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presents

a Theatre Script of

The Tragedy of Gorboduc  
(aka Ferrex and Porrex)

By Thomas Norton and  
Thomas Sackville

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# THE TRAGEDY OF GORBODUC (aka FERREX AND PORREX)

By Thomas Norton and  
Thomas Sackville

*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 Loegrís.

***GWENARD***, Duke of Camberland.

***NUNTIUS***, A Messenger of the Elder Brother's Death.

***NUNTIUS***, A Messenger of Duke Fergus' rising in Arms.

*Chorus:*

***FOUR ANCIENT AND SAGE MEN OF BRITAIN.***

### **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).

### **B. Settings and Stage Directions.**

The original quartos of *Gorboduc* do not provide scene settings or stage directions; all scene settings and stage directions in this edition are adopted from the suggestions of early editors of the play.

### **C. Suggestions for Production**

(1) Each Act is preceded by what is known as a "Dumb Show", a brief pantomime that either literally or figuratively portrays action that took place before the beginning of the play (in the case of Act I), or will take place in the following Act (in this case of the remaining four Acts).

Following ancient tradition, a slip of paper containing a description of the action and meaning of the Dumb Show preceding each Act may be distributed to the audience beforehand, to enable them to follow the Dumb Shows' significance as they view the action on the stage.

The original Dumb Show descriptions were written in the past tense, which makes them difficult to follow for a modern reader; we have changed the tense to the present, to facilitate comprehension. A separate copy of the Dumb-Shows, which may be easily copied and distributed to an audience, appears at the end of this Script.

(2) The text of the Scripts prepared by ElizabethanDrama.org generally lean towards keeping the language of the original quartos. Where obvious errors in typography have occurred, the emendations suggested by later editors are usually accepted.

In certain cases, it is less clear as to whether the original or emended wording of a particular clause is preferable. In these situations, we have kept the original wording; however, we have listed below some optional alternate wording which some past editors have proposed or preferred. We invite directors of this play to consider making these changes, if the director feels any of them would make the language more sensible, etc.

1. Act I.i.33: change *spoil thee of my sight* to *spoil me of thy sight*.
2. Act I.ii.62: change *into two* to *to two*.
3. Act III.i.9: change *lines* to *lives*.
4. Act IV.i.26: delete the entire line, which repeats line 24.

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

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

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

ACT I, SCENE I.*A Room in Gorboduc's Palace**Enter Videna and Ferrer.*

1 **Viden.** The silent night that brings the quiet pause  
 2 From painful travails of the weary day,  
 Prolongs my careful thoughts, and makes me blame  
 4 The slow Aurore, that so for love or shame  
 Doth long delay to shew her blushing face;  
 6 And now the day renews my grievful plaint.

8 **Ferr.** My gracious lady and my mother dear,  
 Pardon my grief for your so grievèd mind,  
 10 To ask what cause tormenteth so your heart.

12 **Viden.** So great a wrong, and so unjust despite,  
 Without all cause, against all course of kind!

14 **Ferr.** Such causeless wrong and so unjust despite,  
 16 May have redress, or at the least, revenge.

18 **Viden.** Neither, my son; such is the froward will,  
 The person such, such my mishap and thine.

20 **Ferr.** Mine know I none, but grief for your distress.

22 **Viden.** Yes; mine for thine, my son: a father? no:  
 24 In kind a father, not in kindliness.

26 **Ferr.** My father? why? I know nothing at all,  
 Wherein I have misdono unto his grace.

28 **Viden.** Therefore, the more unkind to thee and me:  
 30 For, knowing well, my son, the tender love  
 That I have ever borne and bear to thee,  
 32 He, grieved thereat, is not content alone  
 To spoil thee of my sight, my chiefest joy,  
 34 But thee, of thy birthright, and heritage,  
 Causeless, unkindly, and in wrongful wise,  
 36 Against all law and right he will bereave:  
 Half of his kingdom he will give away.

38 **Ferr.** To whom?

40 **Viden.** Even to Porrex his younger son;  
 42 Whose growing pride I do so sore suspect,  
 That being raised to equal rule with thee,

44 Me thinks I see his envious heart to swell,  
 Filled with disdain and with ambitious hope.  
 46 The end the gods do know, whose alters I  
 Full oft have made in vain, of cattle slain,  
 48 To send the sacred smoke to Heaven's throne,  
 For thee my son; if things do so succeed,  
 50 As now my jealous mind misdeemeth sore.

52 **Ferr.** Madam, leave care and careful plaint for me!  
 Just hath my father been to every wight:  
 54 His first injustice he will not extend  
 To me, I trust, that give no cause thereof;  
 56 My brother's pride shall hurt himself, not me.

58 **Viden.** So grant the gods! but yet thy father so  
 Hath firmly fixèd his unmovèd mind,  
 60 That plaints and prayers can no whit avail;  
 For those have I assayed, but even this day,  
 62 He will endeavor to procure assent  
 Of all his council to his fond device.

64 **Ferr.** Their ancestors from race to race have born  
 66 True faith to my forefathers and their seed:  
 I trust they eke will bear the like to me.

68 **Viden.** There resteth all, but if they fail thereof,  
 70 And if the end bring forth an ill success,  
 On them and theirs the mischief shall befall,  
 72 And so I pray the gods requite it them!  
 And so they will, for so is wont to be  
 74 When lords and trusted rulers under kings,  
 To please the present fancy of the prince,  
 76 With wrong transpose the course of governance.  
 Murders, mischief, or civil sword at length,  
 78 Or mutual treason, or a just revenge,  
 When right-succeeding line returns again  
 80 By Jove's just judgment and deservèd wrath,  
 Brings them to cruël and reproachful death,  
 82 And roots their names and kindreds from the earth.

84 **Ferr.** Mother, content you, you shall see the end.

86 **Viden.** The end? thy end I fear, Jove end me first!

