

ElizabethanDrama.org
presents
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 xviii. 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 Loegris.

Gwenard, Duke of Cumberland.

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
5 Lord Buckhurst, and by T. Norton, and after shewed

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

9 money and much discretion, in the last great plague,
10 an. 1565, about five years past, while the said Lord
11 was out of England, and T. Norton far out of London,
12 and neither of them both made privy, put it forth
13 exceedingly corrupted: even as if by means of a
14 broker for hire, he should have enticed into his house

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

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

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.

	shamefacedness <u>new appareled, trimmed and attired her</u>	= literally cleaned up and gave her new clothes, and figuratively (referring to the authors) made the necessary corrections to the script.
26	in such form as she was before, in which better form since she hath come to <u>me</u> .	= ie. John Daye, the new publisher.
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	
30	by my encouragement and others somewhat less ashamed of the <u>dishonesty</u> done to her because it was	
32	ashamed of the <u>dishonesty</u> done to her because it was	
34	<u>by fraud and force</u> .	
	If she be welcome among you, and gently	
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,	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.
38	poor gentlewoman, will surely <u>play Lucrece's part</u> , and	
40		36-37: <i>the house...descended</i> = ie. the Inner Temple in London, where <i>Gorboduc</i> was originally performed. ¹²
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.	
		= blamed, criticized.
		= calamity. = malicious.
		= 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.
		= ie. any great expense.
		= ie. the new edition of the published play.

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
3 dissension: the younger killed the elder; the mother that
4 more dearly loved the elder, for revenge killed the
5 younger. The people, moved with the cruelty of the
6 fact, rose in rebellion and slew both father and mother.
7 The nobility assembled, and most terribly destroyed the
8 rebels, and afterwards, for want of issue of the prince
9 whereby the succession of the crown became uncertain,
10 they fell to civil war, in which both they and many of
11 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 cannot be broken by them. At the length one of them plucks out one of the sticks and breaks it; and the rest plucking out all the other sticks one after another, do easily break them, the same being severed: which, being conjoined, they had before attempted in vain.

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

12 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 Jesus 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>	
2	<p>From painful <u>travails</u> of the weary day, Prolongs my <u>careful</u> thoughts, and makes me blame</p>	= labours; travail is usually stressed on its first syllable: <i>TRA-vail.</i>
4	<p>The <u>slow Aurore</u>, that so for love or shame Doth long delay to <u>shew</u> her <u>blushing</u> face;</p>	= full of care, ie. anxious.
6	<p>And now the day renews my <u>griefful plaint</u>.</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.
8	<p>Ferr. My gracious lady and my mother dear, Pardon my grief for your so grievèd mind, To ask what cause tormenteth so <u>your heart</u>.</p>	= lamentation that is full of grief. ²
10		
12	<p>Viden. So great a wrong, and <u>so unjust despite</u>, Without all cause, against all course of <u>kind</u>!</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.
14		
16	<p>Ferr. Such causeless wrong and so unjust despite, May have <u>redress</u>, or at the least, revenge.</p>	= "such an unfair act"; despite suggests a spiteful act. ¹
18	<p>Viden. Neither, my son; such is the <u>foward</u> will, The person such, such my <u>mishap</u> and <u>thine</u>.</p>	= nature.
20		
22	<p>Ferr. <u>Mine know I none</u>, but grief for your distress.</p>	= remedy, compensation.
24	<p>Viden. Yes; mine for thine, my son: a father? no: In <u>kind</u> a father, not in kindliness.</p>	18-19: "the person I am describing is so obstinate, that it is both my misfortune (mishap) ² and yours (thine)." foward = unmanageable or ungovernable, or perverse. ^{1,5}
26	<p>Ferr. My father? why? I know nothing at all, Wherein I have <u>misdone</u> unto his grace.</p>	= "I know of no such misfortune (that affects me)".
28		
30	<p>Viden. <u>Therefore</u>, the more <u>unkind</u> to thee and me: For, knowing well, my son, the tender love That I have ever borne and bear to thee, He, grieved thereat, is not content alone</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.
32	<p><u>To spoil thee of my sight</u>, my chiefest joy,</p>	= done harm. ¹
		= "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,</p>	= "but the king also wants to take away your birthright", ie. sole rule of Britain.
36	<p>Causeless, unkindly, and in wrongful <u>wise</u>, Against all law and right he will <u>bereave</u>: Half of his kingdom he will give away.</p>	= way or manner. = "deprive (you)."²
38	<p>Ferr. To whom?</p>	
40	<p>Viden. Even to <u>Porrex his younger son</u>;</p>	= Porrex is thus also Ferrex's younger brother.
42	<p>Whose growing pride I do so <u>sore</u> suspect, That being raised to equal rule with thee, Me thinks I see <u>his envious</u> heart to swell, Filled with disdain and with ambitious hope.</p>	= reluctantly or grievingly. ¹
44		= ie. Porrex's. = malicious or spiteful.
46	<p>The end the gods do know, whose alters I <u>Full oft have made</u> in vain, of <u>cattle slain</u>,</p>	
48	<p>To send the sacred smoke to Heaven's throne, For thee my son; if things do so <u>succeed</u>,</p>	Note also the line's rhyme of <i>vain</i> and <i>slain</i> ; 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.
50	<p>As now my <u>jealous</u> mind <u>misdeemeth</u> sore.</p>	= turn out this away. = fearful. ¹ = ie. "distressingly suspects or fears (will happen)."¹,⁵
52	<p>Ferr. Madam, leave care and <u>careful plaint</u> for me!</p>	= worried lamenting or moaning. ¹
	<p>Just hath my father been to every <u>wight</u>:</p>	= "person"; by the mid-16th century, <i>wight</i> 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.
54	<p>His first <u>unjustice</u> he will not extend To me, I trust, that give no cause thereof; My brother's pride shall hurt himself, not me.</p>	= less common alternate form of <i>injustice</i> .
56		
58	<p>Viden. So grant the gods! but yet thy father so Hath firmly fixèd his unmovèd mind, That plaints and prayers can <u>no whit</u> avail;</p>	= not a bit.
60		
	<p>For <u>those have I assayed</u>, but <u>even</u> this day,</p>	61: those have I assayed = "I have tried (<i>assayed</i>) both plaints and prayers".
62	<p>He will endeavor to procure assent <u>Of all his council to his fond device</u>.</p>	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> .
64	<p>Ferr. <u>Their</u> ancestors from <u>race to race</u> have born</p>	= from. = foolish idea.
		We note here that in the quartos, <i>advice</i> and <i>device</i> are always written as <i>advise</i> and <i>devise</i> ; our edition employs the latter only when the words are used as verbs.
66	<p>True faith to my forefathers and their <u>seed</u>:</p>	65: Their = ie. Gorboduc's counsellors'. race to race = generation to generation. 65-66: born True faith = ie. remained loyal.
		= offspring, ie. descendants.

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

8 The kingdom yet may with unbroken course
 Have certain prince, by whose undoubted right,
 Your wealth and peace may stand in quiet stay:
 And eke that they, whom nature hath prepared
 In time to take my place in princely seat,
 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 derived down to them,
 With honour they may leave unto their seed;
 And not be thought for their unworthy life,
 And for their lawless swarving out of kind,

 22 Worthy to lose what law and kind them gave:
 But that they may preserve the common peace,
 The cause that first began and still maintains
 The lineal course of kings' inheritance,
 For me, for mine, for you, and for the state,
 Whereof both I and you have charge and care,
 Thus do I mean to use your wonted faith
 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,

32 Lest as the blame of ill succeeding things
 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

42 For you, for yours, and for our native land.
 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,
 Who now in my decaying years are grown
 52 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 "vigilant".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.
56	With me and with their mother here in court: Their age now asketh other place and trade,	= in this edition, words in brackets were present in the 1565, but absent from the 1570, quarto, and reinstated by the editors.
58	And <u>mine</u> also doth ask another change; Theirs to more <u>travail</u> , mine to greater ease.	= ie. "they are old enough now that they should take on another position and occupation". ¹⁶
60	When fatal death shall end my mortal life, My purpose is to leave unto them <u>twain</u>	= ie. "my age".
62	The realm divided into two <u>sondry</u> parts:	= work.
64	The one, <u>Ferrex</u> mine elder son shall have, The other, shall the other <u>Porrex</u> rule.	= two.
66	That both my purpose may more firmly stand, And <u>eke</u> that they may better rule their charge,	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> .
68	I mean forthwith to place them in <u>the same</u> : That in my life they may both learn to rule,	<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.
70	And I may joy to see their ruling well. This is in sum what I would have <u>ye</u> weigh:	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>).
72	First, whether ye <u>allow</u> my whole <u>device</u> , And think it good for me, for them, for you,	= also.
74	And for our country, mother of us all: And if ye like it, and allow it well,	= ie. the same rank, equal shares.
76	Then for their guiding and their governance, Show forth such means of <u>circumstance</u> ,	= as Gorboduc is addressing all his advisors, he uses the old plural pronoun <i>ye</i> .
	As ye think <u>meet</u> to be both known and <u>kept</u> .	= approve. = idea.
78	<u>Lo</u> , this is all; now tell me your advice.	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
80	<u>Aros</u> . And this is much, and asketh great advice;	Note that two syllables seem to have dropped out of line 76.
82	But for my part, my sovereign lord and king,	= behold.
84	This do I think: your majesty doth know, How under you in justice and in peace,	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."
86	Great wealth and honour long we have enjoyed;	= judged.
88	So as we cannot seem with greedy minds To wish for change of prince or governance:	= from.
90	But if we like your purpose and device, Our liking must be <u>deemèd</u> to proceed Of rightful reason, and of heedful care,	= ie. "the kingdom that is all of ours".
	Not for ourselves, but for <u>our common state</u> ,	

