <p>74</p> <p>76</p> <p>78</p> <p>80</p>	<p>The <u>wonted</u> courteous laws to messengers Are not observed, which in just war they use.</p> <p>Shall I so hazard any one of mine?</p> <p>Shall I betray my trusty friend to him That hath disclosed his treason unto me?</p> <p>Let him <u>entreat</u> that fears, I fear him not: Or shall I to the king my father <u>send</u>? Yea, and send now while such a mother lives That loves my brother and that hateth me? Shall I give leisure, by my <u>fond</u> delays, To Ferrex to <u>oppress</u> me all <u>unware</u>?</p> <p>I will not; but I will invade his realm, And seek the traitor-prince within his court. Mischief for mischief is a due reward. His wretched head shall pay the worthy price Of this his treason and his hate to me. Shall I <u>abide</u>, and <u>treat</u>, and send, and pray, And hold my <u>yelden</u> throat to traitor's knife, While I with valiant mind and conquering force Might rid myself of foes, and win a realm? Yet rather, when I have the wretch's head, <u>Then</u> to the king my father will I send.</p> <p>The <u>bootless case</u> may yet appease his wrath:</p> <p>If not I will defend me as I may.</p> <p>Phil. <u>Lo, here</u> the end of these two youthful kings! The father's death! the reign of their two realms! "O most <u>unhappy</u> state of counsellors That <u>light on</u> so unhappy lords and times, That neither can their good advice be heard, Yet must they bear the blames <u>of ill success</u>." But I will to the king their father <u>haste</u>, Ere this mischief come to that likely end, That if the <u>mindful</u> wrath of <u>wreakful</u> gods Since mighty <u>Ilion's</u> fall, not yet appeased</p>	<p>46-47: Porrex points out that opposing nations engaged in an honourable war will always observe the accustomed (wonted) immunities granted to official messengers who move back and forth between the two sides; Ferrex's bellicose intentions, however, are so insidious that he cannot be expected to grant the same.</p> <p>= "do you expect me to risk sending one of my messengers to him now?"</p> <p>49-50: Porrex is unwilling to send the man who did so great a service for him by spying on Ferrex and reporting back the military build-up going on in the southern kingdom, ie. Tyndar, on such an obviously dangerous mission.</p> <p>= beg. = appeal.</p> <p>55-56: "shall I give Ferrex time to make the preparations necessary that would allow him to make a surprise attack on me?" fond = foolish or stupid. oppress = overwhelm.¹⁶ unware = unaware or unexpectedly.¹</p> <p>= suffer, endure.³ = entreat, beg. = yielded, ie. surrendered;¹ yelden was archaic by the mid-16th century.</p> <p>= only then.</p> <p>68: since the situation, once Ferrex is dead, would be irreversible, Gorboduc will realize he has no choice but to accept it. bootless case = irretrievable situation.</p> <p>70: Porrex and Tyndar likely exit the stage at this point.</p> <p>= "see here". = unfortunate. = figuratively land or descend on, ie. "are put in a position in which they must work with". = "when the results are bad". = hurry. = the sense is "never forgetting". = avenging.</p> <p>80-83: the British, we remember, were descended from</p>
---	--	---

82 With these poor remnants of the Trojan name,
 Have not determined by unmoved fate
 Out of this realm to rase the British line;

84 By good advice, by awe of father's name,
 By force of wiser lords, this kindled hate
 86 May yet be quenched, ere it consume us all.

88 **Chorus.** When youth not bridled with a guiding stay
 Is left to randon of their own delight,
 90 And welds whole realms, by force of sovereign sway,
 Great is the danger of unmastered might,
 92 Lest skillless rage throw down with headlong fall
 Their lands, their states, their lives, themselves and all.

94
 96 When growing pride doth fill the swelling breast,
 And greedy lust doth raise the climbing mind,
 O, hardly may the peril be repressed;
 98 Ne fear of angry gods, ne laws kind,

Ne country's care can fire'd hearts restrain,
 100 When force hath armèd envy and disdain.

102 When kings of foreset will neglect the rede

Of best advice, and yield to pleasing tales,
 104 That do their fancy's noisome humour feed,
 Ne reason, nor regard of right avails:
 106 Succeeding heaps of plagues shall teach too late,
 To learn the mischiefs of misguiding state.

108 Foul fall the traitor false, that undermines

110 The love of brethren, to destroy them both!
 Woe to the prince that pliant ear inclines,

112 And yields his mind to poisonous tale that floweth
 From flattering mouth! and woe to wretched land
 114 That wastes itself with civil sword in hand!

116 Lo thus it is, poison in gold to take,
 And wholesome drink in homely cup forsake.

END OF ACT II.

Brute and his band of itinerant Trojans. Philander's point is that the gods, perhaps not satisfied with having allowed the Greeks to destroy their original home (*Ilion* is another traditional name for Troy), will only be finally appeased by the complete destruction of the royal Trojan line in Britain.

rase = probably a variation of *raze*, to erase or obliterate.

= before.

= means of support.

= ie. act in an uncontrolled or wild manner.

= uncontrolled or not yet mastered.¹

= irrational.¹⁶

= nor laws of nature or familial relations; Cauthen suggests that *laws* here should be pronounced with two syllables: *LAW-es*.

102: *foreset* = fixed purpose,¹ though Creeth suggests "fore-sight".

rede = judgment¹ or advice.⁴

= ie. flattery.

= harmful.¹⁶

109: note the intense alliterative use of one-syllable words beginning with *f* and containing an *l* in this line.

= ie. who willingly listens to the advice of flatterers.

pliant = easily influenced.¹

116-7: a reference to the allegorical Dumb Show at the beginning of Act II. Note also that 112-3 provide an extra rhyming couplet to conclude the Chorus.

homely = unpretentious.⁵

ACT III.

THE ORDER AND SIGNIFICATION OF THE DUMB SHOW BEFORE THE THIRD ACT.

1 First the music of flutes begins to play, during which
2 comes in upon the stage a company of mourners all
3 clad in black, betokening death and sorrow to ensue
4 upon the ill-advised misgovernment and dissension of
5 brethren, as befell upon the murder of Ferrex by his
6 younger brother. After the mourners have passed
7 thrice about the stage, they depart, and then the music
8 ceases.

ACT III, SCENE I.

The Court of Gorboduc.

Enter Gorboduc, Eubulus, and Arostus.

1 **Gorb.** O cruël Fates, O mindful wrath of gods,

2 Whose vengeance neither Simois' strained streams

3 Flowing with blood of Trojan princes slain,
4 Nor Phrygian fields made rank with corpses dead

Of Asian kings and lords, can yet appease;

6 Ne slaughter of unhappy Priam's race,

= symbolizing.

= brothers.

1-16: Gorboduc's speech harkens back to the Trojan War, and the destruction of his ancestor's city and slaughter of the royal family at the hands of the Greeks: the gods cannot or will not release the descendants of the Trojans, now the British, from their **wrath**.

mindful = probably meaning "remembering", ie. unforgetting.

2: **Simois** = the attendant god of the river of the same name. The Simois flowed from Mt. Ida, and joined the Scamander River on the plains of Troy.⁸ Note the striking alliteration in this line.

strained = perhaps suggesting "labouring", as under the stress of great amounts of a foreign fluid, ie. blood.

= while the name **Phrygia** usually refers to an ancient nation that was situated in west-central Asia Minor, it can also be used to describe the broader area of western Asia Minor generally, or, as here, the region which contained Troy and the battlefields of the Trojan War specifically.²³

= ie. the allies of the Trojans, who came from the western half of Asia Minor; although we may point out that a contingent from Thrace, which is on the European side of the border between the continents, also fought with the Trojans.

6: **Ne** = nor.

unhappy = ill-fated.

Priam's race = **Priam** was the patriarch of the Trojan royal family at the time of the Trojan War. Priam famously had 50 sons, including Paris, whose eloping with Helen precipitated the Greek attack on Troy, and Hector, the Trojan side's greatest warrior.

Nor Ilion's fall made level with the soil,
 8 Can yet suffice: but still continued rage
 Pursues our lines, and from the farthest seas

10 Doth chase the issues of destroyèd Troy.
 "O, no man happy, till his end be seen."
 12 If any flowing wealth and seeming joy
 In present years might make a happy wight,
 14 Happy was Hecuba, the woefullest wretch

That ever lived to make a mirror of;
 16 And happy Priam with his noble sons;
 And happy I, till now alas, I see
 18 And feel my most unhappy wretchedness. –
 Behold, my lords, read you this letter here;
 20 Lo, it contains the ruin of our realm
 If timely speed provide not hasty help.
 22 Yet, O ye gods, if ever woeful king
 Might move you kings of kings, wreak it on me

24 And on my sons, not on this guiltless realm:
 Send down your wasting flames from wrathful skies,
 26 To reave me and my sons the hateful breath.

Read, read, my lords; this is the matter why
 28 I called you now to have your good advice.

30 *The Letter from Dordan*
the Counsellor of the Elder Prince.
 32
 34 *Eubulus readeth the letter.*

My sovereign lord, what I am loath to write
 36 But loathest am to see, that I am forced
 By letters now to make you understand.
 38 My lord Ferrex, your eldest son, misled
 By traitorous fraud of young untemperèd wits,

40 Assembleth force against your younger son;
 Ne can my counsel yet withdraw the heat
 42 And furious pangs of his enflamèd head.
 Disdain, saith he, of his inheritance,
 44 Arms him to wreak the great pretended wrong
 With civil sword upon his brother's life.
 46 If present help does not restrain this rage,
 This flame will waste your sons, your land, and you.
 48
 Your Majesty's faithful and most

7: "nor the razing of Ilion to the ground"; **Ilion** is an alternate name for Troy.

= lines of descent, ie. families; we note that the 1565 quarto here prints **lives**, which is accepted by some later editors.

= descendants, ie. the British.

= individual, person.

= Priam's wife, and a princess of the royal family of the nation of Phrygia.¹⁰

= example.¹⁶

23: **move** = affect, touch.

kings of kings = ie. the gods.

wreak it = "visit or vent your anger".

= Gorboduc does not want the citizens to suffer from the punishment of the gods, as in a civil war.

26: "to kill me and my sons".

reave = rob, take away from.¹

39: the sense is, "by the traitorous and deceiving advice of hot-headed young counselors."

untemperèd = immoderate.

wits = refers in a combined sense to a group of people and their faculty of thinking.¹

= **saith** is pronounced in a single syllable.