88

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT I, SCENE II.*The King's Council Chamber.**Enter Gorboduc, Arostus, Philander and Eubulus.*

1 **Gorb.** My lords, whose grave advice and faithful aid  
 2 Have long upheld my honour and my realm,  
 And brought me to this age from tender years,  
 4 Guiding so great estate with great renown;  
 Now more importeth me, than erst, to use  
 6 Your faith and wisdom, whereby yet I reign;  
 That when by death my life and rule shall cease,  
 8 The kingdom yet may with unbroken course  
 Have certain prince, by whose undoubted right,  
 10 Your wealth and peace may stand in quiet stay:  
 And eke that they, whom nature hath prepared  
 12 In time to take my place in princely seat,  
 While in their father's time their pliant youth  
 14 Yields to the frame of skilful governance,  
 May so be taught and trained in noble arts,  
 16 As what their fathers which have reigned before  
 Have with great fame derivèd down to them,  
 18 With honour they may leave unto their seed;  
 And not be thought for their unworthy life,  
 20 And for their lawless swarving out of kind,  
 Worthy to lose what law and kind them gave:  
 22 But that they may preserve the common peace,  
 The cause that first began and still maintains  
 24 The lineal course of kings' inheritance,  
 For me, for mine, for you, and for the state,  
 26 Whereof both I and you have charge and care,  
 Thus do I mean to use your wonted faith  
 28 To me and mine, and to your native land.  
 My lords, be plain, without all wry respect,  
 30 Or poisonous craft to speak in pleasing wise,  
 Lest as the blame of ill succeeding things  
 32 Shall light on you, so light the harms also.

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

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

48 **Gorb.** My lords, I thank you all. This is the case:  
 Ye know the gods, who have the sovereign care  
 50 For kings, for kingdoms, and for common weals,  
 Gave me two sons in my more lusty age,  
 52 Who now in my decaying years are grown  
 Well towards riper state of mind and strength,  
 54 To take in hand some greater princely charge.  
 As yet they live and spend [their] hopeful days  
 56 With me and with their mother here in court:  
 Their age now asketh other place and trade,  
 58 And mine also doth ask another change;  
 Theirs to more travail, mine to greater ease.  
 60 When fatal death shall end my mortal life,  
 My purpose is to leave unto them twain  
 62 The realm divided into two sondry parts:  
 The one, Ferrex mine elder son shall have,  
 64 The other, shall the other Porrex rule.  
 That both my purpose may more firmly stand,  
 66 And eke that they may better rule their charge,  
 I mean forthwith to place them in the same:  
 68 That in my life they may both learn to rule,  
 And I may joy to see their ruling well.  
 70 This is in sum what I would have ye weigh:  
 First, whether ye allow my whole device,  
 72 And think it good for me, for them, for you,  
 And for our country, mother of us all:  
 74 And if ye like it, and allow it well,  
 Then for their guiding and their governance,  
 76 Show forth such means of circumstance,  
 As ye think meet to be both known and kept.  
 78 Lo, this is all; now tell me your advice.

80 **Aros.** And this is much, and asketh great advice;  
 But for my part, my sovereign lord and king,  
 82 This do I think: your majesty doth know,  
 How under you in justice and in peace,  
 84 Great wealth and honour long we have enjoyed;  
 So as we cannot seem with greedy minds  
 86 To wish for change of prince or governance:  
 But if we like your purpose and device,  
 88 Our liking must be deemèd to proceed



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

Be brought in ure of skilful stayèdness;  
 136 And in your life, their lives disposèd so,  
 Shall length your noble life in joyfulness.  
 138 Thus think I that your grace hath wisely thought,  
 And that your tender care of common weal  
 140 Hath bred this thought, so to divide your land,  
 And plant your sons to bear the present rule  
 142 While you yet live to see their ruling well,  
 That you may longer live by joy therein.  
 144 What further means behooveful are and meet,  
 At greater leisure may your grace devise,  
 146 When all have said; and when we be agreed  
 If this be best to part the realm in twain,  
 148 And place your sons in present government:  
 Whereof, as I have plainly said my mind,  
 150 So would I hear the rest of all my lords.

152 *Phil.* In part I think as hath been said before,  
 In part again my mind is otherwise.  
 154 As for dividing of this realm in twain,  
 And lotting out the same in egal parts,  
 156 To either of my lords your grace's sons,  
 That think I best for this your realm's behoof,  
 158 For profit and advancement of your sons,  
 And for your comfort and your honour eke:  
 160 But so to place them while your life do last,  
 To yield to them your royal governance,  
 162 To be above them only in the name  
 Of father, not in kingly state also,  
 164 I think not good for you, for them, nor us.  
 This kingdom since the bloody civil field,  
 166 Where Morgan slain did yield his conquered part  
 Unto his cousin's sword in Camberland,  
 168 Containeth all that whilom did suffice  
 Three noble sons of your forefather Brute:  
 170 So your two sons, it may suffice also;  
 The mo the stronger, if they gree in one:  
 172 The smaller compass that the realm doth hold  
 The easier is the sway thereof to wield;  
 174 The nearer justice to the wrongèd poor,  
 The smaller charge, and yet enough for one.  
 176 And when the region is divided so  
 That brethren be the lords of either part,  
 178 Such strength doth nature knit between them both,  
 In sondry bodies by conjoinèd love,  
 180 That not as two, but one of doubled force,  
 Each is to other as a sure defense;

182 The nobleness and glory of the one,  
Doth sharp the courage of the other's mind  
184 With virtuous envy to contend for praise:  
And such an egalness hath nature made,  
186 Between the brethren of one father's seed,  
As an unkindly wrong it seems to be,  
188 To throw the brother subject under feet  
Of him, whose peer he is by course of kind:  
190 And nature that did make this egalness,  
Oft so repineth at so great a wrong,  
192 That oft she raiseth up a grudging grief  
In younger brethren at the elder's state:  
194 Whereby both towns and kingdoms have been razed,  
And famous stocks of royal blood destroyed:  
196 The brother, that should be the brother's aid,  
And have a wakeful care for his defense,  
198 Gapes for his death, and blames the lingering years  
That draws not forth his end with faster course;  
200 And oft impatient of so long delays,  
With hateful slaughter he prevents the Fates,  
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;  
If egal state may nourish egal love,  
206 Where none hath cause to grudge the other's good,  
But now the head to stoop beneath them both,  
208 Ne kind, ne reason, ne good order bears.  
And oft it hath been seen, where nature's course  
210 Hath been perverted in disordered wise,  
When fathers cease to know that they should rule,  
212 And children cease to know they should obey:  
And often over-kindly tenderness  
214 Is mother of unkindly stubbornness.  
I speak not this in envy or reproach,  
216 As if I grudged the glory of your sons,  
Whose honour I beseech the gods increase:  
218 Nor yet as if I thought there did remain  
So filthy cankers in their noble breasts,  
220 Whom I esteem (which is their greatest praise)  
Undoubted children of so good a king;  
222 Only I mean to shew by certain rules,  
Which kind hath graft within the mind of man,  
224 That nature hath her order and her course,  
Which, being broken, doth corrupt the state  
226 Of minds and things even in the best of all.  
My lords, your sons may learn to rule of you;