Sith our own state doth need no better change:
 I think in all as erst your grace has said.
 First, when you shall unload your agèd mind
 Of heavy care and troubles manifold,
 And lay the same upon my lords your sons,
 Whose growing years may bear the burden long,
 (And long I pray the gods to grant it so)
 And in your life while you shall so behold
 Their rule, their virtues, and their noble deeds,
 Such as their kind beightheth to us all;
 Great be the profits that shall grow thereof,
 Your age in quiet shall the longer last,
 Your lasting age shall be their longer stay:
 For cares of kings, that rule as you have ruled
 For public wealth and not for private joy,
 Do waste man's life, and hasten crooked age
 With furrowed face and with enfeebled limbs,
 To draw on creeping death a swifter pace.
 They two, yet young, shall bear the parted reign
 With greater ease than one, now old, alone
 Can wield the whole, for whom much harder is
 With lessened strength the double weight to bear.
 Your eye, your counsel, and the grave regard
 Of father, yea, of such as father's name,
 Now at beginning of their sondered reign
 When it is hazard of their whole success,
 Shall bridle so their force of youthful heats,
 And so restrain the rage of insolence
 Which most assails the young and noble minds,
 And so shall guide and train in tempered stay
 Their yet green bending wits with reverent awe,
 As now inured with virtues at the first.
 Custom, O king, shall bring delightfulness.
 By use of virtue, vice shall grow in hate;
 But if you so dispose it, that the day
 Which ends your life, shall first begin their reign,
 Great is the peril, what will be the end,
 When such beginning of such liberties
Void of such stays as in your life do lie,
 Shall leave them free to randon of their will,
 An open prey to traitorous flattery,
 The greatest pestilence of noble youth:

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

 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

Shall length your noble life in joyfulness.
 Thus think I that your grace hath wisely thought,
 And that your tender care of common weal
 Hath bred this thought, so to divide your land,
 And plant your sons to bear the present rule
 While you yet live to see their ruling well,
 That you may longer live by joy therein.
 What further means behooveful are and meet,
 At greater leisure may your grace devise,
When all have said; and when we be agreed
 If this be best to part the realm in twain,
 And place your sons in present government:
 Whereof, as I have plainly said my mind,
 So would I hear the rest of all my lords.
Phil. In part I think as hath been said before,
 In part again my mind is otherwise.
 As for dividing of this realm in twain,
 And lotting out the same in egal parts,
 To either of my lords your grace's sons,
That think I best for this your realm's behoof,
 For profit and advancement of your sons,
 And for your comfort and your honour eke:
 But so to place them while your life do last,
 To yield to them your royal governance,
 To be above them only in the name
 Of father, not in kingly state also,
 I think not good for you, for them, nor us.
 This kingdom since the bloody civil field,
 Where Morgan slain did yield his conquered part
 Unto his cousin's sword in Cumberland,

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. **Cumberland**, 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."

		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).
170	So your two sons, it may suffice also; 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." 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.
172	The smaller <u>compass</u> that the realm doth hold The easier is the <u>sway</u> thereof to wield;	= space or area. = influence or control.
174	The nearer justice to the wrongèd poor,	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	The smaller <u>charge</u> , and yet enough for one. And when the region is divided so	= responsibility.
178	That <u>brethren</u> be the lords of either part, Such strength doth nature knit between them both,	= brothers.
180	In <u>sondry</u> bodies by conjoinèd love, That not as two, but one of doubled force,	= separate.
182	Each is to other as a sure defense; The nobleness and glory of the one,	
184	Doth <u>sharp</u> the courage of the other's mind With virtuous envy to contend for praise:	= sharpen. 184: a friendly competition arises as to which of the two sovereigns can be more virtuous. = equality.
186	And such an <u>egalness</u> hath nature made, Between the brethren of one father's seed,	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.
	As an <u>unkindly</u> wrong it seems to be,	
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 <u>egalness</u> ,	190-3: Nature is personified as sowing dissension or discontent in a younger brother. = complains, feels dissatisfaction. ²
192	Oft so <u>repineth</u> at so great a wrong, That oft <u>she</u> raiseth up a grudging grief	= ie. Nature.
194	In younger brethren at the elder's state: 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: The brother, that should be the brother's aid,	
198	And have a <u>wakeful</u> care for his defense, <u>Gapes</u> for his death, and blames the lingering years	= vigilant. 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; And oft impatient of so long delays,	
	With hateful slaughter he <u>prevents</u> the Fates,	= 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,
 With endless vengeance on his stock for aye.
 204 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.

238 If kind and Fates would suffer, I would wish
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. = euphemism for "let you die".
246	Be prince and father of our common weal:	= mature enough.
248	They, when they see your children <u>ripe</u> to rule, Will make them room, and will remove you hence,	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".
	That yours, in right ensuing of your life,	
250	May rightly honour your immortal name.	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!
252	Eubu. Your <u>wonted</u> true regard of <u>faithful</u> hearts	= accustomed. = loyal.
254	Makes me, O king, the bolder to presume	
256	To speak what I conceive within my breast;	
258	Although <u>the same do not</u> agree at all	= "what I conceive does not".
260	With that which <u>other here my lords</u> have said,	= "the other lords who are here" ¹²
262	Nor which yourself have seemèd best to like.	
264	Pardon I crave, and that my words be deemed	
266	To flow from hearty <u>zeal unto</u> your grace,	= ie. care over the welfare of.
268	And to the safety of your common weal.	
	To part your realm unto my lords your sons,	
270	I think not good for you, <u>ne</u> yet for them,	
272	But worst of all, for this our native land:	
274	For with one land, one single rule is best:	
276	Divided reigns do make divided hearts;	
278	But peace preserves the country and the prince.	
280	Such is in man the greedy mind to reign,	
282	So great is his desire to climb aloft,	
284	In worldly stage the stateliest parts to bear,	265: see the note at lines 13-15 above in Act I's Dumb Show.
269	That faith and justice and all <u>kindly</u> love,	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.
	<u>Do yield unto</u> desire of sovereignty,	= familial.
	Where egal state doth raise an egal hope	= ie. all take second place to.
	To win <u>the thing</u> that either would attain.	
	Your grace rememb'reth how in passèd years,	
	The mighty Brute, first <u>prince</u> of all this land,	
	Possessed the same and ruled it well <u>in one</u> :	
	He, thinking that the <u>compass did suffice</u>	
	For his three sons three kingdoms <u>eke</u> to make,	
	Cut it in three, as you would now in twain:	
	But how much British blood hath since been spilt	
	To join again the <u>sondered</u> unity?	
	What princes slain before their timely hour?	
	What waste of towns and people in the land?	
	What treasons heaped on murders and on spoils?	

	Whose just revenge even yet is scarcely ceased, <u>Ruthful</u> remembrance is yet raw in mind.	= pitiable, grief-causing. ¹ Note the nice alliteration in this line.
286		= happen.
288	The gods forbid the like to <u>chance</u> again: And you, O king, give not the cause thereof.	
290	My Lord Ferrex your elder son, perhaps Whom kind and custom gives a rightful hope	
292	To be your heir and to <u>succeed</u> your reign, Shall think that he doth suffer greater wrong	= ie. "succeed you in".
294	Than he perchance will bear, if <u>power</u> serve.	= 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.
296	Porrex the younger, so upraised in state, Perhaps in <u>courage</u> will be raised also,	= ambition. ²
298	If flattery then, which fails not to assail	
300		296-9: Eubulus warns Gorboduc of the dire consequences that may result from self-serving advisors leading his sons down the wrong path.
302	The tender minds of yet <u>unskilful</u> youth, In one shall kindle and increase disdain, And envy in <u>the other's</u> heart enflame: This fire shall waste their love, their lives, their land, And ruthless ruin shall destroy them both.	= lacking in judgment or knowledge. ^{3,16}
304	I wish not this, O King, so to befall, But fear the thing, that I do most abhor.	298: ie. cause disdain in the elder towards the younger.
306		= ie. the younger one's.
308	Give no beginning to so dreadful end; Keep them in order and obedience;	
310	And let them both by now obeying you, Learn such behavior as <u>beseems</u> their state;	303: an early version of Shakespeare's more familiar "In time we hate that which we often fear", from <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> .
312	The elder, mildness in his governance, The younger, a <u>yielding contentedness</u> ;	
314	And keep them near unto your presence still, That they, restrainèd by the awe of you,	= is fitting to.
316	May live in <u>compass</u> of well-tempered <u>stay</u> , And pass the perils of their youthful years.	= ie. acceptance that the elder is the sole ruler.
318		
320	Your agèd life draws on to feebler time, Wherein you shall less able be to bear The <u>travails</u> that in youth you have sustained, Both in your person's and your realm's defense.	= limit. = restraint.
322	If planting now your sons <u>in furder parts</u> ,	313: another allusion to the notion that maturity will bestow on the boys the ability to rule more wisely and with moderation.
324	You send them furder from your present reach, Less shall you know how they <u>themselves</u> demean:	
326	Traitorous corrupters of their pliant youth Shall have <u>unspied</u> a much more free access;	= work.
	And if ambition and inflamed disdain Shall arm the one, the other, or them both,	
	To civil war, or to usurping pride, <u>Late</u> shall you rue that you <u>ne recked</u> before.	= ie. in far-away locations. <i>further</i> = less commonly used alternate form of <i>further</i> .
		= 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 unseen (<i>unspied</i>) by you".
		= in the end. = did not consider or heed (my warning). ¹