44: "leads him to avenge this falsely alleged harm".¹

50	humble subject, Dordan.	
52	Aros. O king, appease your grief and <u>stay</u> your <u>plaint</u> :	53: "assuage your grief and put off (<i>stay</i>) your lamenting (<i>plaint</i>)."
54	Great is the matter and a woeful case; But timely knowledge may bring timely help.	
56	Send for them both unto your presence here: The reverence of your honour, age, and state,	
58	Your grave advice, the awe of father's name, Shall quickly knit again this broken peace.	
60	And if in either of my lords your sons Be such untamèd and unyielding pride,	
62	As will not bend unto your noble <u>hests</u> ;	= commands. ¹⁶
	If Ferrex the elder son <u>can bear no peer</u> ,	= cannot tolerate coexisting with another of equal rank. Note that line 63 contains an extra 11th syllable; perhaps Ferrex should be pronounced in a single syllable: <i>Fer'x</i> .
64	Or Porrex not content, aspires to more Than you him gave, above his native right;	
66	Join with the juster side, so shall you force Them to agree, and hold the land <u>in stay</u> .	= under control. ¹
68		
70	<i>Enter Philander.</i>	
72	Eubu. What meaneth this? Lo, yonder comes in haste Philander from my lord your younger son.	
74	Gorb. The gods send joyful news.	
76	Phil. The mighty Jove Preserve your majesty, O noble king.	
78	Gorb. Philander, welcome; but how doth my son?	
80	Phil. Your son, sir, lives; and healthy I him left: But yet, O king, <u>this want of lustful health</u>	= ie. "your lack of vigorous health".
82	Could not be half so grievful to your grace As these most wretched tidings that I bring.	
84	Gorb. Oh <u>heavens</u> , yet more? no end of woes to me?	= heaven(s) is sometimes pronounced, as here, in a single syllable, with the <i>v</i> essentially omitted (<i>hea'ns</i>), though more often it is disyllabic.
86	Phil. <u>Tyndar</u> , O king, came lately from the court	= Tyndar , we remember, is Porrex's sycophantic advisor; it was he who convinced Porrex to prepare for war against his brother, whom Tyndar reported was building an army to use against Porrex.
90	Of Ferrex, to my lord your younger son, And made report of great preparèd store Of war, and saith that it is wholly meant Against Porrex, <u>for high disdain that he</u>	= ie. "out of Ferrex's disdain for Porrex who".
92	Lives now a king and <u>egal</u> in degree With him that claimeth to succeed the whole, As by due title of descending right.	= equal.
94	Porrex is now so set on flaming fire, Partly with kindled rage of cruèl wrath,	
96		

98 Partly with hope to gain a realm thereby,
 That he in haste prepareth to invade
 100 His brother's land, and with unkindly war
 Threatens the murder of your elder son;
 102 Ne could I him persuade, that first he should
 Send to his brother to demand the cause;
 104 Nor yet to you, to stay his hateful strife.
Wherefore, sith there no more I can be heard,
 106 I come myself now to inform your grace,
 And to beseech you, as you love the life
 108 And safety of your children and your realm,
 Now to employ your wisdom and your force,
 110 To stay this mischief ere it be too late.

112 **Gorb.** Are they in arms? would he not send to me?
 Is this the honour of a father's name?
 114 In vain we travail to assuage their minds:
 As if their hearts, whom neither brother's love,
 116 Nor father's awe, nor kingdom's cares can move,

Our counsels could withdraw from raging heat.
 118 Jove slay them both, and end the cursèd line!
 For though, perhaps, fear of such mighty force
 120 As I, my lords, joined with your noble aids,
 May yet raise, shall repent their present heat;
 122 The secret grudge and malice will remain,
 The fire not quenched, but kept in close restraint,
 124 Fed still within, breaks forth with double flame:
 Their death and mine must pease the angry gods.

126 **Phil.** Yield not, O king, so much to weak despair:
 128 Your sons yet live; and long, I trust, they shall.
 If Fates had taken you from earthly life,
 130 Before beginning of this civil strife,
 Perhaps your sons in their unmastered youth,
 132 Loose from regard of any living wight,
 Would run on headlong, with unbridled race,
 134 To their own death, and ruin of this realm.
 But sith the gods, that have the care for kings,
 136 Of things and times dispose the order so,
 That in your life this kindled flame breaks forth,
 138 While yet your life, your wisdom, and your power,
 May stay the growing mischief, and repress
 140 The fiery blaze of their enkindled heat;
 It seems, and so ye ought to deem thereof,
 142 That loving Jove hath tempered so the time
 Of this debate to happen in your days,
 144 That you yet living may the same appease,
 And add it to the glory of your latter age,

= unnatural.

= delay.

= in consequence of which.¹ = since.

= stop.

= strive. = mollify.¹⁶

116: *father's awe* = ie. reverence for their father.

kingdom's cares = worries or anxieties over their kingdoms.

= advice.

119-124: "even if (*though*) we can raise our own army and use it to force the boys to stand down, it will not solve the root of the problem, which is their mutual envy and malice, for it will remain simmering below the surface, only to break forth sooner or later again into open war."

= "will be necessary to appease"; both *pease* and *appease* were in use by the early 14th century.¹

127-8: Philander pleads with the king not to project an inevitable tragic ending to the unfolding situation.

129-130: another rhyming couplet appears in the blank verse here.

132: free from the close attention of any person (*wight*) with authority over them

= check, cut off.

= "think about it this way".

= Jove, who is full of love.

= ie. "while you are still alive".

= old age.

Line 145 appears to have 12 syllables; Morley²² suggests pronouncing *add it to the* "swiftly" in two syllables: *add 't 't the*. Cunliffe suggests the extra foot was simply added by

146 And they your sons may learn to live in peace.
 Beware, O king, the greatest harm of all,
 148 Lest by your wailful complaints your hastened death
 Yield larger room unto their growing rage:

150 Preserve your life, the only hope of stay.
 And if your highness herein list to use
 152 Wisdom or force, counsel or knightly aid,
 Lo we, our persons, powers and lives are yours:
 154 Use us till death; O king, we are your own.

156 **Eubu.** Lo here the peril that was erst foreseen,

When you, O king, did first divide your land,
 158 And yield your present reign unto your sons,
 But now, O noble prince, now is no time
 160 To wail and plain, and waste your woeful life;

Now is the time for present good advice –
 162 Sorrow doth dark the judgment of the wit.

“The heart unbroken, and the courage free
 164 From feeble faintness of bootless despair,
 Doth either rise to safety or renown
 166 By noble valour of unvanquished mind;
 Or yet doth perish in more happy sort.”
 168 Your grace may send to either of your sons
 Someone both wise and noble personage,
 170 Which with good counsel, and with weighty name
 Of father, shall present before their eyes
 172 Your hest, your life, your safety and their own,
 The present mischief of their deadly strife:
 174 And in the while, assemble you the force
 Which your commandment, and the speedy haste
 176 Of all my lords here present can prepare.
 The terror of your mighty power shall stay
 178 The rage of both, or yet of one least.

180 *Enter Nuntius.*

182 **Nunt.** O king, the greatest grief that ever prince did hear,
 That ever woeful messenger did tell,
 184 That ever wretched land hath seen before,
 I bring to you: Porrex your younger son,
 186 With sudden force invaded hath the land
 That you to Ferrex did allot to rule;
 188 And with his own most bloody hand he hath
 His brother slain, and doth possess his realm.
 190

accident. The trend in modern editions of the old plays is to counsel that there is no reason to try to "fix" irregular lines.

148-9: Philander worries the king might die sooner than his appointed time, basically from a broken heart.
wailful complaints = sorrowful laments.¹

= the sense is "control" or "preserving settled conditions".
 = wishes.

153-4: Philander, speaking for all the counsellors, pledges to do everything in his power to help the king - "just don't give up!"

= "see here". = earlier predicted: Eubulus refers to his own forecast that the kingdom would be ruined if Gorboduc retired and split Britain up.

= lament; *plaint* is the noun, referring to a lament, while *plain* could be either a verb (as used here) or a noun.¹

= cloud. = intellect.

163-7: "a heart not weighed down by useless (*bootless*) despair will prevail, and result in either security and honour (*renown*), or death in a more fortunate manner (*happy sort*)." We note that *renown* was a frequently used alternate form of *renown*.

= commands.

= ie. an army.

= control or cut off.

= messenger.

182-9: Nuntius' Message: note that Philander had only moments ago arrived to tell the king that the two brothers had raised armies; now, just minutes later, Porrex and Ferrex have already fought their war. In this technique called *Compression of Time*, multiple events that would necessarily

192 **Gorb.** O heavens! send down the flames of your revenge,
Destroy, I say, with flash of wreakful fire,
The traitor son, and then the wretched sire!

194 But let us go, that yet perhaps I may
196 Die with revenge, and pease the hateful gods.

[*Exeunt.*]

198 **Chorus.** The lust of kingdom knows no sacred faith,

200 No rule of reason, no regard of right,
202 No kindly love, no fear of Heaven's wrath:
But with contempt of gods, and man's despite,

204 Through bloody slaughter doth prepare the ways
To fatal sceptre, and accursèd reign:
206 The son so loathes the father's lingering days,

Ne dreads his hand in brother's blood to stain.

208 O wretched prince, ne dost thou yet record

210 The yet fresh murthers done within the land

Of thy forefathers, when the cruèl sword
212 Bereft Morgan his life with cousin's hand?

214 Thus fatal plagues pursue the guilty race,

Whose murderous hand, imbruèd with guiltless blood,
216 Asks vengeance still before the heavens' face,
With endless mischiefs on the cursèd brood.

218 The wicked child thus brings to woeful sire
220 The mournful plaints to waste his weary life;
Thus do the cruèl flames of civil fire
222 Destroy the parted reign with hateful strife:

224 And hence doth spring the well from which doth flow
The dead black streams of mournings, plaints, and woe.

END OF ACT III.

require days or weeks to occur *off-stage* take place within minutes of each other *on-stage*. This tactic hastens the pace of the story, heightening the play's drama.

= "father", meaning himself; another rhyming couplet has inserted itself in 192-3.

195: *pease* = appease.

hateful = full of hate; you can create your own Elizabethan adjective by attaching *-ful* to the end of any emotion (and I suppose any noun), and the result will mean "full of (emotion)".

= desire or greed for. Note that this Chorus is comprised of 4-line stanzas, each with a rhyme-scheme of *ab-ab*, before ending with a final rhyming couplet.

200: a spectacular bit of alliteration.

= familial.

= spite, malicious hate.³

206: the heir to the throne is resentful when the king his father lives too long.

= "nor fears".

= "can you not remember".¹⁶

= murders; *murther* remained the more commonly used form well into the 17th century. Note that *murderous*, however, was printed with its modern spelling in line 215.

212: see Act I.ii.166-7, for the note on *Morgan*.

214: Cunliffe suggests the line refers to the classical notion of an inescapable family curse.

= stained, defiled or steeped in.¹

= ie. his grieving father.

ACT IV.

THE ORDER AND SIGNIFICATION OF THE DUMB SHOW BEFORE THE FOURTH ACT.

1 First the music of howbies begins to play, during
2 which there comes forth from under the stage, as
though out of hell, three Furies, Alecto, Megera and
4 Ctisiphone, clad in black garments sprinkled with
blood and flames, their bodies girt with snakes, their
6 heads spread with serpents instead of hair, the one
bearing in her hand a snake, the other a whip, and the
8 third a burning firebrand, each driving before them a
king and a queen, which, moved by Furies, unnaturally
10 had slain their own children. The names of kings and
queens were these, Tantalus, Medea, Athamas, Ino,
12 Cambyses, Althea; after that the Furies and these pass
about the stage thrice, they depart, and then the music
14 ceases.
16 Hereby is signified the unnatural murders to
follow: that is to say, Porrex slain by his own mother,
and King Gorboduc and Queen Videna killed by their
18 own subjects.

= alternate spelling for *hautboys*; a *hautboy* is a double-reed musical instrument, similar to the oboe.^{1,2} Cunliffe suggests that the hautboys might have provided a "weird squealing" sound appropriate for the appearance of the Furies (p. 299).

= ie. through a trap door; such stage effects were very popular in the Elizabethan era.

3-8: *three Furies...firebrand* = see the note after line 18 below.

= encircled.¹

= piece of burning wood used as a torch.¹

= urged or incited.

10-12: *The names...Althea* = see the note after line 18 below.

3-8: *three Furies...firebrand* = the *Furies* were three goddesses whose job it was to follow and torment those who committed such serious crimes as murder of one's kin or breaches of faith and duty. *Alecto* was the never-tiring prosecutor, *Megera* was the "grim", and *Ctisiphone*, the "avenger of murder". The ladies were imagined to be dressed in black and with hair of snakes, and sometimes with wings. Each carried an object with her, either a weapon, a torch, or a snake (see Murray, pp. 189-190).^{8,11}

10-12: *The names...Althea* = the authors have listed a number of famous mythological characters who committed terrible crimes against their own families:

Tantalus = an alternate story told of *Tantalus* (compare the one described at Act II.i.19) had Tantalus inviting the gods to a feast. To test their alleged powers of perception, he killed, cooked, and served them his son Pelops. Needless to say, they noticed (Murray, p. 243).¹¹

Medea = the witch *Medea* had a number of gruesome stories told about her. In Euripides' play about Medea, she kills her children with Jason (of Jason and the Golden Fleece) to get revenge on him when he decides to leave her to marry a princess.