228 Your own example in your noble court  
 Is fittest guider of their youthful years,  
 230 If you desire to seek some present joy  
 By sight of their well ruling in your life,  
 232 See them obey, so shall you see them rule:  
 Who so obeyeth not with humbleness,  
 234 Will rule with outrage and with insolence.  
 Long may they rule, I do beseech the gods;  
 236 But long may they learn, ere they begin to rule.  
 If kind and Fates would suffer, I would wish  
 238 Them agèd princes and immortal kings.  
 Wherefore, most noble king, I well assent  
 240 Between your sons that you divide your realm,  
 And as in kind, so match them in degree:  
 242 But while the gods prolong your royal life,  
 Prolong your reign; for thereto live you here,  
 244 And therefore have the gods so long forboren  
 To join you to themselves, that still you might  
 246 Be prince and father of our common weal:  
 They, when they see your children ripe to rule,  
 248 Will make them room, and will remove you hence,  
 That yours, in right ensuing of your life,  
 250 May rightly honour your immortal name.

252 **Eubu.** Your wonted true regard of faithful hearts  
 Makes me, O king, the bolder to presume  
 254 To speak what I conceive within my breast;  
 Although the same do not agree at all  
 256 With that which other here my lords have said,  
 Nor which yourself have seemèd best to like.  
 258 Pardon I crave, and that my words be deemed  
 To flow from hearty zeal unto your grace,  
 260 And to the safety of your common weal.  
 To part your realm unto my lords your sons,  
 262 I think not good for you, ne yet for them,  
 But worst of all, for this our native land:  
 264 For with one land, one single rule is best:  
 Divided reigns do make divided hearts;  
 266 But peace preserves the country and the prince.  
 Such is in man the greedy mind to reign,  
 268 So great is his desire to climb aloft,  
 In worldly stage the stateliest parts to bear,  
 270 That faith and justice and all kindly love,  
 Do yield unto desire of sovereignty,  
 272 Where egal state doth raise an egal hope  
 To win the thing that either would attain.  
 274 Your grace rememb'reth how in passèd years,

The mighty Brute, first prince of all this land,  
276 Possessed the same and ruled it well in one:  
He, thinking that the compass did suffice  
278 For his three sons three kingdoms eke to make,  
Cut it in three, as you would now in twain:  
280 But how much British blood hath since been spilt  
To join again the sondered unity?  
282 What princes slain before their timely hour?  
What waste of towns and people in the land?  
284 What treasons heaped on murders and on spoils?  
Whose just revenge even yet is scarcely ceased,  
286 Ruthful remembrance is yet raw in mind.  
The gods forbid the like to chance again:  
288 And you, O king, give not the cause thereof.  
My Lord Ferrex your elder son, perhaps  
290 Whom kind and custom gives a rightful hope  
To be your heir and to succeed your reign,  
292 Shall think that he doth suffer greater wrong  
Than he perchance will bear, if power serve.  
294 Porrex the younger, so upraised in state,  
Perhaps in courage will be raised also,  
296 If flattery then, which fails not to assail  
The tender minds of yet unskilful youth,  
298 In one shall kindle and increase disdain,  
And envy in the other's heart enflame:  
300 This fire shall waste their love, their lives, their land,  
And ruthful ruin shall destroy them both.  
302 I wish not this, O King, so to befall,  
But fear the thing, that I do most abhor.  
304 Give no beginning to so dreadful end;  
Keep them in order and obedience;  
306 And let them both by now obeying you,  
Learn such behavior as beseems their state;  
308 The elder, mildness in his governance,  
The younger, a yielding contentedness;  
310 And keep them near unto your presence still,  
That they, restrained by the awe of you,  
312 May live in compass of well-tempered stay,  
And pass the perils of their youthful years.  
314 Your aged life draws on to feebler time,  
Wherein you shall less able be to bear  
316 The travails that in youth you have sustained,  
Both in your person's and your realm's defense.  
318 If planting now your sons in furdur parts,  
You send them furdur from your present reach,  
320 Less shall you know how they themselves demean:

Traitorous corrupters of their pliant youth  
 322 Shall have unspied a much more free access;  
 And if ambition and inflamed disdain  
 324 Shall arm the one, the other, or them both,  
 To civil war, or to usurping pride,  
 326 Late shall you rue that you ne recked before.  
 Good is, I grant, of all to hope the best,  
 328 But not to live still dreadless of the worst.  
 So trust the one, that th' other be forseen.  
 330 Arm not unskilfulness with princely power;  
 But you that long have wisely ruled the reins  
 332 Of royalty within your noble realm,  
 So hold them, while the gods for our avails  
 334 Shall stretch the thread of your prolongèd days.  
 Too soon he clamb into the flaming car,  
 336 Whose want of skill did set the earth on fire.  
 Time and example of your noble grace,  
 338 Shall teach your sons both to obey and rule;  
 When time hath taught them, time shall make them place,  
 340 The place that now is full: and so I pray  
 Long it remain, to comfort of us all.

342 **Gorb.** I take your faithful hearts in thankful part:  
 344 But sith I see no cause to draw my mind,  
 To fear the nature of my loving sons,  
 346 Or to misdeem that envy or disdain  
 Can there work hate, where nature planteth love;  
 348 In one self purpose do I still abide:  
 My love extendeth egally to both,  
 350 My land sufficeth for them both also.  
 Humber shall part the marches of their realms:  
 352 The southern part the elder shall possess,  
 The northern shall Porrex the younger rule.  
 354 In quiet I will pass mine agèd days,  
 Free from the travail and the painful cares  
 356 That hasten age upon the worthiest kings.  
 But lest the fraud, that ye do seem to fear  
 358 Of flattering tongues, corrupt their tender youth,  
 And writhe them to the ways of youthful lust,  
 360 To climbing pride, or to revenging hate;  
 Or to neglecting of their careful charge,  
 362 Lewdly to live in wanton recklessness;  
 Or to oppressing of the rightful cause;  
 364 Or not to wreak the wrongs done to the poor,  
 To tread down truth, or favour false deceit;  
 366 I mean to join to either of my sons  
 Someone of those whose long approvèd faith

368 And wisdom tried may well assure my heart:  
 That mining fraud shall find no way to creep  
 370 Into their fencèd ears with grave advice.  
 This is the end; and so I pray you all  
 372 To bear my sons the love and loyalty  
 That I have found within your faithful breasts.