	Good is, I grant, of all to <u>hope the best</u> ,	= the still common phrase <i>hope for the best</i> first appeared in the early 15th century. ¹
328	But not to live still dreadless of the worst. So trust the one, that <u>th' other</u> be forseen.	= should be pronounced in two syllables: <i>tho-ther</i> . Wherever <i>the</i> and <i>to</i> should be abbreviated to <i>th'</i> and <i>t'</i> for the sake of the meter, we will do so; the quartos always spell them out.
330		= "do not arm ignorance (<i>unskilfulness</i>)".
332	<u>Arm not unskilfulness</u> with princely power; But you that long have wisely ruled the reins	331-2: more nice alliteration appears in these two lines.
334	Of royalty within your noble realm, So hold them, while the gods for our <u>avails</u> Shall stretch the <u>thread</u> of your prolongèd days.	= benefit, good. 334: an allusion to "the <i>thread</i> of life" spun by the Fates; when the Fate known as Atropos cuts one's thread, one's life ends.
336	Too soon he <u>clamb</u> into the flaming <u>car</u> , Whose <u>want</u> of skill did set the earth on fire.	335-6: a reference to <i>Phaeton</i> , 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 <i>clamb</i> = archaic form of "climbed", the latter which does not appear in English letters until the 1560's. <i>car</i> = we note that the 1565 quarto here printed <i>cart</i> , which is just as satisfactory as <i>car</i> . <i>want</i> = lack.
338	Time and example of your noble grace, Shall teach your sons both to obey and rule;	339: <i>time</i> will mature them, and time will determine the appropriate moment to set them on the throne.
340	When time hath taught them, time shall make them place,	
342	The place that now is full: and so I pray Long it remain, to comfort of us all.	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) <i>Arostus</i> agrees with the king, that he should retire and divide the kingdom for his sons; (2) <i>Philander</i> allows for Gorboduc dividing the kingdom, but believes he should continue to rule until he dies; (3) <i>Eubulus</i> feels strongly that dividing the kingdom will lead to disaster.
344	<i>Gorb.</i> I take your faithful hearts in thankful part: But <u>sith</u> I see no cause to <u>draw my mind</u> ,	= since. = ie. "allow my mind to be pulled towards other opinions".
346	To fear the nature of my loving sons, Or to <u>misdeem</u> that envy or disdain	= wrongly believe.
348	Can there work hate, where nature planteth love; In one <u>self</u> purpose do I still abide:	348: "I am still determined to do as I wish". <i>self</i> = same or sole. ¹⁵
350	My love extendeth egally to both, My land sufficeth for them both also. Humber shall part the <u>marches</u> of their realms:	349: "since I love them both equally".
352	The southern part the elder shall possess, The northern shall Porrex the younger rule.	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 <i>marches</i> = frontier, border. ¹

354	In quiet I will pass mine agèd days, Free from the travail and the painful cares That hasten age upon the worthiest kings. But lest the <u>fraud</u> , that ye do seem to fear	= deceit; the description in lines 357-360 is of sycophants misleading the young kings with ideas of grandeur and power.
358	Of flattering tongues, corrupt their tender youth, And <u>writhe</u> them to the ways of youthful <u>lust</u> , To climbing pride, or to revenging hate; Or to neglecting of their <u>careful charge</u> ,	= ie. turn or incline, ¹ or twist. ⁵ = ambition. ⁵
360	<u>Lewdly</u> to live in wanton recklessness;	= ie. responsibility which requires great care.
362	Or to oppressing of the rightful cause;	= basely. ³
364	Or not to <u>wreak</u> the wrongs done to the poor, To tread down truth, or favour false deceit;	= avenge ¹ or punish. ⁵
366	I mean to join to either of my sons Someone of those whose long approvèd faith	366-8: Gorboduc will assigned an experienced advisor to keep an eye on and wisely counsel his sons.
368	And wisdom tried may well assure my heart: That <u>mining</u> fraud shall find no way to creep	= the sense is "undermining".
370	Into their <u>fencèd</u> ears with grave advice.	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
372	This is the end; and so I pray you all To bear my sons the love and loyalty That I have found within your faithful breasts.	= read as "neither you". = lack
374		
376	<i>Aros.</i> <u>You</u> , nor your sons, our sovereign lord, shall <u>want</u> Our faith and service while our lives do last.	
378	[<i>Exeunt.</i>]	End of the Acts: Acts I-IV in <i>Gorboduc</i> are each followed by a <i>Chorus</i> , a kind of epilogue, presenting some final thoughts and lessons to be drawn from the action so far. The <i>Names of the Speakers</i> of the Choruses, as listed at the beginning of the play, consists of <i>Four Ancient and Sage Men of Britain</i> : a different <i>Sage Man</i> speaks at the end of each of the first four Acts, while the fifth and final Act contains no Chorus.
380	Chorus. When settled <u>stay</u> doth hold the royal throne In steadfast place by known and <u>doubtless</u> right,	The Chorus' Entrance and Rhyme Scheme: the entrance of the Chorus is not indicated in the original editions.
382	And chiefly when descent on one alone Make single and unparted reign <u>to light</u> ;	The Choruses of Acts I, II, and IV are written in six-line stanzas with the rhyme scheme <i>ab-ab-cc</i> . Such a scheme is now known as the <i>Venus and Adonis</i> stanza, since Shakespeare used this form in his 1593 published poem <i>Venus and Adonis</i> ; ¹⁹ of course, as can be seen, the existence of the form predates the Bard.
384	Each <u>change of course</u> <u>unjoints</u> the whole <u>estate</u> ,	= conditions. = undoubted. 382-3: "and especially when the royal throne settles on (<i>lights on</i>) one heir alone".
	And yields it <u>thrall</u> to ruin by <u>debate</u> .	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		"slave", though the sense here seems to be simply "subject".
388	The strength that knit by fast accord in one, Against all foreign power of mighty foes Could of itself defend itself alone;	<i>debate</i> = strife. ⁴
390	<u>Disjoinèd once</u> , the former force doth <u>lose</u> .	
392	The sticks, that <u>sondered</u> <u>brake</u> so soon in twain, In faggot bound attempted were in vain.	= ie. but once separated. = ie. loosen, referring to the force or bond that should knit (line 387) sibling rulers.
394	<u>Oft</u> tender mind that leads the <u>partial</u> eye Of erring parents in their children's love,	= ie. when separated. = broke. The reference is to the allegorical sticks of Act I's introductory Dumb Show.
396	Destroys the wrongly lovèd child thereby:	
398	This doth the proud son of Apollo prove, Who, rashly set in chariot of his sire, Inflamed the parchèd earth with Heaven's fire.	394-6: briefly, parents can ruin their child by being too indulgent.
400		<i>Oft</i> = often. <i>partial</i> = biased.
402	And this great king, that doth divide his land, And change the course of his <u>descending</u> crown,	397-9: a second allusion to the famous and oft-cited myth of Phaeton; see lines 335-6 above.
404	And yields the reign into his children's hand; From blissful state of joy and great renown,	= hereditatry. ⁵
	A <u>mirror</u> shall become to princes all,	
406	To learn to shun the cause of such a fall.	= example or warning; the early meaning of mirror as "an exemplar" actually may have predated its usual meaning of a reflective surface. ¹

END OF ACT I.

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,
12 immediately falls down dead upon the stage, and so is
13 carried thence away by his lords and gentlemen, and
14 then the music ceases.

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

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

ACT II, SCENE I.

The Court of Ferrex.

Enter Ferrex, Hermon and Dordan.

= 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.

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

2	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	
8	Had stood against him in rebelling <u>wise</u> ; Or if with grudging mind you had <u>envied</u> So slow a sliding of his agèd years;	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. = manner. = displayed resentment towards. ²
10	Or sought before your time to hasten the course Of fatal death upon his royal head;	9: ie. the long and lingering life of his father, so that the throne would have been too slow to descend to Ferrex.
12	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.	10-11: haste...head = hasten Gorboduc's death, perhaps a euphemism for "murder him". = family tree. ²
14		
16	Ferr. The <u>wreakful</u> gods pour on my cursèd head	
18	Eternal plagues and never dying woes; The <u>hellish prince</u> <u>adjudge</u> my damnèd <u>ghost</u>	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.
20	To <u>Tantal's</u> thirst, or proud <u>Ixion's</u> wheel,	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 Aiakos, three men who were famous for establishing law and order during their lives on earth. ⁷ adjudge = sentence.
		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
	Or crue'l <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

	To <u>during</u> torments and unquenchèd flames; If ever I conceived so foul a thought, To wish his end of life, or yet of reign.	= ie. enduring.
22		
24	Dord. <u>Ne yet your father</u> , O most noble prince, Did ever think so foul a thing of you: For he, with more than father's tender love, While yet the Fates do lend him life to rule, (Who long might live to see your ruling well) To you, my lord, and to his other son, Lo, he resigns his realm and royalty; Which never would so wise a prince have done, If he had once <u>misdeemed</u> that in your heart There ever lodgèd so unkind a thought. But tender love, my lord, and settled trust Of your good nature, and your noble mind, Made him to place you thus in royal throne, And now to give you half his realm to guide; Yea, and that half which in abounding store Of things that serve to make a wealthy realm, In stately cities, and in fruitful soil, In temperate breathing of the milder Heaven, In things of needful use, which friendly sea Transports by traffic from the foreign parts, In flowing wealth, in honour and in force, Doth <u>pass</u> the double value of the part That Porrex hath allotted to his reign. Such is your case, such is your father's love.	= "your father neither"; Dordan tries to soften the hurt caused by Gorboduc's decision to divide Britain.
26		
28		
30		
32		
34		
36		
38		
40		
42		
44		
46		
48		
50	Ferr. Ah love, my friends? love wrongs not whom he loves.	
52	Dord. Ne yet he wrongeth you, that giveth you	
54	So large a reign, ere that the course of time Bring you to kingdom by descended right, Which time perhaps might end your time before.	
56		
58	Ferr. Is this no wrong, say you, to reave from me	
60	My native right of half so great a realm? And thus to match his younger son with me In <u>egal</u> power, and in as great <u>degree</u> ?	
62	Yea, and <u>what</u> son? The son whose swelling pride Would never yield one point of reverence, When I the elder and <u>apparent heir</u>	
64	Stood in the likelihood to possess the whole;	
66	Yea, and that son which from his childish age Envieth my honour, and doth hate my life.	
		= mistaken 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 <i>before</i> 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 <i>never</i> 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: <i>like-l'hood</i> .
		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,
 Is armed with force, with wealth, and kingly state?