Athamas and *Ino* = *Athamas* was the husband of *Ino*, the daughter of Cadmus, the founder and king of Thebes. The

ACT IV, SCENE I.

A Room in the Palace.

Enter Videna sola.

1 **Viden.** Why should I live, and linger forth my time
2 In longer life to double my distress?
O me, most woeful wight, whom no mishap
4 Long ere this day could have bereavèd hence.

6 Mought not these hands by fortune or by fate
Have pierced this breast, and life with iron reft?

8 Or in this palace here, where I so long
Have spent my days, could not that happy hour

10 Once, once have hap'd, in which these hugy frames
With death by fall might have oppressèd me?
Or should not this most hard and cruèl soil,
12 So oft where I have pressed my wretched steps,

couple were devoted to worshiping Dionysus, to the point where it caused Hera (the queen of the gods) to become furious with jealousy. She ordered one of the Furies, Tisiphone, to punish them by driving them mad. Tisiphone, wearing a "dress of serpents", proceeded to cause Athamas and Ino to go insane by throwing snakes, whose poison worked on their minds but not their bodies, upon them. Now mad, Athamas smashed their son against a wall, and Ino threw herself into the sea, while Hera laughed at the whole scene (Humphries, pp. 94-99).¹³

Cambyses = the Greek historian Herodotus told a number of stories about **Cambyses**, son of the famous Persian ruler Cyrus the Great, and the successor to Cyrus. Driven mad in punishment for his having killed the sacred Egyptian cow known as Apis, Cambyses had his full brother Smerdis killed, then married and subsequently killed his younger sister.¹⁴

Althea = **Althea** was queen of Calydon. When her son Meleager was born, she was warned by one of the Fates that her son would live only so long as a particular piece of firewood remained unconsumed by fire. To keep him alive forever, Althea hid the log. Later in life, after Meleager had killed his uncles - Althea's brothers - during a war, she burnt the firebrand in revenge, causing Meleager's immediate death.⁸

Authorship: we note that the remainder of the play was written by Sackville, which Cunliffe calls "distinctly fresher and more dramatic" than the first three acts, which were authored by Norton.

The Scene: the entire scene is comprised of a soliloquy by Queen Videna.

3-4: "oh pitiful me, whom some calamity has not prior to today taken away from here, ie. taken my life."

wight = person.

mishap = misfortune.

ere this day = before today.

bereaved hence = taken or snatched away from here.¹

5-6: "why couldn't fate or fortune have arranged for my own hands to rob me of my own life by piercing my breast with an iron instrument?"

mought = archaic form of "might".

life with iron reft = "taken away my own life with an iron instrument, ie. a dagger?"

= fortunate. Smith notes the wordplay between **happy** in this line and **hap'd** in the next.

= happened. = vast structures,³ ie. immense walls.

= crushed.¹

Sometime had ruth of mine accursèd life,
 14 To rend in twain [and] swallow me therein?
 So had my bones possessèd now in peace
 16 Their happy grave within the closèd ground,
 And greedy worms had gnawn this pinèd heart
 18 Without my feeling pain: so should not now
 This living breast remain the ruthful tomb
 20 Wherein my heart yelden to death is graved:

Nor dreary thoughts with pangs of pining grief,
 22 My doleful mind had not afflicted thus. –
 O my belovèd son! O my sweet child!
 24 My dear Ferrex, my joy, my life's delight!
 Is my belovèd son, is my sweet child,
 26 My dear Ferrex, my joy, my life's delight,
 Murdered with cruèl death? O hateful wretch!
 28 O heinous traitor both to Heaven and earth!
 Thou Porrex, thou this damnèd deed hast wrought;
 30 Thou Porrex, thou shall dearly bye the same:
 Traitor to kin and kind, to sire and me,
 32 To thine own flesh, and traitor to thyself:
 The gods on thee in hell shall wreak their wrath,
 34 And here in earth this hand shall take revenge
 On thee, Porrex, thou false and caitiff wight:
 36 If after blood so eager were thy thirst,
 And murderous mind had so possessèd thee;
 38 If such hard heart of rock and stony flint
 Lived in thy breast, that nothing else could like
 40 Thy cruèl tyrant's thought but death and blood:
 Wild savage beasts, mought not their slaughter serve
 42 To feed thy greedy will, and in the midst
 Of their entrails to stain thy deadly hands
 44 With blood deserved, and drink thereof thy fill?
 Or if nought else but death and blood of man
 46 Mought please thy lust, could none in Britain land
 Whose heart be torn out of his loving breast
 48 With thine own hand, or work what death thou wouldst,
 Suffice to make a sacrifice to pease
 50 That deadly mind and murderous thought in thee,
 But he who in the self-same womb was wrapped
 52 Where thou in dismal hour receivèdst life?
 Or if needs, needs this hand must slaughter make,
 54 Moughtest thou not have reached a mortal wound,
 And with thy sword have pierced this cursèd womb
 56 That the accursèd Porrex brought to light,
 And given me a just reward therefore?
 58 So Ferrex yet sweet life mought have enjoyed,
 And to his agèd father comfort brought,
 60 With some young son in whom they both might live.

But whereunto waste I this ruthful speech,
 62 To thee that hast thy brother's blood thus shed?
 Shall I still think that from this womb thou sprong?

= "pity on my". The use of *mine* for *my* was common until the end of the 18th century.¹
 = split apart.
 = would have.
 = wasted with grief.²
 = pitiful.
 = yielded. = buried. The old use of *grave* as a verb was still common in the Elizabethan era.¹
 = wasting.²
 = grieving, full of sorrow.¹

26: the repetition of line 24 here is no doubt a printer's error.

= worked, brought about.
 = pay or atone for.³
 = family and nature. = ie. "your father and mother".
 = avenge.
 = wretched creature.^{2,5}
 = sharp.⁴
 = satisfy, please.²

41-44: basically, "couldn't you satisfy your bloodlust with hunting?"
mought = might.

= nothing.
 = ie. "satisfy your bloodlust".
 = appease.
 = ie. Ferrex.
 = "(that) inauspicious".
 = it was a common Elizabethan motif to suggest that people "lived on" in some sense through their descendants.
 61: ie. "but why am I wasting my pitiful breath?"
 63: "sprang", a common alternate form.

64 That I thee bear? or take thee for my son?
No, traitor, no: I thee refuse for mine;
66 Murderer, I thee renounce, thou are not mine:
Never, O wretch, this womb conceivèd thee,
68 Nor never bode I painful throes for thee.

Changeling to me thou art, and not my child,

70 Nor to no wight that spark of pity knew:
Ruthless, unkind, monster of nature's work,
72 Thou never sucked the milk of woman's breast,
But from thy birth the cruël tiger's teats
74 Have nursèd thee, nor yet of flesh and blood
Formed is thy heart, but of hard iron wrought;
76 And wild and desert woods bred thee to life.
But canst thou hope to 'scape my just revenge?
78 Or that these hands will not be wroke on thee?
Dost thou not know that Ferrex' mother lives,
80 That lovèd him more dearly then herself?
And doth she live, and is not venged on thee?
82

Exit Videna.

ACT IV, SCENE II.

The Court of Gorboduc.

Enter Gorboduc and Arostus.

1 **Gorb.** We marvel much whereto this lingering stay

2 Falls out so long: Porrex unto our court,
By order of our letters is returned:

4 And Eubulus received from us by hest

6 At his arrival here, to give him charge
Before our presence straight to make repair,
And yet we have no word whereof he stays.

8 **Aros.** Lo where he comes, and Eubulus with him.

Enter Eubulus and Porrex.

12 **Eubu.** According to your highness' hest to me,
14 Here have I Porrex brought, even in such sort

= "endured",³ from the verb *bide*.

= fairies were said to sometimes steal an attractive child and replace it with a repellant or stupid one, called a *changeling*.¹

= person.

= unnatural.

= made.

= avenged (past tense of *wreak*).⁹

Entering Characters: *Arostus*, we remember, was the advisor who agreed with Gorboduc that the king should retire and split Britain between his two sons.

1: **We** = Gorboduc employs the plural royal "we".
whereto = for what purpose, why.¹
lingering stay = long delay.

3: ie. Porrex, responding to Gorboduc's command, has returned to his father's court.

4-7: ie. Eubulus was instructed to bring Porrex to Gorboduc's presence immediately on his arrival, but the king has not heard from either of them.

hest = command.

= ie. "to instruct Porrex".

= ie. come.

= "why he is delayed so."

= look, behold.

= Cauthen suggests "condition" (p. 49).

16 As from his wearied horse he did alight,
For that your grace did will such haste therein.

18 **Gorb.** We like and praise this speedy will in you,
To work the thing that to your charge we gave. –
20 Porrex, if we so far should swerve from kind,
And from those bounds which law of nature sets,
22 As thou hast done by vile and wretched deed,
In cruël murder of thy brother's life;
24 Our present hand could stay no lenger time,
But straight should bathe this blade in blood of thee
26 As just revenge of thy detested crime.
No; we should not offend the law of kind

28 If now this sword of ours did slay thee here:
For thou hast murdered him, whose heinous death
30 Even nature's force doth move us to revenge
By blood again; but justice forceth us
32 To measure death for death, thy due desert:

Yet sith thou art our child, and sith as yet

34 In this hard case what word thou canst allege
For thy defense, by us hath not been heard,
36 We are content to stay our will for that
Which justice bids us presently to work;
38 And give thee leave to use thy speech at full,
If ought thou have to lay for thine excuse.

40 **Porr.** Neither, O king, I can or will deny,
42 But that this hand from Ferrex life hath reft:
Which fact how much my doleful heart doth wail,
44 O! would it mought as full appear to sight
As inward grief doth pour it forth to me.
46 So yet perhaps, if ever ruthful heart
Melting in tears within a manly breast,
48 Through deep repentance of his bloody fact,
If ever grief, if ever woeful man
50 Might move regret with sorrow of his fault,
I think the torment of my mournful case
52 Known to your grace, as I do feel the same,
Would force even Wrath herself to pity me.

54 But as the water troubled with the mud
Shews not the face which else the eye should see,
56 Even so your ireful mind with stirrèd thought
Cannot so perfectly discern my cause.

58 But this unhap, amongst so many heaps

= desire.

= Gorboduc continues to use the royal "we".
= responsibility.
20: ie. "if I was to behave in such an unnatural manner".

= hold back, delay. = archaic form of *longer*.
= Gorboduc gestures to or raises his sword here.

27: *No* = the sense is "indeed no".
should not = ie. would not.
kind = nature or familial relationships.

= ie. repay.

33-39: only because Porrex is Gorboduc's own son will the king give him a chance to explain his actions.
sith = since; line 33's first *sith* appears in the 1570 quarto as *sithens*, which we emend to 1565's *sith* for the sake of the meter.

= restrain, delay. = desire. = ie. his killing Porrex.

= permission.
= anything.

= bad deed.
44-45: ie. "if only you could see the grief I genuinely feel inside."
= "a compassionate".

= deed.

= *Wrath*, in whom pity would normally be absent, is personified.
54-55: ie. muddy water does not show a reflection.

= full of ire (not surprisingly!), angry.
= clearly. = ie. "perceive why I did this act."