374

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

378

[*Exeunt.*]

380 **Chorus.** When settled stay doth hold the royal throne  
 In steadfast place by known and doubtless right,  
 382 And chiefly when descent on one alone  
 Make single and unparted reign to light;  
 384 Each change of course unjoins the whole estate,  
 And yields it thrall to ruin by debate.

386

The strength that knit by fast accord in one,  
 388 Against all foreign power of mighty foes  
 Could of itself defend itself alone;  
 390 Disjoinèd once, the former force doth lose.  
 The sticks, that sondered brake so soon in twain,  
 392 In faggot bound attempted were in vain.

394 Oft tender mind that leads the partial eye  
 Of erring parents in their children's love,  
 396 Destroys the wrongly lovèd child thereby:  
 This doth the proud son of Apollo prove,  
 398 Who, rashly set in chariot of his sire,  
 Inflamed the parchèd earth with Heaven's fire.

400

And this great king, that doth divide his land,  
 402 And change the course of his descending crown,  
 And yields the reign into his children's hand;  
 404 From blissful state of joy and great renown,  
 A mirror shall become to princes all,  
 406 To learn to shun the cause of such a fall.

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  
9 presents the king with a cup of gold filled with poison,  
10 which the king accepts, and drinking the same,  
11 immediately falls down dead upon the stage, and so is  
12 carried thence away by his lords and gentlemen, and  
13 then the music ceases.

14 Hereby is signified that as glass by nature holdeth  
15 no poison, but is clear and may easily be seen through,  
16 ne boweth by any art: so a faithful counsellor holdeth  
17 no treason, but is plain and open, ne yieldeth to any  
18 indiscreet affection, but giveth wholesome counsel,  
19 which the ill-advised prince refuseth. The delightful  
20 gold filled with poison betokeneth flattery, which  
21 under fair seeming of pleasant words beareth deadly  
22 poison, which destroyeth the prince that receiveth it.  
23 As befell in the two brethren Ferrex and Porrex, who,  
24 refusing the wholesome advice of grave court  
25 counsellors, credited these young parasites, and  
26 brought to themselves death and destruction thereby.



ACT II, SCENE I.*The Court of Ferrex.**Enter Ferrex, Hermon and Dordan.*

1 **Ferr.** I marvel much what reason led the king  
 2 My father, thus without all my desert,  
 To reave me half the kingdom which by course  
 4 Of law and nature should remain to me.

6 **Herm.** If you with stubborn and untamèd pride  
 Had stood against him in rebelling wise;  
 8 Or if with grudging mind you had envied  
 So slow a sliding of his agèd years;  
 10 Or sought before your time to haste the course  
 Of fatal death upon his royal head;  
 12 Or stained your stock with murder of your kin;  
 Some face of reason might perhaps have seemed  
 14 To yield some likely cause to spoil ye thus.

16 **Ferr.** The wreakful gods pour on my cursèd head  
 Eternal plagues and never dying woes;  
 18 The hellish prince adjudge my damnèd ghost  
 To Tantal's thirst, or proud Ixion's wheel,  
 20 Or cruël gripe to gnaw my growing heart,  
 To during torments and unquenched flames;  
 22 If ever I conceived so foul a thought,  
 To wish his end of life, or yet of reign.

24 **Dord.** Ne yet your father, O most noble prince,  
 26 Did ever think so foul a thing of you:  
 For he, with more than father's tender love,  
 28 While yet the Fates do lend him life to rule,  
 (Who long might live to see your ruling well)  
 30 To you, my lord, and to his other son,  
 Lo, he resigns his realm and royalty;  
 32 Which never would so wise a prince have done,  
 If he had once misdeemed that in your heart  
 34 There ever lodgèd so unkind a thought.  
 But tender love, my lord, and settled trust  
 36 Of your good nature, and your noble mind,  
 Made him to place you thus in royal throne,  
 38 And now to give you half his realm to guide;  
 Yea, and that half which in abounding store  
 40 Of things that serve to make a wealthy realm,  
 In stately cities, and in fruitful soil,

42 In temperate breathing of the milder Heaven,  
 In things of needful use, which friendly sea  
 44 Transports by traffic from the foreign parts,  
 In flowing wealth, in honour and in force,  
 46 Doth pass the double value of the part  
 That Porrex hath allotted to his reign.  
 48 Such is your case, such is your father's love.

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

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

56 **Ferr.** Is this no wrong, say you, to reave from me  
 58 My native right of half so great a realm?  
 And thus to match his younger son with me  
 60 In egal power, and in as great degree?  
 Yea, and what son? The son whose swelling pride  
 62 Would never yield one point of reverence,  
 When I the elder and apparent heir  
 64 Stood in the likelihood to possess the whole;  
 Yea, and that son which from his childish age  
 66 Envieth my honour, and doth hate my life.  
 What will he now do, when his pride, his rage,  
 68 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 grieffful thing is this,  
 That of your brother you can think so ill?  
 78 I never saw him utter likely sign  
 Whereby a man might see or once misdeem  
 80 Such hate of you, ne such unyielding pride:  
 Ill is their counsel, shameful be their end,  
 82 That raising such mistrustful fear in you,  
 Sowing the seed of such unkindly hate,  
 84 Travail by reason to destroy you both.  
 Wise is your brother and of noble hope,  
 86 Worthy to wield a large and mighty realm;  
 So much a stronger friend have you thereby,  
 88 Whose strength is your strength, if you gree in one.