 70 **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 griefful 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:

 98 But sith in each good gift and princely art
 Ye are his match, and in the chief of all –
 100 In mildness and in sober governance –
 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
 Be deemèd cowardice and simple dread,
 Which shall give courage to the fiery head
 106 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;	first while he, Ferrex, still has the advantage. 109-110: "while the wrong done to you is still fresh in people's minds".
112	And <u>ere</u> your brother have by settled power, By <u>guileful cloak</u> of an <u>alluring show</u> , Got him some force and favour in this realm;	= 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. <i>guileful cloak</i> = deceiving disguise. ² <i>alluring show</i> = attractive playing of the part.
114	And while the noble queen your mother lives, To work and <u>practice</u> all for your <u>avail</u> ;	114-5: Hermon is aware that Ferrex is his mother's favourite. = scheme. = benefit.
116	Attempt redress by arms, and <u>wreak</u> yourselves Upon his life that gaineth by your loss,	= revenge.
118	Who now to shame of you, and grieve of us, In your own kingdom triumphs over you:	
120	Shew now your courage <u>meet</u> for kingly state, That <u>they which</u> have <u>avowed</u> 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 <u>ne fail</u> 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 <u>eke shall appease</u> 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 <u>requite</u> Their friendly favour, or their hateful spite,	
134	Yea, or their slackness to advance your cause.	
136	"Wise men do not so hang on passing state Of present princes, chiefly in their age,	
138	But they will further cast their reaching eye, To view and weigh the times and reigns to come."	
140	Ne is it likely, though the king be <u>wroth</u> , That he yet will, or that the realm will bear,	
142	Extreme revenge upon his only son: Or if he would, <u>what one is he that dare</u> Be <u>minister</u> to such an enterprise?	
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 <u>counsel turn his tender mind</u> ,	

148	Or age, or sorrow end his weary days. But if the fear of gods, and secret grudge	yielding or pliant (<i>tender</i>) mind"
150	Of <i>nature's law</i> , <u>repining at the fact</u> ,	150: "nature turns with pain or shrinks (<i>repines</i>) from the deed (<i>fact</i>) of killing one's brother" (Smith, p. 36). ¹⁶ <i>nature's law</i> = ie. the law against killing one's kin.
152	Withhold your courage from so great attempt, Know ye, that lust of kingdoms hath no law,	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.
154	The gods do bear and well <u>allow</u> in kings The things [that] they abhor in <u>rascal routs</u> .	= approve. ³
156	"When kings on <u>slender quarrels</u> run to wars, And then in cruēl and unkindly <u>wise</u>	= worthless rabble. ²
158	Command thefts, rapes, murder of innocents, To spoil of towns, and reigns of mighty realms;	= slight pretexts.
160	Think you such princes do <u>suppress themselves</u> Subject to laws of <u>kind</u> , and fear of gods?" Murders, and violent thefts in <u>private men</u>	= manner.
162	Are heinous crimes and full of foul reproach: Yet <u>none offence</u> , but decked with glorious name	= "limit their behaviour so as to remain".
164	Of noble conquests in the hands of kings. But if you like not yet so <u>hot device</u> ,	= nature or familial relations.
166	Ne <u>list</u> to take such vantage of the time,	= ie. those not serving any public office, or at least those who are not kings.
168	But, though with <u>peril of your own estate</u> , You will not be the first that shall invade;	= ie. are not considered offensive or criminal.
170	Assemble yet your force for your defense, And for your safety stand upon your guard.	165: ie. "but if you are uncomfortable with such an extreme scheme (<i>hot device</i>)".
172	Dord. Oh, Heaven! was there ever heard or known So wicked counsel to a noble prince?	166: "nor wish (<i>list</i>) to take advantage of this propitious moment".
174	Let me, my lord, disclose unto your grace This heinous tale, what mischief it contains;	= "danger of losing your own kingdom". ¹
176	Your father's death, your brother's, and your own, Your present murder, and eternal shame.	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 <i>his</i> half.
178	Hear me, O king, and suffer not to sink So high a treason in your princely breast.	174-5: Dordan will predict what will happen if Ferrex follows Hermon's advice.
180	Ferr. The mighty gods forbid that ever I	
182	Should once conceive such mischief in my heart.	
184	Although my brother hath <u>bereft</u> my realm, And bear perhaps to me an hateful mind,	= "deprived me of".
186	Shall I revenge it with his death therefore? Or shall I so destroy my father's life	
188	That gave me life? The gods forbid, I say, Cease <u>you</u> to speak so anymore to me. —	= ie. Hermon.
190	<u>Ne you, my friend</u> , with answer once repeat So foul a tale: in silence let it die. What lord or subject shall have hope at all	= 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
194 Their goods, their honours, lands and liberties,
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,

220 Then traitorous counsel now will whirl about
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!

[*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?
3 And now while yet his agèd father lives?
4 Neither regards he him, nor fears he me?
5 War would he have? and he shall have it so.

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

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

19 Each man withdraws from talk and company
20 Of those that have been known to favour you:
21 To hide the mischief of their meaning there,
22 Rumours are spread of your preparing here.
23 The rascal numbers of [th'] unskilful sort

24 Are filled with monstrous tales of you and yours.
25 In secret I was counseled by my friends
26 To haste me thence, and brought you, as you know,
27 Letters from those that both can truly tell,
28 And would not write unless they knew it well.

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

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

41 Ne will to him, ne to my father send.
42 If danger were for one to tarry there,
43 Think ye it safety to return again?

44 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?"

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

	With these poor remnants of the Trojan name, Have not determined by unmovèd fate Out of this realm to <u>rāse</u> the British line;	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 (<i>Ilion</i> is another traditional name for Troy), will only be finally appeased by the complete destruction of the royal Trojan line in Britain. <i>rāse</i> = probably a variation of <i>raze</i> , to erase or obliterate.
82		= before.
84	By good advice, by awe of father's name, By force of wiser lords, this kindled hate	= means of support.
86	May yet be quenched, <u>ere</u> it consume us all.	= ie. act in an uncontrolled or wild manner.
88	Chorus. When youth not bridled with a guiding <u>stay</u>	= uncontrolled or not yet mastered. ¹
90	Is left to <u>randon</u> of their own delight,	= irrational. ¹⁶
92	And welds whole realms, by force of sovereign sway, Great is the danger of <u>unmastered</u> might,	
94	Lest <u>skilless</u> rage throw down with headlong fall Their lands, their states, their lives, themselves and all.	
96	When growing pride doth fill the swelling breast, And greedy lust doth raise the climbing mind,	
98	O, hardly may the peril be repressed; Ne fear of angry gods, <u>ne laws kind,</u>	= nor laws of nature or familial relations; Cauthen suggests that <i>laws</i> here should be pronounced with two syllables: <i>LAW-es</i> .
100	Ne country's care can firèd hearts restrain, When force hath armèd envy and disdain.	
102	When kings of <u>foreset</u> will neglect the <u>rede</u>	102: <i>foreset</i> = fixed purpose, ¹ though Creeth suggests "foresight". <i>rede</i> = judgment ¹ or advice. ⁴
104	Of best advice, and yield to <u>pleasing tales</u> ,	= ie. flattery.
	That do their fancy's <u>noisome</u> humour feed,	= harmful. ¹⁶
106	Ne reason, nor regard of right avails: Succeeding heaps of plagues shall teach too late,	
108	To learn the mischiefs of misguiding state.	
110	Foul fall the traitor false, that undermines The love of brethren, to destroy them both!	109: note the intense alliterative use of one-syllable words beginning with <i>f</i> and containing an <i>l</i> in this line.
	Woe to the prince <u>that pliant ear inclines</u> ,	= ie. who willingly listens to the advice of flatterers. <i>pliant</i> = easily influenced. ¹
112	And yields his mind to poisonous tale that floweth	
114	From flattering mouth! and woe to wretched land That wastes itself with civil sword in hand!	
116	Lo thus it is, poison in gold to take, And wholesome drink in <u>homely</u> cup forsake.	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. <i>homely</i> = unpretentious. ⁵

END OF ACT II.

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.

= symbolizing.

= brothers.

ACT III, SCENE I.

The Court of Gorboduc.

Enter Gorboduc, Eubulus, and Arostus.