58: *unhap* = misfortune, probably archaic by this time; *unhap* was generally being replaced by *mishap* in the 1560's.
so many heaps = the sense is "such a multitude (of

60 I must content me with, most wretched man,
That to myself I must reserve my woe,
In pinning thoughts of mine accursèd fact:
62 Since I may not show here my smallest grief,
Such as it is, and as my breast endures,
64 Which I esteem the greatest misery
Of all mishaps that fortune now can send.
66 Not that I rest in hope with plaints and tears
Should purchase life; for to the gods I clepe
68 For true recórd of this my faithful speech;

Never this heart shall have the thoughtful dread
70 To die the death that by your grace's doom,

By just desert, shall be pronounced to me:
72 Nor never shall this tongue once spend this speech

Pardon to crave, or seek by suit to live.

74 I mean not this, as though I were not touched
With care of dreadful death, or that I held

76 Life in contempt: but that I know the mind
Stoops to no dread, although the flesh be frail:
78 And for my guilt, I yield the same so great,
As in myself I find a fear to sue
80 For grant of life.

82 **Gorb.** In vain, O wretch, thou shew'st
A woeful heart; Ferrex now lies in grave,
84 Slain by thy hand.

86 **Por.** Yet this, O father, hear:
And then I end: your majesty well knows
88 That when my brother Ferrex and myself

By your own hest were joined in governance
90 Of this your grace's realm of Britain land,
I never sought nor travailed for the same;
92 Nor by myself, nor by no friend I wrought,
But from your highness' will alone it sprong,
94 Of your most gracious goodness bent to me,
But how my brother's heart even than repined
96 With swoll'n disdain against mine egal rule,

misfortunes)"; even though *many heaps* may be redundant, as *heaps* alone means "a large quantity",¹ the expression became a common one.

= wasting. = act.

= ie. can expect. = wailing or lamenting.
= "save (my)". = call or appeal^{3,16} (archaic).
= **record** as a noun was often stressed on the second syllable.

= full of thought, ie. anxious.¹⁶

70: *your grace's* = *your grace* was a title used to address the members of the royal family in England until the time of Henry VIII, but subsequently only used for dukes and duchesses.¹

doom = judgment.

72: **Nor never** = double negatives were used as intensifiers in the Elizabethan era.

spend = expend.
= petition or act of begging.

74-75: **I mean...death** = ie. "in refusing to beg for my life, I don't mean to suggest that I have no worry or fear over dying".

= ie. "my".

41-80: **Porrex's speech**: Porrex has approached his father the right way: he admits his guilt, offers no excuse, and gladly submits himself to his father's judgment, and he is willing to accept the punishment he deserves.

88-94: Porrex reminds his father that he never asked or sought to be given his own kingdom to reign over, but that Gorboduc instead gave it to him out of benevolence alone.

= strived to gain.
= ie. acted through.
= sprang.
= directed at or inclined towards.
= complained, felt discontent over.
= "my equal reign or kingship".

98 Seeing that realm which by descent should grow
Wholly to him, allotted half to me?
Even in your highness' court he now remains,
100 And with my brother then in nearest place,
Who can record what proof thereof was shewed,
102 And how my brother's envious heart appeared.

Yet I that judgèd it my part to seek
104 His favour and good-will, and loath to make
Your highness know the things which should have brought
106 Grief to your grace, and your offence to him,
Hoping my earnest suit should soon have won
108 A loving heart within a brother's breast,
Wrought in that sort, that for a pledge of love

110 And faithful heart he gave to me his hand.
This made me think that he had banished quite
112 All rancour from his thought, and bare to me
Such hearty love, as I did owe to him:
114 But after once we left your grace's court,
And from your highness' presence lived apart,
116 This egal rule still, still, did grudge him so,

118 That now those envious sparks which erst lay raked
In living cinders of dissembling breast,
Kindled so far within his heart disdain,

120 That longer could he not refrain from proof
Of secret practice to deprive me life

122 By poison's force; and had bereft me so,

124 If mine own servant, hirèd to this fact,
And moved by troth with hate to work the same,
In time had not bewrayed it unto me.

126 When thus I saw the knot of love unknit,
All honest league and faithful promise broke,
128 The law of kind and troth thus rent in twain,
His heart on mischief set, and in his breast
130 Black treason hid; then, then, did I despair
That ever time could win him friend to me:
132 Then saw I how he smiled with slaying knife
Wrapped under cloak; then saw I deep deceit
134 Lurk in his face, and death prepared for me:

99-102: this is an assertion, not a question: "as we speak, there is a man in your court (presumably meaning Dordan) who was with Ferrex and can reveal to you the envy and malice that was in his heart."

103-09: *Yet I...that sort* = "yet I did not want to be the one to upset you by telling you the evil things Ferrex did, but rather I sought my brother out to try to regain his love for me."

= worked in that manner, ie. approached his brother in this way.

110-113: *he gave...to him* = Porrex suggests that he and Ferrex appeared to be on amicable terms when they departed the court to take over their respective kingdoms.

116: *still* = always.

did grudge him = caused him to be discontented; this interesting use of *grudge* as a verb lingered on throughout the 19th century.¹

117-9: Smith identifies a custom (called *raking a fire*) of keeping a fire alive at night by covering it with ashes or cinders.¹⁶ Porrex's point is that like a fire quietly smoldering underneath raked ashes, resentment lingered in Ferrex's heart even as he made an outward show of amity towards his brother.

erst = first.

raked = covered.¹

= plot.

122: *By poison's force* = now Porrex claims that Ferrex was going to poison him!

had bereft me so = "would have in fact robbed me of my life".

= ie. Tyndar. = here disyllabic: *HI-red*.

= "loyalty (to me)".

= ie. "exposed (*bewrayed*) Ferrex's plans to kill me".

= untied, unraveled.¹

= alliance.

= loyalty. = torn apart.

132-3: *Then saw...cloak* = a nice metaphorical image of false friendship.

<p>Even nature moved me then to hold my life</p> <p>136 More dear to me than his, and <u>bad this hand</u>, Since by his life my death must needs ensue,</p> <p>138 And by his death my life to be preserved, To shed his blood, and seek my safety so;</p> <p>140 And wisdom willèd me, without <u>protract</u>, In speedy <u>wise</u> to put <u>the same in ure</u>.</p> <p>142 Thus have I told the cause that movèd me To work my brother's death, and so I yield</p> <p>144 My life, my death, to judgment of your grace.</p>	<p>135-6: <i>Even nature...than his</i> = "I naturally felt it more important to preserve my life, even if it was at the expense of his".</p> <p>= bade, ie. enjoined.² = Porrex raises his right, or sword, hand.</p> <p>= delay.³</p> <p>= way. = ie. his plan to kill Ferrex. = into action.¹</p> <p>86-144: Porrex's speech: we can never know how genuine Porrex's contrition really is; but we may suspect that Porrex is gambling that Gorboduc will be unwilling to execute his only remaining son, no matter how angry or upset he is over Porrex's murder of Ferrex; Porrex first thought of this line of reasoning in Act II.ii.66-68.</p>
<p>146 Gorb. Oh cruël <u>wight</u>, should any cause prevail To make thee stain thy hands with brother's blood?</p> <p>148 But what of thee we will resolve to do</p> <p>Shall yet remain unknown: thou in the <u>mean</u> Shalt from our royal presence banished be, Until our princely pleasure <u>furder</u> shall To thee be showed; depart therefore our sight, Accursèd child!</p>	<p>= person.</p> <p>148-9: <i>But what...unknown</i> = "my decision over what to do about this situation will come at a later time".</p> <p>= meantime.</p> <p>= further.</p>
<p>154</p> <p style="text-align: right;">[Exit Porrex.]</p> <p>156</p> <p style="text-align: center;">What cruël destiny, 158 What <u>froward</u> fate hath <u>sorted us this chance</u>, That even <u>in those</u>, where we should comfort find, 160 Where our delight now in our agèd days Should rest and be, <u>even there our only</u> grief 162 And deepest sorrows to <u>abridge</u> our life, Most <u>pinning cares</u> and deadly thoughts do grow.</p>	<p>155: stage direction added by Smith.</p> <p>= contrary.² = "allotted to me this falling out of events".²</p> <p>= ie. "in those people".</p> <p>= the sense of this clause is simply "only".</p> <p>= cut short.</p> <p>= wasting or consuming anxieties.</p>
<p>164 Aros. <u>Your</u> grace should now, in these grave years of yours</p> <p>166 Have found <u>ere this</u> the price of mortal joys;</p> <p>How short they be; how fading here in earth; 168 How full of change; how brittle our <u>estate</u>; Of nothing sure, save only of the death 170 To whom both man and all the world doth owe Their end at last; neither shall nature's power 172 In <u>other sort</u> against your heart prevail, Than as the naked hand whose stroke <u>assays</u> 174 The armèd breast where force doth <u>light</u> in vain.</p>	<p>165-6: a sentence of regret: Arostus is ruing the fact that now that he is in his old age, when he should able to live in ease and contentment, Gorboduc should discover the price that must be paid for any happiness we have on earth.</p> <p><i>Your</i> = read as "That your".</p> <p><i>ere this</i> = before now.</p> <p>= condition.</p>
<p>176 Gorb. Many can yield right grave and sage advice</p>	<p>= another way.</p> <p>= attempts (to pierce).</p> <p>= land or strike.</p> <p>176-182: Gorboduc is bitter and sarcastic in this speech.</p>

Of patient sprite to others wrapped in woe,

178 And can in speech both rule and conquer kind;

180 Who if by proof they might feel nature's force,
Would show themselves men as they are indeed,

Which now will needs be gods. But what doth mean

182 The sorry cheer of her that here doth come?

184 *Enter Marcella.*

186 **Marc.** O, where is ruth? or where is pity now?
Whither is gentle heart and mercy fled?

188 Are they exiled out of our stony breasts,
Never to make return? Is all the world

190 Drownèd in blood, and sunk in cruëlty?
If not in women mercy may be found,

192 If not, alas, within the mother's breast,
To her own child, to her own flesh and blood;

194 If ruth be banished thence; if pity there
May have no place; if there no gentle heart

196 Do live and dwell, where should we seek it then?

198 **Gorb.** Madam, alas, what means your woeful tale?

200 **Marc.** O silly woman I; why to this hour
Have kind and fortune thus deferred my breath

202 That I should live to see this doleful day?
Will ever wight believe that such hard heart

204 Could rest within the cruël mother's breast?
With her own hand to slay her only son?

206 But out, alas, these eyes beheld the same:
They saw the dreary sight, and are become

208 Most ruthful records of the bloody fact.
Porrex, alas, is by his mother slain,

210 And with her hand, a woeful thing to tell,
While slumb'ring on his careful bed he rests,

212 His heart stabbed in with knife is reft of life.

214 **Gorb.** O Eubulus, O, draw this sword of ours,
And pierce this heart with speed. O hateful light,

216 O loathsome life, O sweet and welcome death!

176-7: "it's easy for others to advise someone in despair to be patient".
sprite = spirit.

178: ie. "and can in doing so overcome distraught feelings with words alone."
kind = nature.

179-180 = ie. if those who breezily give others advice were to find themselves in a situation in which events had turned so brutally against them, they would show indeed that they are only men - that they are as weak in spirit or lacking in fortitude as any other mere mortal.

= ie. "who now act like gods." The idea is that only gods can be so superhuman as to be able to suppress such cripplingly strong emotions.

= sorrowful countenance or expression.¹⁶

Entering character: *Marcella* is a noble woman serving as Queen Videna's lady-in-waiting, a position of honour.

= mercy or pity.
= to where.

= from there.

= foolish or weak.
= nature. = "prolonged my life".¹

= humanity.

= an exclamation of grief.¹
= gory or bloody, a very ancient meaning for *dreary*.¹
= witnesses.¹ = criminal deed.

= full of cares or worries.