90 *Herm.* If nature and the gods had pinchèd so  
 Their flowing bounty, and their noble gifts  
 92 Of princely qualities from you my lord,  
 And poured them all at once in wasteful wise  
 94 Upon your father's younger son alone;  
 Perhaps there be, that in your prejudice  
 96 Would say that birth should yield to worthiness:  
 But sith in each good gift and princely art  
 98 Ye are his match, and in the chief of all –  
 In mildness and in sober governance –  
 100 Ye far surmount; and sith there is in you  
 Sufficing skill and hopeful towardness  
 102 To wield the whole, and match your elders' praise,  
 I see no cause why ye should lose the half,  
 104 Ne would I with you yield to such a loss:  
 Lest your mild sufferance of so great a wrong  
 106 Be deemèd cowardice and simple dread,  
 Which shall give courage to the fiery head  
 108 Of your young brother to invade the whole.  
 While yet therefore sticks in the people's mind  
 110 The loathèd wrong of your disheritance;  
 And ere your brother have by settled power,  
 112 By guileful cloak of an alluring show,  
 Got him some force and favour in this realm;  
 114 And while the noble queen your mother lives,  
 To work and practice all for your avail;  
 116 Attempt redress by arms, and wreak yourselves  
 Upon his life that gaineth by your loss,  
 118 Who now to shame of you, and grieve of us,  
 In your own kingdom triumphs over you:  
 120 Shew now your courage meet for kingly state,  
 That they which have avowed to spend their goods,  
 122 Their lands, their lives, and honours in your cause,  
 May be the bolder to maintain your part  
 124 When they do see that coward fear in you  
 Shall not betray ne fail their faithful hearts.  
 126 If once the death of Porrex end the strife,  
 And pay the price of his usurpèd reign,  
 128 Your mother shall persuade the angry king,  
 The lords your friends eke shall appease his rage;  
 130 For they be wise, and well they can foresee  
 That ere long time your agèd father's death  
 132 Will bring a time when you shall well requite  
 Their friendly favour, or their hateful spite,  
 134 Yea, or their slackness to advance your cause.  
 “Wise men do not so hang on passing state

136 | Of present princes, chiefly in their age,  
 But they will further cast their reaching eye,  
 138 | To view and weigh the times and reigns to come.”  
 Ne is it likely, though the king be wroth,  
 140 | That he yet will, or that the realm will bear,  
 Extreme revenge upon his only son:  
 142 | Or if he would, what one is he that dare  
 Be minister to such an 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 counsel turn his tender mind,  
 148 | Or age, or sorrow end his weary days.  
 But if the fear of gods, and secret grudge  
 150 | Of nature’s law, repining at the fact,  
 Withhold your courage from so great attempt,  
 152 | Know ye, that lust of kingdoms hath no law,  
 The gods do bear and well allow in kings  
 154 | The things [that] they abhor in rascal routs.  
 “When kings on slender quarrels run to wars,  
 156 | And then in cruël and unkindly wise  
 Command thefts, rapes, murder of innocents,  
 158 | To spoil of towns, and reigns of mighty realms;  
 Think you such princes do suppress themselves  
 160 | Subject to laws of kind, and fear of gods?”  
 Murders, and violent thefts in private men  
 162 | Are heinous crimes and full of foul reproach:  
 Yet none offence, but decked with glorious name  
 164 | Of noble conquests in the hands of kings.  
 But if you like not yet so hot device,  
 166 | Ne list to take such vantage of the time,  
 But, though with peril of your own estate,  
 168 | You will not be the first that shall invade;  
 Assemble yet your force for your defense,  
 170 | And for your safety stand upon your guard.

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

180 | **Ferr.** The mighty gods forbid that ever I  
 182 | Should once conceive such mischief in my heart.

184 Although my brother hath bereft my realm,  
 And bear perhaps to me an hateful mind,  
 Shall I revenge it with his death therefore?  
 186 Or shall I so destroy my father's life  
 That gave me life? The gods forbid, I say,  
 188 Cease you to speak so anymore to me. –  
 Ne you, my friend, with answer once repeat  
 190 So foul a tale: in silence let it die.  
 What lord or subject shall have hope at all  
 192 That under me they safely shall enjoy  
 Their goods, their honours, lands and liberties,  
 194 With whom neither one only brother dear,  
 Ne father dearer, could enjoy their lives?  
 196 But sith I fear my younger brother's rage,  
 And sith perhaps some other man may give  
 198 Some like advice, to move his grudging head  
 At mine estate, which counsel may perchance  
 200 Take greater force with him, than this with me;  
 I will in secret so prepare myself,  
 202 As, if his malice or his lust to reign  
 Break forth in arms or sudden violence,  
 204 I may withstand his rage, and keep mine own.  
 206 **Dord.** I fear the fatal time now draweth on  
 When civil hate shall end the noble line  
 208 Of famous Brute, and of his royal seed: –  
 Great Jove, defend the mischiefs now at hand!  
 210 O that the secretary's wise advice  
 Had erst been heard when he besought the king  
 212 Not to divide his land, nor send his sons  
 To further parts from presence of his court,  
 214 Ne yet to yield to them his governance.  
 Lo, such are they now in the royal throne  
 216 As was rash Phaëton in Phoebus' car;  
 Ne then the fiery steeds did draw the flame  
 218 With wilder randon through the kindled skies,  
 Then traitorous counsel now will whirl about  
 220 The youthful heads of these unskilful kings.  
 But I hereof their father will inform;  
 222 The reverence of him perhaps shall stay  
 The growing mischiefs while they yet are green:  
 224 If this help not, then woe unto themselves,  
 The prince, the people, the divided land!  
 226

[Exeunt.]

ACT II, SCENE II.*The Court of Porrex.**Enter Porrex, Tyndar, and Philander.*

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

6  
 8 **Tyn.** I saw myself the great preparèd store  
 Of horse, of armour, and of weapons there;  
 Ne bring I to my lord reported tales  
 10 Without the ground of seen and searchèd truth.  
 Lo, secret quarrels run about his court  
 12 To bring the name of you, my lord, in hate.  
 Each man almost can now debate the cause  
 14 And ask a reason of so great a wrong,  
 Why he so noble and so wise a prince  
 16 Is as, unworthy, reft his heritage?  
 And why the king, misled by crafty means,  
 18 Divided thus his land from course of right?  
 The wiser sort hold down their grievful heads;  
 20 Each man withdraws from talk and company  
 Of those that have been known to favour you:  
 22 To hide the mischief of their meaning there,  
 Rumours are spread of your preparing here.  
 24 The rascal numbers of [th'] unskilful sort  
 Are filled with monstrous tales of you and yours.  
 26 In secret I was counseled by my friends  
 To haste me thence, and brought you, as you know,  
 28 Letters from those that both can truly tell,  
 And would not write unless they knew it well.