- 1 **Gorb.** O cruel Fates, O mindful wrath of gods,
2 Whose vengeance neither Simois' strained streams
4 Flowing with blood of Trojan princes slain,
Nor Phrygian fields made rank with corpses dead

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

- Of Asian kings and lords, can yet appease;
6 Ne slaughter of unhappy Priam's race,

= 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,
 Happy was Hecuba, the woefullest wretch
 14 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 *Eubulus readeth the letter.*
 34 My sovereign lord, what I am loath to write
 36 But loapest 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 untempered wits,
 40 Assembleth force against your younger son;
 Ne can my counsel yet withdraw the heat
 42 And furious pangs of his enflamed 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."
untempered = 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> : Great is the matter and a woeful case; But timely knowledge may bring timely help. Send for them both unto your presence here: The reverence of your honour, age, and state, Your grave advice, the awe of father's name, Shall quickly knit again this broken peace.	53: "assuage your grief and put off (<i>stay</i>) your lamenting (<i>plaint</i>)." = commands. ¹⁶
56	And if in either of my lords your sons Be such untamèd and unyielding pride, As will not bend unto your noble <u>hests</u> ;	
60	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> .
62		
64	Or Porrex not content, aspires to more Than you him gave, above his native right; 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> Could not be half so grievful to your grace As these most wretched tidings that I bring.	= ie. "your lack of vigorous health".
86	Gorb. Oh <u>heavens</u> , yet more? no end of woes to me?	
88	Phil. <u>Tyndar</u> , O king, came lately from the court Of Ferrex, to my lord your younger son, And made report of great prepared store Of war, and saith that it is wholly meant Against Porrex, <u>for high disdain that he</u> 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. Porrex is now so set on flaming fire, Partly with kindled rage of cruél wrath,	= 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. = 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. = ie. "out of Ferrex's disdain for Porrex who". = equal.

98	Partly with hope to gain a realm thereby, That he in haste prepareth to invade His brother's land, and with <u>unkindly</u> war Threatens the murder of your elder son;	= unnatural.
100	Ne could I him persuade, that first he should Send to his brother to demand the cause;	
102	Nor yet to you, to <u>stay</u> his hateful strife. <u>Wherefore</u> , sith there no more I can be heard,	= delay.
104	I come myself now to inform your grace, And to beseech you, as you love the life	= in consequence of which. ¹ = since.
106	And safety of your children and your realm, Now to employ your wisdom and your force,	
108	To <u>stay</u> this mischief ere it be too late.	
110		= stop.
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 <u>travail</u> to <u>assuage</u> their minds: As if their hearts, whom neither brother's love,	= strive. = mollify. ¹⁶
116	Nor <u>father's awe</u> , nor <u>kingdom's cares</u> can move,	116: <i>father's awe</i> = ie. reverence for their father. <i>kingdom's cares</i> = worries or anxieties over their kingdoms.
118	Our <u>counsels</u> could withdraw from raging heat. Jove slay them both, and end the cursed line!	= advice.
120	For <u>though</u> , perhaps, fear of such mighty force As I, my lords, joined with your noble aids,	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."
122	May yet raise, shall repent their present heat; The secret grudge and malice will remain,	
124	The fire not quenched, but kept in close restraint, Fed still within, breaks forth with double flame:	= "will be necessary to appease"; both <i>pease</i> and <i>appease</i> were in use by the early 14th century. ¹
	Their death and mine <u>must pease</u> the angry gods.	
126		127-8: Philander pleads with the king not to project an inevitable tragic ending to the unfolding situation.
128	Phil. Yield not, O king, so much to weak despair: Your sons yet live; and long, I trust, they shall.	129-130: another rhyming couplet appears in the blank verse here.
130	If Fates had taken you from earthly life, Before beginning of this civil strife,	
132	Perhaps your sons in their unmastered youth, Loose from regard of any living <u>wight</u> ,	132: free from the close attention of any person (<i>wight</i>) with authority over them
134	Would run on headlong, with unbridled race, To their own death, and ruin of this realm.	
136	But sith the gods, that have the care for kings, Of things and times dispose the order so,	
138	That in your life this kindled flame breaks forth, While yet your life, your wisdom, and your power,	
140	May <u>stay</u> the growing mischief, and repress The fiery blaze of their enkindled heat;	= check, cut off.
142	It seems, and so ye ought to <u>deem</u> thereof, That <u>loving Jove</u> hath tempered so the time	= "think about it this way".
144	Of this debate to happen in <u>your days</u> , That you yet living may the same appease,	= Jove, who is full of love.
	And add it to the glory of your <u>latter age</u> ,	= ie. "while you are still alive".
		= old age.
		Line 145 appears to have 12 syllables; Morley ²² suggests pronouncing <i>add it to the</i> "swiftly" in two syllables: <i>add t' t the</i> . 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 plaints 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 renowm
 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.

Enter Nuntius.

180
 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.

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 plaints = 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 (**renowm**), or death in a more fortunate manner (**happy sort**)."
We note that **renowm** 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

		require days or weeks to occur <i>off-stage</i> take place within minutes of each other <i>on-stage</i> . This tactic hastens the pace of the story, heightening the play's drama.
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 <u>sire</u> !	= "father", meaning himself; another rhyming couplet has inserted itself in 192-3.
194	But let us go, that yet perhaps I may Die with revenge, and <u>pease</u> the <u>hateful</u> gods.	195: pease = appease. hateful = full of hate; you can create your own Elizabethan adjective by attaching <i>-ful</i> to the end of any emotion (and I suppose any noun), and the result will mean "full of (emotion)".
196		
198		[<i>Exeunt.</i>]
200	Chorus. The <u>lust</u> of kingdom knows no sacred faith,	= desire or greed for. Note that this Chorus is comprised of 4-line stanzas, each with a rhyme-scheme of <i>ab-ab</i> , before ending with a final rhyming couplet.
202	No rule of reason, no regard of right, No <u>kindly</u> love, no fear of Heaven's wrath: But with contempt of gods, and man's <u>despite</u> ,	200: a spectacular bit of alliteration. = familial. = spite, malicious hate. ³
204	Through bloody slaughter doth prepare the ways To fatal sceptre, and accursèd reign:	
206	The son so loathes the father's lingering days, <u>Ne dreads</u> his hand in brother's blood to stain.	206: the heir to the throne is resentful when the king his father lives too long. = "nor fears".
208	O wretched prince, <u>ne dost thou yet record</u>	= "can you not remember". ¹⁶
210	The yet fresh <u>murthers</u> done within the land	
212	Of thy forefathers, when the cruél sword Bereft Morgan his life with cousin's hand?	= 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.
214	Thus fatal plagues pursue the guilty race,	212: see Act I.ii.166-7, for the note on Morgan .
216	Whose murderous hand, <u>imbruēd</u> with guiltless blood, Asks vengeance still before the heavens' face, With endless mischiefs on the cursèd brood.	214: Cunliffe suggests the line refers to the classical notion of an inescapable family curse. = stained, defiled or steeped in. ¹
218		
220	The wicked child thus brings to <u>woeful sire</u> The mournful plaints to waste his weary life;	
222	Thus do the cruél flames of civil fire Destroy the parted reign with hateful strife:	= ie. his grieving father.
224	And hence doth spring the well from which doth flow The dead black streams of mournings, plaints, and woe.	

END OF ACT III.

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
6 blood and flames, their bodies girt with snakes, their
heads spread with serpents instead of hair, the one
8 bearing in her hand a snake, the other a whip, and the
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

14 about the stage thrice, they depart, and then the music
ceases.

16 Hereby is signified the unnatural murders to
follow: that is to say, Porrex slain by his own mother,
18 and King Gorboduc and Queen Videna killed by their
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

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

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?
3 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?
12 Or should not this most hard and cruël soil,
So oft where I have pressed my wretched steps,

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

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

 But whereunto waste I this ruthful speech,
 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

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.

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

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

Enter Eubulus and Porrex.

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

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

	As from his wearied horse he did alight, For that your grace did <u>will</u> such haste therein.	= desire.
18	Gorb. <u>We</u> like and praise this speedy will in you, To work the thing that to your <u>charge</u> we gave. — Porrex, if we so far should swerve from kind, And from those bounds which law of nature sets, As thou hast done by vile and wretched deed, In cruel murder of thy brother's life; Our present hand could <u>stay</u> no <u>lenger</u> time, But straight should bathe <u>this blade</u> in blood of thee As just revenge of thy detested crime. <u>No;</u> we <u>should</u> not offend the law of <u>kind</u>	= Gorboduc continues to use the royal "we". = responsibility. 20: ie. "if I was to behave in such an unnatural manner".
24		
26		
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 <u>measure</u> death for death, thy due desert: Yet <u>sith</u> thou art our child, and <u>sith</u> as yet	= hold back, delay. = archaic form of longer . = Gorboduc gestures to or raises his sword here.
34		
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40	In this hard case what word thou canst allege For thy defense, by us hath not been heard, We are content to <u>stay</u> our <u>will</u> for <u>that</u> Which justice bids us presently to work; And give thee <u>leave</u> to use thy speech at full, If <u>aught</u> thou have to lay for thine excuse.	27: No = the sense is "indeed no". should not = ie. would not. kind = nature or familial relationships.
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50	Porr. Neither, O king, I can or will deny, But that this hand from Ferrex life hath reft: Which <u>fact</u> how much my doleful heart doth wail, O! would it mought as full appear to sight As inward grief doth pour it forth to me. So yet perhaps, if ever <u>ruthful</u> heart Melting in tears within a manly breast, Through deep repentance of his bloody <u>fact</u> , If ever grief, if ever woeful man Might move regret with sorrow of his fault, I think the torment of my mournful case Known to your grace, as I do feel the same, Would force even <u>Wrath</u> herself to pity me.	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.
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58	But as the water troubled with the mud Shews not the face which else the eye should see, Even so your <u>ireful</u> mind with stirrèd thought Cannot so <u>perfectly</u> discern my cause.	= restrain, delay. = desire. = ie. his killing Porrex.
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60 I must content me with, most wretched man,
 That to myself I must reserve my woe,
 In pining thoughts of mine accursed 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 record 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

 90 By your own hest were joined in governance
 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 swell'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.
 104 Yet I that judgèd it my part to seek
 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.