184-212: **Marcella's Entrance and Speech:** here is another example of *Compression of Time*; Marcella's entrance and announcement that Videna has slain Porrex occurs a mere 22½ lines of speech after Porrex leaves the stage.

<p>218 Dear Eubulus, <u>work</u> this we thee beseech.</p> <p>220 Eubu. <u>Patient</u> your grace, perhaps he liveth yet, With wound received, but not of certain death.</p> <p>222 Gorb. O let us then <u>repair</u> unto the place, And see if Porrex live, or thus be slain.</p> <p>224 Marc. Alas, he liveth not! it is too true. 226 That with these eyes, of him a peerless prince, 228 Son to a king, and in the flower of youth, Even with a <u>twink</u> a <u>senseless stock</u> I saw.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">230 [Exeunt Gorboduc and Eubulus.]</p> <p>232 Aros. O damnèd deed!</p> <p>234 Marc. But hear his <u>ruthful</u> end: 236 The noble prince, pierced with the sudden wound, Out of his wretched slumber <u>hastely start</u>,</p> <p>Whose strength now failing, straight he <u>overthrew</u>, 238 When in the fall his eyes even now unclosed Beheld the queen, and cried to her for help. 240 We then, alas, the ladies which that time Did there attend, seeing that heinous deed, 242 And hearing him oft call the wretched name Of mother, and to cry to her for aid, 244 Whose direful hand gave him the mortal wound, Pitying (alas, for <u>nought</u> else could we do) 246 His ruthful end, ran to the woeful bed, <u>Dispoilèd straight his breast</u>, and all we might,</p> <p>248 Wipèd in vain with napkins next at hand The sudden streams of blood that flushèd fast 250 Out of the gaping wound. O, what a look! O, what a ruthful, steadfast eye, methought 252 He fixed upon my face, which to my death Will never part from me! when with a <u>braid</u>, 254 A <u>deep-fet</u> sigh he gave, and therewithal Clasping his hands, to Heaven he cast his sight; 256 And straight pale death pressing within his face, The flying <u>ghost</u> his mortal corpse forsook.</p> <p>258 Aros. Never did age bring forth so vile a <u>fact</u>!</p> <p>260 Marc. O hard and cruël <u>hap</u>, that thus assigned 262 Unto so worthy a <u>wight</u> so wretched end:</p> <p>But most hard cruël heart, that could <u>consent</u> 264 To lend the hateful destinies that hand, By which, alas, so heinous crime was wrought! 266 O queen of <u>adamant</u>! O marble breast! If not the <u>favour</u> of his <u>comely</u> face,</p>	<p>= do.</p> <p>= "be patient", a rare use of <i>patient</i> as a verb.¹</p> <p>= go.</p> <p>228: <i>twink</i> = a wink of an eye.¹ <i>stock</i> = a body shorn of the physical senses.¹</p> <p>230: stage direction added by Smith.</p> <p>= pitiful.</p> <p>= hastily or suddenly started;¹ <i>hastely</i>, an early form of <i>hastily</i>, is pronounced in two syllables. = fell down.¹⁶</p> <p>= "nothing".</p> <p>= "quickly stripped off his upper garment". <i>dispoiled</i> = undressed.¹⁶</p> <p>= start or sudden spasm.³ = ie. deeply felt.</p> <p>= spirit or soul.</p> <p>= deed.</p> <p>= fate.² 262: another line with an extra syllable; <i>a</i> can easily be removed if one wishes. <i>wight</i> = individual. = agree.³</p> <p>= legendary and oft-referred-to mineral of great hardness. = appearance.¹ = attractive, handsome.</p>
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268 If not his princely cheer and countenance,
His valiant active arms, his manly breast,
270 If not his fair and seemly personage,
His noble limbs, in such proportion cast
272 As would have rapt a silly woman's thought; –

If this mought not have moved thy bloody heart,
274 And that most cruël hand, the wretched weapon
Even to let fall, and kissed him in the face,

276 With tears for ruth to reave such one by death:
Should nature yet consent to slay her son?
278 O mother, thou to murder thus thy child?
Even Jove with justice must with lightning flames
280 From Heaven send down some strange revenge on thee. –
Ah, noble prince, how oft have I beheld
282 Thee mounted on thy fierce and trampling steed,
Shining in armour bright before the tilt,

284 And with thy mistress' sleeve tied on thy helm,

And charge thy staff to please thy lady's eye,
286 That bowed the head-piece of thy friendly foe?

How oft in arms on horse to bend the mace?

288 How oft in arms on foot to break the sword?
Which never now these eyes may see again.

290 *Aros.* Madam, alas, in vain these plaints are shed,
292 Rather with me depart, and help to suage
The thoughtful griefs that in the agèd king
294 Must needs by nature grow by death of this
His only son, whom he did hold so dear.

296 *Marc.* What wight is that which saw that I did see,
298 And could refrain to wail with plaint and tears?
Not I, alas, that heart is not in me:
300 But let us go, for I am grieved anew,
To call to mind the wretched father's woe.

302 [Exeunt.]

304 *Chorus.* When greedy lust in royal seat to reign

306 Hath reft all care of gods and eke of men,
And cruël heart, wrath, treason and disdain,
308 Within ambitious breast are lodgèd, then
Behold how mischief wide herself displays,

= molded.

= enraptured, captured the heart of. = foolish.

273-5: Marcella apostrophizes to the absent Videna here: she wonders how it was possible for the queen not to be moved to drop her weapon and shower kisses on her son's face, even after having stabbed him.

mought (line 273) = might.

= pity. = rob.

= jousting tournament; such elements of medieval romance described by Marcella throughout this speech are obviously anachronistic (Cauthen, p. 57).¹⁵

= helmet. The *sleeve* is attached to the helmet as a favour. Early sleeves, notes the OED, were separate articles of clothing which could be worn with or without a top.

= ie. level his lance (Cauthen, p. 57).¹⁵

= bent.³ = helmet.

= aim or direct his weapon.

mace = a heavy club, possibly with a metal, sometimes spiked, head.¹

= laments.

= allay, an alternate form of *assuage*.

= sorrowful.¹

305f: The final Chorus returns to the 6-line stanzas, except for the second stanza (lines 312-321), which has 10 lines.

lust = desire.

= robbed. = also.

310 And with the brother's hand the brother slays.
 312 When blood thus shed doth stain the Heaven's face
 Crying to Jove for vengeance of the deed,
 314 The mighty god even moveth from his place,
 With wrath to wreak; then sends he forth with speed
 316 The dreadful Furies, daughters of the night,
 With serpents girt, carrying the whip of ire,
 318 With heare of stinging snakes, and shining bright
 With flames and blood, and with a brand of fire:

320 These for revenge of wretched murder done,
 Do make the mother kill her only son.

322 Blood asketh blood, and death must death requite:
 324 Jove by his just and everlasting doom
 Justly hath ever so requited it;
 326 The times before record, and times to come
 Shall find it true, and so doth present proof
 328 Present before our eyes for our behoof.

330 O happy wight that suffers not the snare
 Of murderous mind to tangle him in blood;
 332 And happy he, that can in time beware
 By others' harms, and turn it to his good:
 334 But woe to him, that fearing not t' offend,
 Doth serve his lust, and will not see the end.

END OF ACT IV.

= work his vengeance.

315-8: the chorus returns to the image of the *Furies*, who corporeally appeared in the Dumb Show at the beginning of this Act; the sisters were sometimes described as daughters of the mythological god *Night*. Compare the descriptive language here with that of the Dumb Show, lines 3-8.

Line 317 has an extra syllable; perhaps *carrying* should be pronounced as a disyllable: *carr-ying*.

heare (line 318) = old variation of *hair*.

= repay.

= judgment.

= this word dating from the 13th century means "benefit".

= fortunate man.

= the sense is "learned from".

305-335: **Rhyming Words:** the fact that the lines in the Chorus were meant to rhyme is evidence of how the sounds of vowels have changed over the centuries; in 1565, the following pairs of words from the Chorus would have rhymed, or at least come much closer to rhyming than they do in modern English: *requite - it, doom - come, blood - good*.

ACT V.

THE ORDER AND SIGNIFICATION OF THE DUMB SHOW BEFORE THE FIFTH ACT.

1 First the drums and flutes begin to sound, during
2 which there comes forth upon the stage a company of
3 harquebusiers and of armed men, all in order of battle.
4 These, after their pieces discharge, and that the armed
5 men three times march about the stage, depart, and
6 then the drums and flutes cease.

7 Hereby is signified tumults, rebellions, arms and
8 civil wars to follow, as fell in the realm of Great Britain,
9 which by the space of fifty years and more, continued
10 in civil war between the nobility after the death of
11 King Gorboduc and of his issues, for want of certain

12 limitation in the succession of the crown, till the time
13 of Dunwallo Molmutius, who reduced the land to
14 monarchy.

ACT V, SCENE I.

*A Council of the King's Lords after the murder of
King and Queen.*

*Enter Clotyn, Mandud, Gwenard, Fergus
and Eubulus.*

1 *Clot.* Did ever age bring forth such tyrant's hearts?

= a *harquebus* was an early long gun, and a *harquebusier* was a soldier armed with such a weapon.¹

= for.

11: *issues* = children.

11-12: *want of certain limitation in* = ie. lack of provision for.¹

13-14: *Dunwallo...monarchy* = after the royal family had been completely wiped out, Britain succumbed to civil war "for a long space", eventually splitting into separate kingdoms. It was up to *Dunwallo Molmutius*, a prince of the royal family of Cornwall, to lead an army which defeated the other kings of Britain, and reunite the island under a single ruler (See Evans, p. 36-37).⁶

monarchy (line 14) = used here literally to indicate that Britain was returned to rule under a single king.

Setting: once again, important action has taken place off-stage between Acts: Gorboduc and Videna are dead, killed by outraged mobs.

Entering Characters: the first four named gentleman are dukes, the leading nobility of Britain.

Clotyn is the *Duke of Cornwall*, perhaps the south-west quadrant of England; Sugden²⁰ tells us that Cornwall actually remained an independent kingdom long after the rest of the isles had been captured by the Angles and other Dark Age tribes, not falling under the invaders' rule till the 10th century.

Mandud is the *Duke of Loegriss*, a region which comprises perhaps the central, east and south-east regions of Britain. The exact extent of all the dukes' lands is unclear; according to Geoffrey of Monmouth, the first British king Brute divided the island into three sections and allotted them to his three sons, the three realms being Loegria (the central part of the island, says Geoffrey), Camber (present day Wales) and Albany (modern Scotland).

Gwenard is the *Duke of Camberland*, which includes modern-day Wales at least.

Fergus is the *Duke of Albany*, which comprises modern Scotland.