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

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

42 Ne will to him, ne to my father send.  
 If danger were for one to tarry there,  
 44 Think ye it safety to return again?  
 In mischiefs, such as Ferrex now intends,  
 46 The wonted courteous laws to messengers  
 Are not observed, which in just war they use.  
 48 Shall I so hazard any one of mine?  
 Shall I betray my trusty friend to him  
 50 That hath disclosed his treason unto me?  
 Let him entreat that fears, I fear him not:  
 52 Or shall I to the king my father send?  
 Yea, and send now while such a mother lives  
 54 That loves my brother and that hateth me?  
 Shall I give leisure, by my fond delays,  
 56 To Ferrex to oppress me all unware?  
 I will not; but I will invade his realm,  
 58 And seek the traitor-prince within his court.  
 Mischief for mischief is a due reward.  
 60 His wretched head shall pay the worthy price  
 Of this his treason and his hate to me.  
 62 Shall I abide, and treat, and send, and pray,  
 And hold my yelden throat to traitor's knife,  
 64 While I with valiant mind and conquering force  
 Might rid myself of foes, and win a realm?  
 66 Yet rather, when I have the wretch's head,  
 Then to the king my father will I send.  
 68 The bootless case may yet appease his wrath:  
 If not I will defend me as I may.

70 **Phil.** Lo, here the end of these two youthful kings!  
 72 The father's death! the reign of their two realms!  
 "O most unhappy state of counsellors  
 74 That light on so unhappy lords and times,  
 That neither can their good advice be heard,  
 76 Yet must they bear the blames of ill success."  
 But I will to the king their father haste,  
 78 Ere this mischief come to that likely end,  
 That if the mindful wrath of wreakful gods  
 80 Since mighty Ilion's fall, not yet appeased  
 With these poor remnants of the Trojan name,  
 82 Have not determined by unmovèd fate  
 Out of this realm to rase the British line;  
 84 By good advice, by awe of father's name,  
 By force of wiser lords, this kindled hate  
 86 May yet be quenched, ere it consume us all.

88 **Chorus.** When youth not bridled with a guiding stay

90 Is left to randon of their own delight,  
And welds whole realms, by force of sovereign sway,  
Great is the danger of unmastered might,  
92 Lest skillless rage throw down with headlong fall  
Their lands, their states, their lives, themselves and all.  
94  
When growing pride doth fill the swelling breast,  
96 And greedy lust doth raise the climbing mind,  
O, hardly may the peril be repressed;  
98 Ne fear of angry gods, ne laws kind,  
Ne country's care can fireð hearts restrain,  
100 When force hath armèd envy and disdain.  
102  
When kings of foreset will neglect the rede  
Of best advice, and yield to pleasing tales,  
104 That do their fancy's noisome humour feed,  
Ne reason, nor regard of right avails:  
106 Succeeding heaps of plagues shall teach too late,  
To learn the mischiefs of misguiding state.  
108  
Foul fall the traitor false, that undermines  
110 The love of brethren, to destroy them both!  
Woe to the prince that pliant ear inclines,  
112 And yields his mind to poisonous tale that floweth  
From flattering mouth! and woe to wretched land  
114 That wastes itself with civil sword in hand!  
116  
Lo thus it is, poison in gold to take,  
And wholesome drink in homely cup forsake.



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  
4 clad in black, betokening death and sorrow to ensue  
6 upon the ill-advised misgovernment and dissension of  
8 brethren, as befell upon the murder of Ferrex by his  
younger brother. After the mourners have passed  
thrice about the stage, they depart, and then the music  
ceases.

ACT III, SCENE I.*The Court of Gorboduc.**Enter Gorboduc, Eubulus, and Arostus.*

1 **Gorb.** O cruël Fates, O mindful wrath of gods,  
 2 Whose vengeance neither Simois' strained streams  
 Flowing with blood of Trojan princes slain,  
 4 Nor Phrygian fields made rank with corpses dead  
 Of Asian kings and lords, can yet appease;  
 6 Ne slaughter of unhappy Priam's race,  
 Nor Ilion's fall made level with the soil,  
 8 Can yet suffice: but still continued rage  
 Pursues our lines, and from the farthest seas  
 10 Doth chase the issues of destroyèd Troy.  
 "O, no man happy, till his end be seen."  
 12 If any flowing wealth and seeming joy  
 In present years might make a happy wight,  
 14 Happy was Hecuba, the woefullest wretch  
 That ever lived to make a mirror of;  
 16 And happy Priam with his noble sons;  
 And happy I, till now alas, I see  
 18 And feel my most unhappy wretchedness. —  
 Behold, my lords, read you this letter here;  
 20 Lo, it contains the ruin of our realm  
 If timely speed provide not hasty help.  
 22 Yet, O ye gods, if ever woeful king  
 Might move you kings of kings, wreak it on me  
 24 And on my sons, not on this guiltless realm:  
 Send down your wasting flames from wrathful skies,  
 26 To reave me and my sons the hateful breath.  
 Read, read, my lords; this is the matter why  
 28 I called you now to have your good advice.

30 *The Letter from Dordan*  
*the Counsellor of the Elder Prince.*

32 *Eubulus readeth the letter.*

34 My sovereign lord, what I am loath to write  
 36 But loathest am to see, that I am forced  
 By letters now to make you understand.  
 38 My lord Ferrex, your eldest son, misled  
 By traitorous fraud of young untempered wits,  
 40 Assembleth force against your younger son;  
 Ne can my counsel yet withdraw the heat

42 And furious pangs of his enflamèd head.  
 Disdain, saith he, of his inheritance,  
 44 Arms him to wreak the great pretended wrong  
 With civil sword upon his brother's life.  
 46 If present help does not restrain this rage,  
 This flame will waste your sons, your land, and you.

48  
 Your Majesty's faithful and most  
 50 humble subject,  
 Dordan.

52 **Aros.** O king, appease your grief and stay your plaint:  
 54 Great is the matter and a woeful case;  
 But timely knowledge may bring timely help.  
 56 Send for them both unto your presence here:  
 The reverence of your honour, age, and state,  
 58 Your grave advice, the awe of father's name,  
 Shall quickly knit again this broken peace.  
 60 And if in either of my lords your sons  
 Be such untamèd and unyielding pride,  
 62 As will not bend unto your noble hests;  
 If Ferrex the elder son can bear no peer,  
 64 Or Porrex not content, aspires to more  
 Than you him gave, above his native right;  
 66 Join with the juster side, so shall you force  
 Them to agree, and hold the land in stay.

68  
Enter Philander.

70  
 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  
 80 **Gorb.** Philander, welcome; but how doth my son?

82 **Phil.** Your son, sir, lives; and healthy I him left:  
 But yet, O king, this want of lustful health  
 Could not be half so grievous to your grace  
 84 As these most wretched tidings that I bring.