	Even nature moved me then to hold my life	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".
136	More dear to me than his, and <u>bad this hand</u> , Since by his life my death must needs ensue, And by his death my life to be preserved, To shed his blood, and seek my safety so; And wisdom willèd me, without <u>protract</u> ,	= bade, ie. enjoined. ² = Porrex raises his right, or sword, hand.
138	In speedy <u>wise</u> to put <u>the same in ure</u> .	= delay. ³
140	Thus have I told the cause that movèd me To work my brother's death, and so I yield	= way. = ie. his plan to kill Ferrex. = into action. ¹
142	My life, my death, to judgment of your grace.	
146	Gorb. Oh cruël <u>wight</u> , should any cause prevail To make thee stain thy hands with brother's blood?	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.
148	But what of thee we will resolve to do	= person.
150	Shall yet remain unknown: thou in the <u>mean</u> Shalt from our royal presence banished be,	148-9: <i>But what...unknown</i> = "my decision over what to do about this situation will come at a later time".
152	Until our princely pleasure <u>further</u> shall To thee be showed; depart therefore our sight,	= meantime.
154	Accursèd child!	= further.
156		155: stage direction added by Smith.
158	What cruël destiny, What <u>foward</u> fate hath <u>sorted us this chance</u> ,	= contrary. ² = "allotted to me this falling out of events". ²
160	That even <u>in those</u> , where we should comfort find, Where our delight now in our agèd days	= ie. "in those people".
162	Should rest and be, <u>even there our only</u> grief And deepest sorrows to <u>abridge</u> our life,	= the sense of this clause is simply "only".
164	Most <u>pining cares</u> and deadly thoughts do grow.	= cut short.
166	Aros. <u>Your</u> grace should now, in these grave years of yours Have found <u>ere this</u> the price of mortal joys;	= wasting or consuming anxieties.
168	How short they be; how fading here in earth; How full of change; how brittle our <u>estate</u> ;	165-6: a sentence of regret: Arostus is ruing the fact that now that he is in his old age, when he should be able to live in ease and contentment, Gorboduc should discover the price that must be paid for any happiness we have on earth.
170	Of nothing sure, save only of the death To whom both man and all the world doth owe	<i>Your</i> = read as "That your".
172	Their end at last; neither shall nature's power In <u>other sort</u> against your heart prevail,	<i>ere this</i> = before now.
174	Than as the naked hand whose stroke <u>assays</u> The armèd breast where force doth <u>light</u> in vain.	= condition.
176	Gorb. Many can yield right grave and sage advice	= another way. = attempts (to pierce). = land or strike.
		176-182: Gorboduc is bitter and sarcastic in this speech.

	Of patient <u>sprite</u> to others wrapped in woe,	176-7: "it's easy for others to advise someone in despair to be patient". <i>sprite</i> = spirit.
178	And can in speech both rule and conquer <u>kind</u> ;	178: ie. "and can in doing so overcome distraught feelings with words alone." <i>kind</i> = nature.
180	Who if by proof they might feel nature's force, Would show themselves men as they are indeed,	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.
	<u>Which now will needs be gods.</u> But what doth mean	= 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.
182	The <u>sorry cheer</u> of her that here doth come?	= sorrowful countenance or expression. ¹⁶
184	<i>Enter Marcella.</i>	Entering character: <i>Marcella</i> is a noble woman serving as Queen Videna's lady-in-waiting, a position of honour.
186	Marc. O, where is <u>ruth</u> ? or where is pity now? <u>Whither</u> is gentle heart and mercy fled?	= mercy or pity. = to where.
188	Are they exiled out of our stony breasts, Never to make return? Is all the world	
190	Drownèd in blood, and sunk in cruélty?	
192	If not in women mercy may be found, If not, alas, within the mother's breast,	
194	To her own child, to her own flesh and blood; If ruth be banished <u>thence</u> ; if pity there	
196	May have no place; if there no gentle heart Do live and dwell, where should we seek it then?	= from there.
198	Gorb. Madam, alas, what means your woeful tale?	
200	Marc. O <u>silly</u> woman I; why to this hour Have <u>kind</u> and fortune thus <u>deferred my breath</u>	= foolish or weak. = nature. = "prolonged my life". ¹
202	That I should live to see this doleful day?	
204	Will ever <u>wight</u> believe that such hard heart Could rest within the cruél mother's breast?	= humanity.
206	With her own hand to slay her only son?	
208	But <u>out</u> , alas, these eyes beheld the same: They saw the <u>dreary</u> sight, and are become	
210	Most ruthful records of the bloody <u>fact</u> . Porrex, alas, is by his mother slain,	
212	And with her hand, a woeful thing to tell, While slumb'ring on his <u>careful</u> bed he rests,	
214	His heart stabbed in with knife is reft of life.	
216	Gorb. O Eubulus, O, draw this sword of ours, And pierce this heart with speed. O hateful light, O loathsome life, O sweet and welcome death!	= an exclamation of grief. ¹ = gory or bloody, a very ancient meaning for <i>dreary</i> . ¹ = witnesses. ¹ = criminal deed.

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.

	Dear Eubulus, <u>work</u> this we thee beseech.	= do.
218		= "be patient", a rare use of patient as a verb. ¹
220	Eubu. <u>Patient</u> your grace, perhaps he liveth yet, With wound received, but not of certain death.	
222	Gorb. O let us then <u>repair</u> unto the place, And see if Porrex live, or thus be slain.	= go.
224		
226	Marc. Alas, he liveth not! it is too true. That with these eyes, of him a peerless prince, Son to a king, and in the flower of youth, Even with a <u>twink</u> a <u>senseless stock</u> I saw.	228: twink = a wink of an eye. ¹ stock = a body shorn of the physical senses. ¹
230	[Exeunt Gorboduc and Eubulus.]	230: stage direction added by Smith.
232	Aros. O damnèd deed!	
234	Marc. But hear his <u>ruthful</u> end: The noble prince, pierced with the sudden wound, Out of his wretched slumber <u>hastely start</u> ,	= pitiful.
236		= hastily or suddenly started; ¹ hastely , an early form of hastily , is pronounced in two syllables.
238	Whose strength now failing, straight he <u>overthrew</u> , When in the fall his eyes even now unclosed Beheld the queen, and cried to her for help.	= fell down. ¹⁶
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>Dispoiled straight his breast</u> , and all we might,	= "nothing".
248	Wipèd in vain with napkins next at hand The sudden streams of blood that flushèd fast Out of the gaping wound. O, what a look!	= "quickly stripped off his upper garment".
250	O, what a Ruthful, steadfast eye, methought	dispoiled = undressed. ¹⁶
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;	= start or sudden spasm. ³
256	And straight pale death pressing within his face, The flying <u>ghost</u> his mortal corpse forsook.	= ie. deeply felt.
258		
260	Aros. Never did age bring forth so vile a <u>fact</u> !	= spirit or soul.
262	Marc. O hard and cruél <u>hap</u> , that thus assigned Unto so worthy a <u>wight</u> so wretched end:	= deed.
264		= fate. ²
266	But most hard cruél heart, that could <u>consent</u> To lend the hateful destinies that hand, By which, alas, so heinous crime was wrought! O queen of <u>adamant</u> ! O marble breast! If not the <u>favour</u> of his <u>comely</u> face,	262: another line with an extra syllable; a can easily be removed if one wishes. wight = individual. = agree. ³
		= legendary and oft-referred-to mineral of great hardness. = appearance. ¹ = attractive, handsome.