<p>2 The brother hath bereft the brother's life; The mother she hath dyed her cruël hands 4 In blood of her own son, and now at last The people, lo, forgetting <u>troth</u> and love, 6 <u>Contemning</u> quite both law and loyal heart, Even they have slain their sovereign lord and queen. 8</p> <p>10 Mand. Shall this their traitorous crime unpunished <u>rest</u>? Even yet they cease not, carried out with rage, In their rebellious <u>roust</u>, to threaten still 12 A new bloodshed unto the prince's kin, To slay them all, and to uproot the <u>race</u> 14 Both of the king and queen, so are they <u>moved</u> With Porrex's death, wherein they falsely charge 16 The guiltless king without <u>desert</u> at all, And traitorously have murdered him therefore, 18 And <u>eke</u> the queen.</p> <p>20 Gwen. Shall subjects dare with force To work revenge upon their <u>prince's fact</u>? 22 Admit the worst that may, as sure in this The deed was foul, the queen to slay her son, 24 Shall yet the subject seek to take the sword, Arise against his lord, and slay his king? 26 O wretched state, where those rebellious hearts Are not <u>rent</u> out even from their living breasts, 28 And with the body <u>thrown onto the fowls</u> As carrion food, <u>for terror of</u> the rest. 30</p> <p>32 Ferg. There can no punishment be thought too great For this so grievous crime: let speed therefore Be used therein, for it <u>behooveth so</u>. 34</p> <p>36 Eubu. <u>Ye</u> all, my lords, I see, consent in one, And I as one consent with ye in all. I hold it more than <u>need</u>, with sharpest law 38 To punish this tumultuous bloody rage: For nothing more may shake the common state 40 Than <u>sufferance</u> of uproars without <u>redress</u>;</p> <p><u>Whereby how soon</u> kingdoms of mighty power, 42 After great conquests made, and flourishing In fame and wealth, have been to ruin brought; 44 I pray to Jove that we may rather <u>wail</u> Such <u>hap</u> in <u>them</u>, than witness in ourselves. 46 <u>Eke</u> fully with the duke my mind agrees,</p> <p>That no cause serves, whereby the subject may 48 Call to <u>accompt</u> the doings of his prince, Much less in blood by sword to work revenge,</p> <p>50 No more than may the hand cut off the head, In act nor speech, no: <u>not in secret thought</u> 52 The subject may rebel against his lord,</p>	<p>= loyalty. = scorning.</p> <p>= remain.</p> <p>= mobs.²</p> <p>= "(entire) family". = enraged.</p> <p>= ie. his deserving it.</p> <p>= also.</p> <p>= sovereign's acts.</p> <p>= torn. = the modern equivalent might be "thrown to the vultures". = "in order to scare".</p> <p>= is appropriate or necessary.</p> <p>= Eubulus uses ye in its old plural sense in addressing all of the dukes.</p> <p>= necessary.</p> <p>= toleration. = remedy, though the sense may be "punish- ment".¹ = in context, the sense is "we can see in history how some".</p> <p>= grieve over.² = occurrences.² = ie. "those other kingdoms only". = also.</p> <p>47-49: "that there is no action a sovereign can take, no matter how harmful or evil, that can be challenged by his subjects, or justify rebellion or acts of revenge." accompt = account.</p> <p>= ie. not even in his thoughts.</p>
--	---

	Or judge of him that sits in <u>Caesar's seat</u> ,	= ie. the sovereign's seat, or throne. Actually, the reference to <i>Caesar</i> is technically anachronistic (if such a word can be applied to what is legendary history), as the events of our play occurred before Caesar and the Romans first arrived in Britain in 55 B.C.
54	With <u>grudging</u> mind to damn those he dislikes.	= grumbling. ¹⁶ 47-54: we note that these lines are missing from the 1570 edition of the play, but appeared in the 1565 quarto. As Morley ²² suggests, the authors, in reprinting their play, must have decided the lines were too bold in their advice with respect to the prerogatives of a monarch. But other commentators have suggested the omission was accidental, or that Norton, who may have managed the printing of the 1570 edition, deliberately omitted the lines because he simply did not agree with their sentiment.
	Though kings forget to govern as they ought,	55: ie. "though a sovereign may not always rule with moderation as he should".
56	Yet subjects must obey as they are bound. But now, my lords, before ye farther wade,	57-62: Eubulus suggests that it is premature to discuss the punishment of the rebels; instead, the nobles need to first figure out how to end the violence.
58	Or spend your speech, what sharp revenge shall fall	
60	By justice' plague on these rebellious <u>wights</u> ;	= people.
62	Methinks, ye rather should first search the way By which in time, the rage of this uproar Mought be repressed, and these great tumults ceased.	
64	Even yet the life of Britain land doth hang In traitor's balance of <u>unequal</u> weight;	= unequal.
66	Think not, my lords, the death of Gorboduc, Nor yet Videna's blood will cease their rage:	
68	Even our own lives, our wives and children dear, Our country, <u>dearest</u> of all, in danger stands	= pronounce in one syllable, as <i>dear'st</i> .
70	Now to be spoiled; now, now made desolate, And by ourselves a conquest to ensue.	72: "and we shall also be conquered" (Smith, p. 80). 71: the sense is, "if you allow the people to act out their desires or inclinations".
72	For, give once sway unto the people's lusts,	= stop.
74	To rush forth on, and <u>stay</u> them not in time, And as the stream that rolleth down the hill,	
76	So will they headlong run with raging thoughts From <u>blood to blood</u> , from mischief unto <u>moer</u> ,	= ie. one violent, blood-spilling act to another. = more.
78	To ruin of the realm, themselves and all: So <u>giddy</u> are the common people's minds,	= fickle. ²
80	So glad of change, more wav'ring than the sea. Ye see, my lords, what strength these rebels have;	78: ie. the people don't know what they want.
82	What <u>hugy number</u> is assembled still: For though the traitorous <u>fact</u> for which they rose	= a large number. = deed.
84	Be <u>wrought</u> and done, yet <u>lodge they still in field</u> ;	82: wrought = the past tense of "work", referring to an action intended to bring about a certain result. lodge...field = the rebels have not gone home yet, though they have accomplished their initial goal of killing the king and queen.
	So that how far their furies yet will stretch	
84	Great cause we have to dread. That we may seek By present battle to repress their power,	

86	Speed must we use to <u>levy force</u> therefore; For either they forthwith will mischief work,	= raise an army.
88	Or their rebellious roars forthwith will cease: These violent things may have no lasting long.	
90	Let us therefore use this for present help:	90: "in the meantime, here is what we should do".
92	Persuade by gentle speech, and offer grace, With gift of pardon, save unto the chief,	91-92: offer a general pardon to all the rebels, except for the leaders; this was the typical approach taken by kings in all of the historical dramas of the era, such as in John Ford's <i>Perkin Warbeck</i> and Shakespeare's <i>Henry VI, Part II</i> , and <i>Richard III</i> .
94	And that upon condition that <u>forthwith</u> They yield <u>the captains of their enterprise</u>	= immediately. ¹ = ie. their leaders.
96	To <u>bear</u> such <u>guerdon</u> of their traitorous <u>fact</u> , As may be both due vengeance to themselves, And wholesome terror to posterity.	= ie. receive. = reward. = deeds.
98	This shall, I think, scatter the greatest part That now are holden with desire of home,	97: ie. "and as a warning to those in the future who may consider rebelling against their monarch."
100	Wearied in field with cold of winter's nights, And some, no doubt, stricken with dread of law.	98-101: this is great psychology on the part of Eubulus: having initially joined the rebellion in a fit of irrational frenzy, most of the rabble will quickly tire of the escapade, and will look for an excuse (in this case, a pardon) to go home.
102	When this is once proclaimed, it shall make The captains to mistrust the multitude,	102-4: a general pardon will in turn make the leaders of the rebellion less trusting of their followers, who they now realize have a strong incentive to turn them over to the royal army!
104	Whose safety bids them to betray their <u>heads</u> ;	heads = leaders, with perhaps a secondary reference to the heads the leaders can expect to lose.
106	And so much more, because the <u>rascal routs</u> , In things of great and perilous attempts, Are never trusty to the noble race.	= wretched rabble. 106-7: "when it comes to momentous and dangerous schemes, can never be trusted by their betters".
108	And while we <u>treat</u> and <u>stand on terms of grace</u> ,	108: ie. "so that by offering a general pardon". treat = negotiate. stand on terms of grace = "insist on the conditions of our offer".
110	We shall both <u>stay</u> their fury's rage the while, And <u>eke</u> gain time, whose only help sufficeth <u>Withouten</u> war to vanquish rebel's power.	= mollify. 110: eke = also. 110-1: whose only...power = "which will allow us to suppress the rebellion while preventing further bloodshed." withouten = without (archaic).
112	In the meanwhile, make you in readiness Such <u>band of horsemen</u> as ye may prepare:	= ie. a cavalry force.
114	Horsemen, you know, are not the common's strength, But are the force and store of noble men,	114-5: cavalry is always made up of noblemen, never of those of lower rank.
116	Whereby th' unchosen and unarmèd <u>sort</u> Of skillless rebels, whom none other power	= collection.
118	But number makes to be of dreadful force, With sudden brunt may quickly be oppressed.	117-8: whom none...force = the rabble, being untrained in war, is dangerous only because of its large numbers.

120	And if this gentle means of proffered grace, With stubborn hearts cannot so far avail	120: ie. "and if this offer of a general pardon".
122	As to assuage their desperate <u>courages</u> ,	= ambitions.
124	Than do I wish such slaughter to be made, As present age and eke posterity	
126	May be <u>adrad</u> with horror of revenge, That justly than shall on these rebels fall:	= archaic variation on <i>adread</i> , meaning "terrified". ¹
128	This is, my lords, the sum of mine advice.	
130	Clot. Neither this case admits debate at large; And though it did, this speech that hath been said Hath well abridged the tale I would have told.	129-131: "There is no time for a protracted debate; but even if there were, Eubulus has spoken so well that there is no need for me to go on at length just to agree with him."
132	Fully with Eubulus do I <u>consent</u> In all that he hath said: and if the same	= agree. ³
134	To you, my lords, may seem for best advice, I wish that it should straight be put <u>in ure</u> .	= into action. ²
136		
138	Mand. My lords, than let us presently depart, And follow <u>this</u> that <u>liketh</u> us so well.	= ie. this plan. = pleases. ²
140	[<i>Exeunt all except Fergus.</i>]	140: stage direction added by editor; Fergus' following speech is clearly a soliloquy.
142	Ferg. If ever time to gain a kingdom here Were offered man, now it is offered me.	
144	The realm is <u>reft</u> both of their king and queen;	= "robbed"; <i>reft</i> is the past tense of the verb <i>reave</i> , which appears, together with its cognate <i>bereave</i> , an even dozen times in this play. Interestingly, <i>reft</i> and <i>bereft</i> also appear a combined total of exactly a dozen times.
	The offspring of the <u>prince</u> is slain and dead:	= king; note also that <i>offspring</i> is treated as a singular word, with <i>is</i> .
146	No <u>issue</u> now remains: the heir unknown;	= children or descendants.
148	The people are in arms and mutinies; The nobles they are busied how to cease	
150	These great rebellious tumults and uproars; And Britain land now <u>desert</u> left alone,	= barren, or like a wilderness. ¹
152	Amid these broils uncertain where to rest, <u>Offers herself</u> unto that noble heart	= <i>Britain land</i> is personified.
154	That will or dare pursue to bear her crown. Shall I, that am the Duke of Albany,	154-5: according to Geoffrey, the Duke of Albany was directly descended from Albanactus, the son of Brute.
156	Descended from that line of noble blood, Which hath so long flourished in worthy fame	
158	Of valiant hearts, such as in noble breasts <u>Of right</u> should <u>rest</u> above the <u>baser</u> sort,	= by right. = ie. stand. = lower, meaner.
160	Refuse to <u>venture life</u> to win a crown?	= "risk my life".
162	Whom shall I find <u>emnies</u> that will withstand My <u>fact</u> herein, if I attempt by arms To seek the same now in these times of <u>broil</u> ?	160-2: "who would stand up against me should I take advantage of the instability in Britain to grab the crown for myself?" The duke seems to be trying to talk himself into seizing the moment. <i>emnies</i> = enemies; <i>enemy</i> sometimes was written beginning with <i>emn-</i> in this period, and fits the meter better here. <i>fact</i> = deed.

164 These dukes' power can hardly well appease
The people that already are in arms:

166 But if perhaps my force be once in field,
Is not my strength in power above the best
Of all these lords now left in Britain land?
168 And though they should match me with power of men,
Yet doubtful is the chance of battles joined:

170 If victors of the field we may depart,

Ours is the sceptre then of Great Britain;

172 If slain amid the plain this body lie,
Mine enemies yet shall not deny me this,
174 But that I died giving the noble charge,
To hazard life for conquest of a crown.
176 Forthwith therefore will I in post depart
To Albany, and raise in armour there
178 All power I can: and here my secret friends,
By secret practice shall solicit still,
180 To seek to win to me the people's hearts.