86 **Gorb.** Oh heavens, yet more? no end of woes to me?

88 **Phil.** Tyndar, O king, came lately from the court  
 Of Ferrex, to my lord your younger son,  
 90 And made report of great preparèd store

Of war, and saith that it is wholly meant  
 92 Against Porrex, for high disdain that he  
 Lives now a king and egal in degree  
 94 With him that claimeth to succeed the whole,  
 As by due title of descending right.  
 96 Porrex is now so set on flaming fire,  
 Partly with kindled rage of cruël wrath,  
 98 Partly with hope to gain a realm thereby,  
 That he in haste prepareth to invade  
 100 His brother's land, and with unkindly war  
 Threatens the murder of your elder son;  
 102 Ne could I him persuade, that first he should  
 Send to his brother to demand the cause;  
 104 Nor yet to you, to stay his hateful strife.  
 Wherefore, sith there no more I can be heard,  
 106 I come myself now to inform your grace,  
 And to beseech you, as you love the life  
 108 And safety of your children and your realm,  
 Now to employ your wisdom and your force,  
 110 To stay this mischief ere it be too late.

112 **Gorb.** Are they in arms? would he not send to me?  
 Is this the honour of a father's name?  
 114 In vain we travail to assuage their minds:  
 As if their hearts, whom neither brother's love,  
 116 Nor father's awe, nor kingdom's cares can move,  
 Our counsels could withdraw from raging heat.  
 118 Jove slay them both, and end the cursèd line!  
 For though, perhaps, fear of such mighty force  
 120 As I, my lords, joined with your noble aids,  
 May yet raise, shall repent their present heat;  
 122 The secret grudge and malice will remain,  
 The fire not quenched, but kept in close restraint,  
 124 Fed still within, breaks forth with double flame:  
 Their death and mine must pease the angry gods.

126 **Phil.** Yield not, O king, so much to weak despair:  
 128 Your sons yet live; and long, I trust, they shall.  
 If Fates had taken you from earthly life,  
 130 Before beginning of this civil strife,  
 Perhaps your sons in their unmastered youth,  
 132 Loose from regard of any living wight,  
 Would run on headlong, with unbridled race,  
 134 To their own death, and ruin of this realm.  
 But sith the gods, that have the care for kings,  
 136 Of things and times dispose the order so,  
 That in your life this kindled flame breaks forth,

138 | While yet your life, your wisdom, and your power,  
 May stay the growing mischief, and repress  
 140 | The fiery blaze of their enkindled heat;  
 It seems, and so ye ought to deem thereof,  
 142 | That loving Jove hath tempered so the time  
 Of this debate to happen in your days,  
 144 | That you yet living may the same appease,  
 And add it to the glory of your latter age,  
 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 renown  
 166 | By noble valour of unvanquished mind;  
 Or yet doth perish in more happy sort.”  
 168 | Your grace may send to either of your sons  
 Someone both wise and noble personage,  
 170 | Which with good counsel, and with weighty name  
 Of father, shall present before their eyes  
 172 | Your hest, your life, your safety and their own,  
 The present mischief of their deadly strife:  
 174 | And in the while, assemble you the force  
 Which your commandment, and the speedy haste  
 176 | Of all my lords here present can prepare.  
 The terror of your mighty power shall stay  
 178 | The rage of both, or yet of one least.

180 | *Enter Nuntius.*

182 | **Nunt.** O king, the greatest grief that ever prince did hear,  
 That ever woeful messenger did tell,  
 184 | That ever wretched land hath seen before,

186 I bring to you: Porrex your younger son,  
 With sudden force invaded hath the land  
 That you to Ferrex did allot to rule;  
 188 And with his own most bloody hand he hath  
 His brother slain, and doth possess his realm.

190 **Gorb.** O heavens! send down the flames of your revenge,  
 192 Destroy, I say, with flash of wreakful fire,  
 The traitor son, and then the wretched sire!  
 194 But let us go, that yet perhaps I may  
 Die with revenge, and pease the hateful gods.

[*Exeunt.*]

198 **Chorus.** The lust of kingdom knows no sacred faith,  
 200 No rule of reason, no regard of right,  
 No kindly love, no fear of Heaven's wrath:  
 202 But with contempt of gods, and man's despite,  
 204 Through bloody slaughter doth prepare the ways  
 To fatal sceptre, and accursèd reign:  
 206 The son so loathes the father's lingering days,  
 Ne dreads his hand in brother's blood to stain.  
 208  
 O wretched prince, ne dost thou yet record  
 210 The yet fresh murthers done within the land  
 Of thy forefathers, when the cruël sword  
 212 Bereft Morgan his life with cousin's hand?  
 214 Thus fatal plagues pursue the guilty race,  
 Whose murderous hand, imbrued with guiltless blood,  
 216 Asks vengeance still before the heavens' face,  
 With endless mischiefs on the cursèd brood.  
 218  
 The wicked child thus brings to woeful sire  
 220 The mournful plaints to waste his weary life;  
 Thus do the cruël flames of civil fire  
 222 Destroy the parted reign with hateful strife:  
 224 And hence doth spring the well from which doth flow  
 The dead black streams of mournings, plaints, and woe.

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  
3 though out of hell, three Furies, Alecto, Megera and  
4 Ctisiphone, clad in black garments sprinkled with  
5 blood and flames, their bodies girt with snakes, their  
6 heads spread with serpents instead of hair, the one  
7 bearing in her hand a snake, the other a whip, and the  
8 third a burning firebrand, each driving before them a  
9 king and a queen, which, moved by Furies, unnaturally  
10 had slain their own children. The names of kings and  
11 queens were these, Tantalus, Medea, Athamas, Ino,  
12 Cambyses, Althea; after that the Furies and these pass  
13 about the stage thrice, they depart, and then the music  
14 ceases.