268	If not his princely cheer and countenance, His valiant active arms, his manly breast,	
270	If not his fair and seemly personage,	
272	His noble limbs, in such proportion <u>cast</u> As would have <u>rapt</u> a <u>silly</u> woman's thought; –	= molded. = enraptured, captured the heart of. = foolish.
274	If this <u>mought</u> not have moved thy bloody heart, And that most cruél hand, the wretched weapon Even to let fall, and kissed him in the face,	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. <i>mought</i> (line 273) = might.
276	With tears for <u>ruth</u> to <u>reave</u> such one by death: Should nature yet consent to slay her son?	= pity. = rob.
278	O mother, thou to murder thus thy child?	
280	Even Jove with justice must with lightning flames From Heaven send down some strange revenge on thee. –	
282	Ah, noble prince, how oft have I beheld Thee mounted on thy fierce and trampling steed, Shining in armour bright before the <u>tilt</u> ,	= jousting tournament; such elements of medieval romance described by Marcella throughout this speech are ob- viously anachronistic (Cauthen, p. 57). ¹⁵
284	And with thy mistress' sleeve tied on thy <u>helm</u> ,	= helmet. The <i>sleeve</i> 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.
286	And <u>charge</u> thy <u>staff</u> to please thy lady's eye, That <u>bowed</u> the <u>head-piece</u> of thy friendly foe?	= ie. level his lance (Cauthen, p. 57). ¹⁵ = bent. ³ = helmet.
	How oft in arms on horse to <u>bend</u> the <u>mace</u> ?	= aim or direct his weapon. <i>mace</i> = a heavy club, possibly with a metal, some- times spiked, head. ¹
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 <u>plaints</u> are shed,	
292	Rather with me depart, and help to <u>suage</u>	
294	The <u>thoughtful</u> griefs that in the agèd king Must needs by nature grow by death of this His only son, whom he did hold so dear.	= laments. = allay, an alternate form of <i>assuage</i> . = sorrowful. ¹
296	Marc. What wight is that which saw that I did see, And could refrain to wail with plaint and tears?	
298	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		[<i>Exeunt.</i>]
304	Chorus. When greedy <u>lust</u> in royal seat to reign	305f: The final Chorus returns to the 6-line stanzas, except for the second stanza (lines 312-321), which has 10 lines. <i>lust</i> = desire. = robbed. = also.
306	Hath <u>reft</u> all care of gods and <u>eke</u> of men, And cruél heart, wrath, treason and disdain,	
308	Within ambitious breast are lodgèd, then Behold how mischief wide herself displays,	

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 <u>wreak</u> ; then sends he forth with speed	= work his vengeance.
316	The dreadful Furies, daughters of the <u>night</u> , With serpents girt, <u>carrying</u> the whip of ire,	315-8: the chorus returns to the image of the Furies , who
318	With <u>heare</u> of stinging snakes, and shining bright With flames and blood, and with a brand of fire:	corporeally appeared in the Dumb Show at the beginning of this Act; the sisters were sometimes described as daugh- ters of the mythological god Night . Compare the descriptive language here with that of the Dumb Show, lines 3-8.
320	These for revenge of wretched murder done, Do make the mother kill her only son.	Line 317 has an extra syllable; perhaps <i>carrying</i> should be pronounced as a disyllable: <i>carr-ying</i> .
322	Blood asketh blood, and death must death <u>requite</u> :	heare (line 318) = old variation of hair .
324	Jove by his just and everlasting <u>doom</u>	
326	Justly hath ever so requited it; The times before record, and times to come	= repay.
328	Shall find it true, and so doth present proof Present before our eyes for our <u>behoof</u> .	= judgment.
330	O <u>happy wight</u> that suffers not the snare Of murderous mind to tangle him in blood;	= this word dating from the 13th century means "benefit".
332	And happy he, that can in time <u>beware</u>	= fortunate man.
334	By others' harms, and turn it to his good: But woe to him, that fearing not t' offend, Doth serve his lust, and will not see the end.	= the sense is "learned from".

END OF ACT IV.

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.

= 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.

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.*

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 Loegris**, 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 Cumberland**, which includes modern-day Wales at least.

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

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

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

	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 mislikes.	= 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.
56	Though kings forget to govern as they ought,	55: ie. "though a sovereign may not always rule with moderation as he should".
	Yet subjects must obey as they are bound.	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.
	But now, my lords, before ye farther wade,	= people.
58	Or spend your speech, what sharp revenge shall fall By justice' plague on these rebellious <u>wights</u> ;	= unequal.
60	Methinks, ye rather should first search the way By which in time, the rage of this uproar	56: pronounce in one syllable, as <i>dear'st</i> .
62	Mought be repressed, and these great tumults ceased.	72: "and we shall also be conquered" (Smith, p. 80).
64	Even yet the life of Britain land doth hang In traitor's balance of <u>unegal</u> weight;	71: the sense is, "if you allow the people to act out their desires or inclinations".
66	Think not, my lords, the death of Gorboduc,	= stop.
68	Nor yet Videna's blood will cease their rage: Even our own lives, our wives and children dear,	= ie. one violent, blood-spilling act to another. = more.
70	Our country, <u>dearest</u> of all, in danger stands Now to be spoiled; now, now made desolate,	= fickle. ²
72	And by ourselves a conquest to ensue. For, give once sway unto the people's lusts,	78: ie. the people don't know what they want.
74	To rush forth on, and <u>stay</u> them not in time, And as the stream that rolleth down the hill,	= a large number.
76	So will they headlong run with raging thoughts From <u>blood to blood</u> , from mischief unto <u>moe</u> ,	= deed.
78	To ruin of the realm, themselves and all: So <u>giddy</u> are the common people's minds,	82: <i>wrought</i> = the past tense of "work", referring to an action intended to bring about a certain result.
80	So glad of change, more wav'ring than the sea. Ye see, my lords, what strength these rebels have;	<i>lodge...field</i> = the rebels have not gone home yet, though they have accomplished their initial goal of killing the king and queen.
82	What <u>hugy number</u> is assembled still: For though the traitorous <u>fact</u> for which they rose	
	Be <u>wrought</u> and done, yet <u>lodge they still in field</u> ;	
84	So that how far their furies yet will stretch 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, Or their rebellious roars forthwith will cease: These violent things may have no lasting long. Let us therefore use this for present help:	= raise an army.
92	Persuade by gentle speech, and offer grace, With gift of pardon, save unto the chief,	
94	And that upon condition that <u>forthwith</u> They yield <u>the captains of their enterprise</u>	
96	To bear such <u>guerdon</u> of their traitorous <u>fact</u> , As may be both due vengeance to themselves, And wholesome terror to posterity.	
98	This shall, I think, scatter the greatest part That now are holden with desire of home,	
100	Wearied in field with cold of winter's nights, And some, no doubt, stricken with dread of law.	
102	When this is once proclaimèd, it shall make The captains to mistrust the multitude,	
104	Whose safety bids them to betray their <u>heads</u> :	
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.	
108	And while we <u>treat</u> and <u>stand on terms of grace</u> ,	
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.	
112	In the meanwhile, make you in readiness Such <u>band of horsemen</u> as ye may prepare:	
114	Horsemen, you know, are not the common's strength, But are the force and store of noble men,	
116	Whereby th' unchosen and unarmed <u>sort</u> Of skilless rebels, whom none other power But number makes to be of dreadful force, With sudden brunt may quickly be oppressed.	
90	90: "in the meantime, here is what we should do".	
91-92	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	= immediately. ¹	
96	= ie. their leaders.	
98	= ie. receive. = reward. = deeds.	
97	97: ie. "and as a warning to those in the future who may consider rebelling against their monarch."	
98-101	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.	
102-4	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	heads = leaders, with perhaps a secondary reference to the heads the leaders can expect to lose.	
106	= wretched rabble.	
107	106-7: "when it comes to momentous and dangerous schemes, can never be trusted by their betters".	
108	108: ie. "so that by offering a general pardon". treat = negotiate. stand on terms of grace = "insist on the conditions of our offer".	
110	= mollify.	
111	110: eke = also.	
112	110-1: whose only...power = "which will allow us to suppress the rebellion while preventing further bloodshed."	
113	withouten = without (archaic).	
114	= ie. a cavalry force.	
115	114-5: cavalry is always made up of noblemen, never of those of lower rank.	
116	= collection.	
117-8	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> , Than do I wish such slaughter to be made,	= ambitions.
124	As present age and eke posterity May be <u>adrad</u> with horror of revenge,	= archaic variation on adread , meaning "terrified". ¹
126	That justly than shall on these rebels fall: This is, my lords, the sum of mine advice.	
128		
130	Clot. Neither this case admits debate at large; And though it did, this speech that hath been said	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."
	Hath well abridged the tale I would have told.	
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"; reft is the past tense of the verb reave , which appears, together with its cognate bereave , an even dozen times in this play. Interestingly, reft and bereft 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 offspring is treated as a singular word, with is .
146	No <u>issue</u> now remains: the heir unknown; The people are in arms and mutinies;	= children or descendants.
148	The nobles they are busied how to cease These great rebellious tumults and uproars;	
150	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	= Britain land is personified.
	That will or dare pursue to bear her crown.	
154	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.
	Descended from that line of noble blood,	
156	Which hath so long flourished in worthy fame	
	Of valiant hearts, such as in noble breasts	
158	<u>Of right</u> should <u>rest</u> above the <u>baser</u> sort, Refuse to <u>venture life</u> to win a crown?	= by right. = ie. stand. = lower, meaner. = "risk my life".
160	Whom shall I find <u>ennies</u> that will withstand My <u>fact</u> herein, if I attempt by arms	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.
162	To seek the same now in these times of <u>broil</u> ?	ennies = enemies; enemy sometimes was written beginning with <i>emn-</i> in this period, and fits the meter better here. fact = 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 agèd 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 distrain
 Their wretched minds, forget their loyal heart,
 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 millennium.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,
 Bound to preserve their country and their king,
 Born to defend their commonwealth and prince,
 Even they should give consent thus to subvert
 Thee, Britain land, and from thy womb should spring,
 O native soil, those that will needs destroy
 And ruin thee, and eke themselves in fine.
 For lo, when once the dukes had offered grace
 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,
 And knew the difference of prince's power
 From headless number of tumultuous routs,
 Whom common country's care, and private fear,
 Taught to repent the terror of their rage,
 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
 Their own offense, than that they could conceive

 38 Such hope of pardon for so foul misdeed;
 Or for that they their captains could not yield,
 Who fearing to be yielded, fled before,
 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
 By love, by law, by grace, ne yet by fear,
 By proffered life, nay yet by threatened death;
 With minds hopeless of life, dreadless of death,
 Careless of country, and aweless of God,
 Stood bent to fight as furies did them move,
 With violent death to close their traitorous life.
 These all by power of horsemen were oppressed,

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

 56 And of the murder of their sacred prince. —
 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.
carriion carcasses = dead bodies which serve as food for vultures or other scavengers.