182 [Exit.]

ACT V, SCENE II.

A Council of the King's Lords.

Enter Eubulus.

1 **Eubu.** O Jove, how are these people's hearts abused?
2 What blind fury thus headlong carries them?
That though so many books, so many rolls

4 Of ancient time, record what grievous plagues
Light on these rebels aye, and though so oft
6 Their ears have heard their aged fathers tell
What just reward these traitors still receive,
8 Yea, though themselves have seen deep death and blood,
By strangling cord and slaughter of the sword
10 To such assigned, yet can they not beware;
Yet cannot stay their lewd rebellious hands:
12 But suffering, lo, foul treason to distain
Their wretched minds, forget their loyal heart,
14 Reject all truth, and rise against their prince.

broil = disturbances.¹

163-4: the sense is that the other dukes have so inadequate an army that they are not likely to be able to quell the rebellion on their own.

168-9: "Even if the other dukes' army is as large as my own, you can never tell who will win a battle"; Fergus tries to convince himself that the great reward is worth the risk of a major engagement against the others.

= with **we** in this line and **Ours** in the next, Fergus, employing with undue anticipation the royal "we", means "I" and "mine" respectively.

= needless to say, the use of the term **Great Britain** here is terribly anachronistic, not coming into use until the early part of the second millenium.¹

= "risk my life".

= immediately. = in haste.¹⁶

178: **all power** = ie. "as large an army as".

178-180: **and here...hearts** = remember that Fergus' home, Albany, is modern day Scotland; as Fergus heads way up north to raise an army, he will need partisans in the south to work to create a faction that will favour his bid for the throne.

= misled.

3-7: history records what terrible punishment is inevitably visited on rebels and traitors.

= descend on. = always.

= ie. punishment. = always.

= noose.

= halt. = base.³

= allowing. = disgrace.³

= ie. king.

16 A ruthful case, that those whom duty's bond,
Whom grafted law by nature, truth, and faith,
18 Bound to preserve their country and their king,
Born to defend their commonwealth and prince,
Even they should give consent thus to subvert
20 Thee, Britain land, and from thy womb should spring,
O native soil, those that will needs destroy
22 And ruin thee, and eke themselves in fine.
For lo, when once the dukes had offered grace
24 Of pardon sweet, the multitude, misled
By traitorous fraud of their ungracious heads,

26 One sort that saw the dangerous success
Of stubborn standing in rebellious war,
28 And knew the difference of prince's power
From headless number of tumultuous routs,
30 Whom common country's care, and private fear,
Taught to repent the terror of their rage,
32 Laid hands upon the captains of their band,
And brought them bound unto the mighty dukes:

34 And other sort, not trusting yet so well
The truth of pardon, or mistrusting more
36 Their own offense, than that they could conceive

Such hope of pardon for so foul misdeed;
38 Or for that they their captains could not yield,
Who fearing to be yielded, fled before,
40 Stale home by silence of the secret night:

The third unhappy and enraged sort
42 Of desperate hearts, who, stained in prince's blood,
From traitorous furor could not be withdrawn
44 By love, by law, by grace, ne yet by fear,
By proffered life, nay yet by threatened death;
46 With minds hopeless of life, dreadless of death,
Careless of country, and aweless of God,
48 Stood bent to fight as furies did them move,
With violent death to close their traitorous life.
50 These all by power of horsemen were oppressed,

And with revenging sword slain in the field,
52 Or with the strangling cord hanged on the tree;
Where yet their carrion carcasses do preach,
54 The fruits that rebels reap of their uproars,

And of the murder of their sacred prince. —
56 But lo, where do approach the noble dukes,
By whom these tumults have been thus appeased.

= pitiful.

= ie. "that even".

= "themselves as well in the end."¹

25: "by the treasonous deception of the mob's wicked leaders";¹ Creeth, however, suggests that **heads** refers to the individual brains of the members of the rabble, so that **ungracious heads** instead means "unsophisticated minds".

26-33: one group (**sort**) of rebels, recognizing that they were really nothing more than a disorderly mob (**tumultuous routs**), and also anxious for Britain as well as secretly fearful of the consequences of their actions, turned their leaders over to the nobles.
success (line 26) = aftermath.⁵
common country's care (line 30) = care for their country.

34-40: the leaders of a second portion of the rebels, no longer trusting their followers, ran away before the indecisive mob acted any further; the rebels then went home in turn themselves.

= give up.

= given up (to the authorities).

= stole (archaic).¹

41-49: the third part of the rebel armies kept on fighting.
unhappy = troublesome.¹

= ie. dissuaded.

= ie. saving their lives via a general pardon.

50: this last group of rebels was destroyed or overwhelmed (**oppressed**) by the government's army, which naturally fought from horseback. A small but skilled cavalry force will always defeat an untrained mob fighting on foot.

53-54: ie. their dead, swinging bodies speak a lesson to those who want to study what happens to rebels.

carrion carcasses = dead bodies which serve as food for vultures or other scavengers.

= ie. "here come".

58	<i>Enter Clotyn, Mandud, Gwenard, and Arostus.</i>	Entering Characters: notice that Fergus is missing!
60	Clot. I think the world will now at length beware, 62 And fear to put on arms against their prince.	
64	Mand. If not? those treacherous hearts that dare rebel, Let them behold the wide and <u>hugy</u> fields	= vast.
66	With blood and bodies spread with rebels slain, 68 The lofty trees clothed with the corpses dead, That, strangled with the cord, do hang thereon.	
70	Aros. A just reward, such as all times before Have ever <u>lotted</u> to those wretched folks.	= ie. allotted.
72	Gwen. But what means he that cometh here so fast?	= "but who is that hurrying towards us?"
74		
76	<i>Enter Nuntius.</i>	= another messenger.
78	Nunt. My lords, as duty and my truth doth move, And of my country work and care in me, That if the spending of my breath availed 80 To do the service that my heart desires, I would not shun t' embrace a present death; 82 So have I now in that wherein I thought My <u>travail</u> <u>mought</u> perform some good effect, 84 <u>Ventured</u> my life to bring these tidings here. Fergus, the mighty Duke of Albany, 86 Is now in arms, and lodgeth in the fields With twenty thousand men; <u>hither</u> he bends 88 His speedy march, and <u>minds</u> t' invade the crown: Daily he gathereth strength, and <u>spreads</u> abroad, 90 That to this realm no certain heir remains, That Britain land is left without a guide, 92 That he the sceptre seeks for nothing else But to preserve the people and the land, 94 Which now remain as ship without a <u>stern</u> . Lo, this is that which I have here to say.	79-81: "even if bringing you this message costs me my life, it is worth it to do this service for you." = effort and travel. = might. = risked. = to here. = intends. ² = ie. spreads the message. = ie. the steering mechanism. ¹
96	Clot. Is this his <u>faith</u> ? and shall he falsely thus 98 <u>Abuse the vantage</u> of unhappy times? O wretched land, if his outrageous pride, 100 His cruël and untempered willfulness, His deep dissembling shows of false pretence, 102 Should once attain the crown of Britain land! Let us, my lords, with timely force resist 104 The new attempt of this our common foe, As we would quench the flames of common fire.	= loyalty. = ie. take improper advantage.
106	Mand. Though we remain without a <u>certain prince</u> 108 To wield the realm, or guide the wandering rule, Yet now the common mother of us all, 110 Our native land, our country, that contains Our wives, children, kindred, ourselves, and all 112 That ever is or may be dear to man,	= definitive heir to the throne.

114	Cries unto us to help ourselves and her. Let us advance our <u>powers</u> to repress This growing foe of all our liberties.	= armed forces.
116	Gwen. Yea, let us so, my lords, with hasty speed –	
118	And ye, O gods, send us the welcome death To shed our blood in field, and leave us not	
120	In loathsome life to <u>lenger</u> out our days,	120-1: note the alliteration in both these lines. <i>linger</i> = linger. = "enormous misfortunes (<i>unhaps</i>)".
122	To see the <u>hugy heaps of these unhaps</u> That now roll down upon the wretched land, Where empty place of princely governance, No certain stay now left of doubtless heir, Thus leave this guideless realm an open prey To endless storms and waste of civil war.	123: ie. the throne has no sovereign to occupy it. 124: ie. no unambiguous chain of succession for the crown.
128	Aros. That ye, my lords, do so agree in one, To save your country from the violent reign And wrongfully usurpèd tyranny Of him that threatens conquest of you all, To save your realm, and in this realm yourselves From foreign <u>thraldom</u> of so proud a prince, Much do I praise; and I beseech the gods, With happy honour to requite it you. But O, my lords, <u>sith</u> now the heavens' wrath Hath <u>ref</u> t this land the <u>issue</u> of their <u>prince</u> , Sith of the body of our late sovereign lord Remains <u>no moe</u> , since the young kings be slain, And of the title of descended crown	= enslavement by.
130		
132		
134		
136		= since.
138		= taken from. = children. = ie. king.
140		138: one more line with an apparent extra syllable; none of the editors comment. = no more.
142	Uncertainly the <u>divers</u> minds do think Even of the learnèd sort, and more uncertainly Will <u>partial fancy</u> and <u>affection</u> deem;	140-2: <i>And of...learned sort</i> = even the educated class is unclear, and of various ideas, regarding how to deter- mine who should be king.
144	But most uncertainly will climbing pride, And hope of reign, withdraw to <u>sundry</u> parts The doubtful right and hopeful lust to reign.	= various.
146		
148	When once this noble service is achieved For Britain land, the mother of ye all, When once ye have with armèd force repressed The proud attempts of this <u>Albanian</u> prince,	142-3: <i>more uncertainly...deem</i> = judgment regarding the matter will be warped by biased imagination (<i>partial fancy</i>) ¹ and emotion (<i>affection</i>).
150		144-6: ie. an unfilled throne always invites those who are proud and ambitious to seek it for themselves. <i>sundry</i> = uniquely spelled with a <i>u</i> instead of an <i>o</i> here.
152	That threatens <u>thraldom</u> to your native land, When ye <u>shall</u> vanquishers return from <u>field</u> , And find the princely state an open prey To greedy lust and to usurping power; Then, then, my lords, if ever kindly care	= ie. from Albany, or Scottish. This is a word which your editor would like to see revived to describe any person from Albany, NY.
154		= slavery. = ie. shall as. = the battlefield.

156	Of ancient honour of your ancestors, Of present wealth and <u>noblesse of your stocks</u> ,	= "nobility of your families or ancestors".
158	Yea, of the lives and safety yet to come Of your dear wives, your children, and yourselves,	
160	Might move your noble hearts with gentle <u>ruth</u> , Then, then, have pity on the <u>torn estate</u> ;	= mercy. = rent or torn-apart nation.
162	Then help to salve the <u>wellnear</u> hopeless sore; Which ye shall do, if ye yourselves withhold	= nearly. ¹
164	The slaying knife from your own mother's throat: Her shall you save, and you, and yours in her,	165: Arostus points to different nobles around him; note how in this line he uses the singular <i>you</i> before returning to the plural <i>ye</i> .
166	If ye shall all with one assent forbear Once to lay hand, or take unto yourselves	166-172: Arostus asks the nobles to agree not to claim the throne for themselves; a new king should instead be elected by an assembly of Britain's nobility.
168	The crown, <u>by colour of pretended right</u> , Or by what other means soe'er it be,	= "under any false pretense".
170	Till first by common counsel of you all In <u>parliament</u> , the regal diadem	= the word <i>parliament</i> , of course, is anachronistic, not entering the English language until the 13th or 14th century. ¹
172	Be set in certain place in governance; In which your parliament, and in your choice,	
174	<u>Prefer</u> the right, my lords, without respect Of strength or friends, or whatsoever cause	= take under consideration. ¹
176	That may set forward any other's part; For right will last, and wrong cannot endure:	
178	Right, mean I <u>his or hers</u> , upon whose name The people rest by mean of <u>native line</u> ,	
180	Or <u>by the virtue of some former law</u> Already made their title to advance.	178-181: Cunliffe advises us that these lines were intended to recommend Lady Katherine Grey, the sister of Lady Jane Grey, as successor to Elizabeth (hence line 178 meaningfully reads <i>his or hers</i>). Katherine was both English born (<i>of native line</i>), and had a colour of legitimacy to a claim for the throne, as the Third Succession Act, passed in the reign of Henry VIII, placed Katherine as 5th in line to the throne (hence, <i>by the virtue of some former law</i>).
182	Such one, my lords, let be your chosen king; Such one so born within your native land;	182-4: the repetition of initial words in consecutive clauses is a figure of speech known as <i>anaphora</i> .
184	Such one <u>prefer</u> ; and in no <u>wise</u> admit The heavy yoke of foreign governance:	= promote. = way.
186	Let foreign titles <u>yield to public wealth</u> . And with that heart wherewith ye now prepare	= the sense is "be rejected in favour of the national interest." ¹
188	Thus to withstand the proud invading foe, With that same heart, my lords, keep out also	
190	Unnatural <u>thraldom</u> of <u>strangers' reign</u> , Ne suffer you against the rules of kind,	= slavery. = rule by foreigners.
192	Your mother land to serve a foreign prince.	191-2: "do not tolerate violations of the rules of nature by allowing an outsider to rule Britain."
194	[<i>Exeunt all except Eubulus.</i>]	194: stage direction added by the editor: Eubulus' speech is more in the nature of a summary or epilogue for the audience

196 **Eub.** Lo, here the end of Brutus' royal line,
 And, lo, the entry to the woeful wreck
 198 And utter ruin of this noble realm.
 The royal king, and eke his sons are slain;
 200 No ruler rests within the regal seat;
 The heir, to whom the sceptre longs, unknown;
 202 That to each force of foreign prince's power,
 Whom vantage of our wretched state may move
 204 By sudden arms to gain so rich a realm;
 And to the proud and greedy mind at home,
 206 Whom blinded lust to reign leads to aspire,
 Lo, Britain realm is left an open prey,
 208 A present spoil by conquest to ensue.
 Who seeth not now how many rising minds
 210 Do feed their thoughts with hope to reach a realm?
 And who will not by force attempt to win
 212 So great a gain that hope persuades to have?
A simple colour shall for title serve.
 214 Who wins the royal crown will want no right;
 Nor such as shall display by long descent
 216 A lineal race to prove himself a king.
 In the meanwhile these civil arms shall rage,
 218 And thus a thousand mischiefs shall unfold,
 And far and near spread thee, O Britain land;
 220 All right and law shall cease; and he that had
 Nothing to-day, to-morrow shall enjoy
 222 Great heaps of gold; and he that flowed in wealth,
 Lo, he shall be bereft of life and all;
 224 And happiest he that then possesseth least:
 The wives shall suffer rape, the maids deflowered,
 226 And children fatherless shall weep and wail;
 With fire and sword thy native folk shall perish:
 228 One kinsman shall bereave another life;
 The father shall unwitting slay the son;
 230 The son shall slay the sire, and know it not.
 Women and maids the cruël soldiers' swords
 232 Shall pierce to death, and silly children, lo,
 That play[ing] in the streets and fields are found,
 234 By violent hand shall close their latter day.
 Whom shall the fierce and bloody soldiër
 236 Reserve to life? whom shall he spare from death?
 Even thou, O wretched mother, half alive,
 238 Thou shalt behold thy dear and only child
 Slain with the sword, while he yet sucks thy breast.
 240 Lo, guiltless blood shall thus eachwhere be shed.

than part of a conversation with the other nobles, and replaces the Chorus, which does not appear in this Act.

= "see here".

= also.

= ie. occupies.

= ie. belongs.¹⁶

202-4: "to any foreign prince who may seek to take advantage of Britain's current vulnerable state to try to seize the throne".

= desire.

209-210: "who is so blind as to fail to see how many people there are who hope to capture the vacant throne?"
seeth = pronounced in one syllable here.

= ie. whom.

= a transparent pretext.

= ie. not lack a claim to a right to the crown. The tone of this line is cynical.

215-6: "anybody can come up with a family tree that proves they are descended from the royal family."

As a factual matter, so many English monarchs had so many children both inside and outside of marriage that probably every Englishman and Englishwoman alive today is descended from some branch of the royal family.

= "robbed of his life and all his wealth."

= unmarried women, hence virgins.

= ie. take the life of a relative.

= unknowingly.

= defenseless.

= end. = ie. last day on earth.

= **soldier** here is likely trisyllabic: *SOL-di-er*.

= ie. save the life of.

= everywhere (archaic).¹

242	Thus shall the wasted soil yield forth no fruit, But <u>derth</u> and famine shall possess the land.	= scarcity; an archaic form of <i>dearth</i> . ¹
244	The towns shall be consumed and burnt with fire; The peopled cities shall <u>wax desolate</u> ;	= gradually become deserted. ¹
246	And thou, O Britain, <u>whilom in renown</u> ,	= formerly (<i>whilom</i>) famous or highly esteemed. ³
248	Whilom in wealth and fame, shalt thus be torn, Dismembered thus, and thus be rent in twain;	
250	Thus wasted and defaced, spoiled and destroyed; These be the fruits your civil wars will bring.	
252	Hereto it comes, when kings will not <u>consent</u> To grave advice, but <u>follow willful will</u> .	= agree with, ie. heed. = ie. stubbornly follow their own inclinations.
254	This is the end, when in <u>fond</u> princes' hearts Flattery prevails, and <u>sage rede</u> hath no place.	= foolish. = wise advice.
256	These are the plagues, when murder is the <u>mean</u> To make new heirs unto the royal crown.	= means.
258	Thus <u>wreak</u> the gods, when that the <u>mother's wrath</u> <u>Nought</u> but the blood of her own child may <u>suage</u> .	= avenge. = alluding of course to Queen Videna. = nothing. = pacify.
260	These mischiefs spring when rebels will arise To work revenge and judge their prince's <u>fact</u> .	= deed.
262	This, this ensues when noble men do fail <u>In loyal troth</u> , and subjects will be kings:	= ie. "in their loyalty".
264	And this doth grow, when, lo, unto the prince, Whom death or sudden <u>hap of life bereaves</u> ,	= accident. = takes the life of.
266	No certain heir remains, such certain heir As not <u>all only</u> is the rightful heir,	= variation of <i>alonely</i> , meaning "only".
268	But to the realm is so made known to be, And <u>truth</u> thereby vested in subjects' hearts,	= faith or loyalty. ¹⁶
270	To owe faith there, where right is known to rest. Alas, in parliament what hope can be,	
272	When <u>is of parliament</u> no hope at all? Which, though it be assembled by <u>consent</u> ,	= ie. "in parliament there is". = general agreement.
274	Yet is not likely with consent to end; While each one for himself, or for his friend	
276	Against his foe, shall <u>travail what he may</u> . While now the state left open to the man	= "strive in any way he can".
278	That shall with <u>greatest force</u> invade the same, Shall fill ambitious minds with <u>gaping</u> hope,	= ie. the strongest private army. = yearning, like mouths opened as if hoping to swallow. ²
280	When will they once with yielding hearts agree? Or in the <u>while</u> , how shall the realm be used?	= meantime.
282	No, no; then parliament should have been <u>holden</u> ,	280-7: if no heir exists, a parliament should establish a line of succession while the present monarch is still alive. <i>holden</i> = obliged. ¹
284	And certain heirs appointed to the crown To <u>stay</u> the title of established right, And plant the people in obedience,	= secure or steady. ¹
286	While yet the <u>prince</u> did live, whose name and power By lawful summons and authority	= king.
288	Might make a parliament to be of force, And might have set the state in quiet stay: But now, O happy man, whom speedy death	288-292: <i>O happy man...justice</i> = a man is fortunate if he dies before he is forced to witness the misery that descends on his country. = "is not obliged".
290	Deprives of life, <u>ne is enforced</u> to see These huge mischiefs and these miseries,	

292 These civil wars, these murders, and these wrongs
Of justice, yet must God in fine restore
This noble crown unto the lawful heir:
294 For right will always live, and rise at length,
But wrong can never take deep root to last.

296

FINIS

[*Exeunt.*]

= in the end.¹

152-250: Eubulus' unbroken speech of 100 lines and 807 words may be the single longest speech in the entire Elizabethan canon. The longest single speech in Shakespeare's works, by contrast, is that of Richard in *King Henry VI, Part III*, Act III.ii, which contains a mere 575 words.

In John Lyly's c. 1590 play *Midas*, we find a single continuous prose speech that goes on for 737 words.

Norton and Sackville's Invented Words

Like all of the writers of the era, Norton and Sackville made up words when they felt like it, usually by adding prefixes and suffixes to known words, combining words, or using a word in a way not yet used before. The following is a list of words and phrases that research suggests appear for the first time, or were used with a given meaning for the first time, in *Gorboduc*:

Albanian (meaning Scottish)
delightfulness
descended (as an adjective, per the OED: unconfirmed)
dumb show
foreset (as a noun)
hautboy
ill-succeeding
lustful (meaning vigorous)
marble (first figurative use, meaning cold and unyielding, per the OED: unconfirmed)
motherland
overkindly
random / randon (meaning to wander aimlessly)
stand on terms
traitor-prince
unjoint (first use as a verb meaning to sever or separate something other than actual joints)
unmastered

Collocations

Collocations are words that are commonly, conventionally and familiarly used together, but which when used collectively so do not rise to the level of what may be called an expression. All of the following collocations make their first appearance in *Gorboduc*, and were subsequently used by later writers, and some even continue to be used this day.

These collocations are in *quotation marks* to indicate an exactly worded formula that was reused regularly by later writers.

"abounding store"
"armed breast"
"black treason"
"bootless case"
"broken peace"
"careful charge"
"climbing mind"
"climbing pride"
"creeping death"
"divided hearts"
"face of reason"
"feeble / feebled / enfeebled limbs"
"flaming cart" (1565 quarto)
"flaming car" (1570 quarto)
"furrowed face"
"gaping wound"
(shared with another source as first appearing in 1565)
"hazard life"
(shared with another source as first appearing in 1565)
"kin and kind"
"levy force(s)"
"lingering stay"
"marble breast"

"mortal corpse"
 "parched earth"
 "partial eye"
 "pleasing tale(s)"
 "quiet pause"
 "raging thoughts"
 "rascal rout(s)"
 "rebellious rout(s)"
 "reft of life"
 "rend in twain"
 "royal seed"
 "stony breast(s)"
 "strangling cord"
 "swelling breast"
 "timely help"
 "timely hour" (1570 quarto only)
 "troubles manifold" (though "manifold troubles" had been in previous use)
 "unquenched flames"
 "win a crown"
 "youthful lust"

Norton and Sackville's Archaic Words

The following is a list of words used by the authors in *Gorboduc* that were likely already archaic by the time they wrote the play in the mid-16th century (see the discussion at the beginning of the play):

adrad
behight
bode (past tense of bide)
clepe
derth (for dearth)
eachwhere
eke
hastely
helm
lenger
mought
ne...ne
overthrow (meaning "to fall down")
stale (for stole)
unhap
wight
withouten
wroke
yelden

FOOTNOTES

The footnotes in the play correspond as follows:

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