 = ie. "here come".

58

Enter Clotyn, Mandud, Gwenard, and Arostus.

60

Clot. I think the world will now at length beware,
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 hugy fields
With blood and bodies spread with rebels slain,
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 lotted to those wretched folks.

72

Gwen. But what means he that cometh here so fast?

74

Enter Nuntius.

76

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
To do the service that my heart desires,
I would not shun t' embrace a present death;
So have I now in that wherein I thought
My travail mought perform some good effect,
Ventured my life to bring these tidings here.
Fergus, the mighty Duke of Albany,
Is now in arms, and lodgeth in the fields
With twenty thousand men; hither he bends
His speedy march, and minds t' invade the crown:
Daily he gathereth strength, and spreads abroad,
That to this realm no certain heir remains,
That Britain land is left without a guide,
That he the sceptre seeks for nothing else
But to preserve the people and the land,
Which now remain as ship without a stern.
Lo, this is that which I have here to say.

96

Clot. Is this his faith? and shall he falsely thus
Abuse the vantage of unhappy times?
O wretched land, if his outrageous pride,
His cruél and untempered willfulness,
His deep dissembling shows of false pretence,
Should once attain the crown of Britain land!
Let us, my lords, with timely force resist
The new attempt of this our common foe,
As we would quench the flames of common fire.

106

Mand. Though we remain without a certain prince
To wield the realm, or guide the wandering rule,
Yet now the common mother of us all,
Our native land, our country, that contains
Our wives, children, kindred, ourselves, and all
That ever is or may be dear to man,

Entering Characters: notice that Fergus is missing!

= vast.

= ie. allotted.

= "but who is that hurrying towards us?"

= another messenger.

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

= loyalty.

= ie. take improper advantage.

= definitive heir to the throne.

114 Cries unto us to help ourselves and her.
 Let us advance our powers to repress
 This growing foe of all our liberties.
 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 lenger out our days,
 122 To see the hugy heaps of these unhaps
 That now roll down upon the wretched land,
 124 Where empty place of princely governance,
 No certain stay now left of doubtless heir,
 Thus leave this guideless realm an open prey
 126 To endless storms and waste of civil war.
 128 **Aros.** That ye, my lords, do so agree in one,
 To save your country from the violent reign
 130 And wrongfully usurpèd tyranny
 Of him that threatens conquest of you all,
 132 To save your realm, and in this realm yourselves
 From foreign thraldom of so proud a prince,
 134 Much do I praise; and I beseech the gods,
 With happy honour to requite it you.
 136 But O, my lords, sith now the heavens' wrath
 Hath reft this land the issue of their prince,
 138 Sith of the body of our late sovereign lord
 Remains no moe, since the young kings be slain,
 140 And of the title of descended crown
 Uncertainly the divers minds do think
 142 Even of the learnèd sort, and more uncertainly
 Will partial fancy and affection deem;
 144 But most uncertainly will climbing pride,
 And hope of reign, withdraw to sundry parts
 146 The doubtful right and hopeful lust to reign.
 When once this noble service is achieved
 148 For Britain land, the mother of ye all,
 When once ye have with armèd force repressed
 150 The proud attempts of this Albanian prince,
 That threatens thraldom to your native land,
 152 When ye shall vanquishers return from field,
 And find the princely state an open prey
 154 To greedy lust and to usurping power;
 Then, then, my lords, if ever kindly care

= armed forces.

120-1: note the alliteration in both these lines.

linger = linger.

= "enormous misfortunes (*unhaps*)".

123: ie. the throne has no sovereign to occupy it.

124: ie. no unambiguous chain of succession for the crown.

= enslavement by.

= since.

= taken from. = children. = ie. king.

138: one more line with an apparent extra syllable; none of the editors comment.

= no more.

140-2: *And of...learned sort* = even the educated class is unclear, and of various ideas, regarding how to determine who should be king.

= various.

142-3: **more uncertainly...deem** = judgment regarding the matter will be warped by biased imagination (*partial fancy*)¹ and emotion (*affection*).

144-6: ie. an unfilled throne always invites those who are proud and ambitious to seek it for themselves.

sundry = uniquely spelled with a *u* instead of an *o* here.

= ie. from Albany, or Scottish. This is a word which your editor would like to see revived to describe any person from Albany, NY.

= 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> ,	= mercy.
162	Then, then, have pity on the <u>torn estate</u> ;	= rent or torn-apart nation.
164	Then help to salve the <u>wellnear</u> hopeless sore; Which ye shall do, if ye yourselves withhold The slaying knife from your own mother's throat: Her shall you save, and you, and yours in her,	= nearly. ¹
166	If ye shall all with one assent forbear Once to lay hand, or take unto yourselves	
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 <u>In parliament</u> , the regal diadem	= the word parliament , 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	
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> ,	= take under consideration. ¹
180	Or <u>by the virtue of some former law</u> Already made their title to advance.	
182	Such one, my lords, let be your chosen king;	
184	Such one so born within your native land; Such one <u>prefer</u> ; and in no <u>wise</u> admit	
186	The heavy yoke of foreign governance: Let foreign titles <u>yield to public wealth</u> .	
188	And with that heart wherewith ye now prepare	
190	Thus to withstand the proud invading foe, With that same heart, my lords, keep out also <u>Unnatural thraldom of strangers' reign</u> ,	
192	Ne suffer you against the rules of kind, Your mother land to serve a foreign prince.	
194	[<i>Exeunt all except Eubulus.</i>]	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>). 182-4: the repetition of initial words in consecutive clauses is a figure of speech known as <i>anaphora</i> . = promote. = way. = the sense is "be rejected in favour of the national interest." ¹ = slavery. = rule by foreigners. 191-2: "do not tolerate violations of the rules of nature by allowing an outsider to rule Britain." 194: stage direction added by the editor: Eubulus' speech is more in the nature of a summary or epilogue for the audience

196 **Eubu.** 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?

 212 And who will not by force attempt to win
 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;

 216 Nor such as shall display by long descent
 A lineal race to prove himself a king.

218 In the meanwhile these civil arms shall rage,
 And thus a thousand mischiefs shall unfold,
 220 And far and near spread thee, O Britain land;
 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 cruel 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 soldier
 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

Thus shall the wasted soil yield forth no fruit,
 242 But derth and famine shall possess the land.
 The towns shall be consumed and burnt with fire;
 244 The peopled cities shall wax desolate;
 And thou, O Britain, whilom in renown,
 246 Whilom in wealth and fame, shalt thus be torn,
 Dismembered thus, and thus be rent in twain;
 248 Thus wasted and defaced, spoiled and destroyed;
 These be the fruits your civil wars will bring.
 250 Hereto it comes, when kings will not consent
 To grave advice, but follow willful will.
 252 This is the end, when in fond princes' hearts
 Flattery prevails, and sage rede hath no place.
 254 These are the plagues, when murder is the mean
 To make new heirs unto the royal crown.
 256 Thus wreak the gods, when that the mother's wrath
Nought but the blood of her own child may usage.
 258 These mischiefs spring when rebels will arise
 To work revenge and judge their prince's fact.
 260 This, this ensues when noble men do fail
In loyal troth, and subjects will be kings:
 262 And this doth grow, when, lo, unto the prince,
 Whom death or sudden hap of life bereaves,
 264 No certain heir remains, such certain heir
 As not all only is the rightful heir,
 266 But to the realm is so made known to be,
 And truth thereby vested in subjects' hearts,
 268 To owe faith there, where right is known to rest.
 Alas, in parliament what hope can be,
 270 When is of parliament no hope at all?
 Which, though it be assembled by consent,
 272 Yet is not likely with consent to end;
 While each one for himself, or for his friend
 274 Against his foe, shall travail what he may.
 While now the state left open to the man
 276 That shall with greatest force invade the same,
 Shall fill ambitious minds with gaping hope,
 278 When will they once with yielding hearts agree?
 Or in the while, how shall the realm be used?
 280 No, no; then parliament should have been holden,

 And certain heirs appointed to the crown
 282 To stay the title of established right,
 And plant the people in obedience,
 284 While yet the prince did live, whose name and power
 By lawful summons and authority
 286 Might make a parliament to be of force,
 And might have set the state in quiet stay:
 288 But now, O happy man, whom speedy death

 Deprives of life, ne is enforced to see
 290 These hugy mischiefs and these miseries,

= scarcity; an archaic form of **dearth**.¹

 = gradually become deserted.¹
 = formerly (**whilom**) famous or highly esteemed.³

 = agree with, ie. heed.
 = ie. stubbornly follow their own inclinations.
 = foolish.
 = wise advice.
 = means.

 = avenge. = alluding of course to Queen Videna.
 = nothing. = pacify.

 = deed.

 = ie. "in their loyalty".

 = accident. = takes the life of.

 = variation of **alonely**, meaning "only".

 = faith or loyalty.¹⁶

 = ie. "in parliament there is".
 = general agreement.

 = "strive in any way he can".

 = ie. the strongest private army.
 = yearning, like mouths opened as if hoping to swallow.²

 = meantime.

 280-7: if no heir exists, a parliament should establish a line
 of succession while the present monarch is still alive.
holden = obliged.¹

 = secure or steady.¹

 = king.

 288-292: **O happy man...justice** = a man is fortunate if
 he dies before he is forced to witness the misery that
 descends on his country.
 = "is not obliged".

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.

= 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.

[*Exeunt.*]

FINIS

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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