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

ACT IV, SCENE I.*A Room in the Palace.**Enter Videna sola.*

1 **Viden.** Why should I live, and linger forth my time  
 2 In longer life to double my distress?  
 O me, most woeful wight, whom no mishap  
 4 Long ere this day could have bereavèd hence.  
 Mought not these hands by fortune or by fate  
 6 Have pierced this breast, and life with iron reft?  
 Or in this palace here, where I so long  
 8 Have spent my days, could not that happy hour  
 Once, once have hap'd, in which these hugy frames  
 10 With death by fall might have oppressèd me?  
 Or should not this most hard and cruël soil,  
 12 So oft where I have pressed my wretched steps,  
 Sometime had ruth of mine accursèd life,  
 14 To rend in twain [and] swallow me therein?  
 So had my bones possessèd now in peace  
 16 Their happy grave within the closèd ground,  
 And greedy worms had gnawn this pinèd heart  
 18 Without my feeling pain: so should not now  
 This living breast remain the ruthful tomb  
 20 Wherein my heart yelden to death is graved:  
 Nor dreary thoughts with pangs of pining grief,  
 22 My doleful mind had not afflicted thus. –  
 O my belovèd son! O my sweet child!  
 24 My dear Ferrex, my joy, my life's delight!  
 Is my belovèd son, is my sweet child,  
 26 My dear Ferrex, my joy, my life's delight,  
 Murdered with cruël death? O hateful wretch!  
 28 O heinous traitor both to Heaven and earth!  
 Thou Porrex, thou this damnèd deed hast wrought;  
 30 Thou Porrex, thou shall dearly bye the same:  
 Traitor to kin and kind, to sire and me,  
 32 To thine own flesh, and traitor to thyself:  
 The gods on thee in hell shall wreak their wrath,  
 34 And here in earth this hand shall take revenge  
 On thee, Porrex, thou false and caitiff wight:  
 36 If after blood so eager were thy thirst,  
 And murderous mind had so possessèd thee;  
 38 If such hard heart of rock and stony flint  
 Lived in thy breast, that nothing else could like  
 40 Thy cruël tyrant's thought but death and blood:



42 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  
 44 With blood deserved, and drink thereof thy fill?  
 Or if nought else but death and blood of man  
 46 Mought please thy lust, could none in Britain land  
 Whose heart be torn out of his loving breast  
 48 With thine own hand, or work what death thou wouldst,  
 Suffice to make a sacrifice to pease  
 50 That deadly mind and murderous thought in thee,  
 But he who in the self-same womb was wrapped  
 52 Where thou in dismal hour receivèdst life?  
 Or if needs, needs this hand must slaughter make,  
 54 Moughtest thou not have reached a mortal wound,  
 And with thy sword have pierced this cursèd womb  
 56 That the accursèd Porrex brought to light,  
 And given me a just reward therefore?  
 58 So Ferrex yet sweet life mought have enjoyed,  
 And to his agèd father comfort brought,  
 60 With some young son in whom they both might live.  
 But whereunto waste I this ruthful speech,  
 62 To thee that hast thy brother's blood thus shed?  
 Shall I still think that from this womb thou sprong?  
 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  
 At his arrival here, to give him charge  
 6 Before our presence straight to make repair,  
 And yet we have no word whereof he stays.

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

*Enter Eubulus and Porrex.*

12  
 14 **Eubu.** According to your highness' hest to me,  
 Here have I Porrex brought, even in such sort  
 As from his wearied horse he did alight,  
 16 For that your grace did will such haste therein.

18 **Gorb.** We like and praise this speedy will in you,  
 To work the thing that to your charge we gave. —  
 20 Porrex, if we so far should swerve from kind,  
 And from those bounds which law of nature sets,  
 22 As thou hast done by vile and wretched deed,  
 In cruël murder of thy brother's life;  
 24 Our present hand could stay no lenger time,  
 But straight should bathe this blade in blood of thee  
 26 As just revenge of thy detested crime.  
 No; we should not offend the law of kind  
 28 If now this sword of ours did slay thee here:  
 For thou hast murdered him, whose heinous death  
 30 Even nature's force doth move us to revenge  
 By blood again; but justice forceth us  
 32 To measure death for death, thy due desert:  
 Yet sith thou art our child, and sith as yet  
 34 In this hard case what word thou canst allege  
 For thy defense, by us hath not been heard,  
 36 We are content to stay our will for that  
 Which justice bids us presently to work;  
 38 And give thee leave to use thy speech at full,  
 If aught thou have to lay for thine excuse.

40 **Porr.** Neither, O king, I can or will deny,

42 | But that this hand from Ferrex life hath reft:  
 Which fact how much my doleful heart doth wail,  
 44 | O! would it might as full appear to sight  
 As inward grief doth pour it forth to me.  
 46 | So yet perhaps, if ever ruthless heart  
 Melting in tears within a manly breast,  
 48 | Through deep repentance of his bloody fact,  
 If ever grief, if ever woeful man  
 50 | Might move regret with sorrow of his fault,  
 I think the torment of my mournful case  
 52 | Known to your grace, as I do feel the same,  
 Would force even Wrath herself to pity me.  
 54 | But as the water troubled with the mud  
 Shews not the face which else the eye should see,  
 56 | Even so your ireful mind with stirrèd thought  
 Cannot so perfectly discern my cause.  
 58 | But this unhap, amongst so many heaps  
 I must content me with, most wretched man,  
 60 | That to myself I must reserve my woe,  
 In pining thoughts of mine accursèd fact:  
 62 | Since I may not show here my smallest grief,  
 Such as it is, and as my breast endures,  
 64 | Which I esteem the greatest misery  
 Of all mishaps that fortune now can send.  
 66 | Not that I rest in hope with plaints and tears  
 Should purchase life; for to the gods I clepe  
 68 | For true recórd of this my faithful speech;  
 Never this heart shall have the thoughtful dread  
 70 | To die the death that by your grace's doom,  
 By just desert, shall be pronounced to me:  
 72 | Nor never shall this tongue once spend this speech  
 Pardon to crave, or seek by suit to live.  
 74 | I mean not this, as though I were not touched  
 With care of dreadful death, or that I held  
 76 | Life in contempt: but that I know the mind  
 Stoops to no dread, although the flesh be frail:  
 78 | And for my guilt, I yield the same so great,  
 As in myself I find a fear to sue  
 80 | For grant of life.

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

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

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 swoll'n disdain against mine egal rule,  
Seeing that realm which by descent should grow  
98 Wholly to him, allotted half to me?  
Even in your highness' court he now remains,  
100 And with my brother then in nearest place,  
Who can record what proof thereof was shewed,  
102 And how my brother's envious heart appeared.  
Yet I that judgèd it my part to seek  
104 His favour and good-will, and loath to make  
Your highness know the things which should have brought  
106 Grief to your grace, and your offence to him,  
Hoping my earnest suit should soon have won  
108 A loving heart within a brother's breast,  
Wrought in that sort, that for a pledge of love  
110 And faithful heart he gave to me his hand.  
This made me think that he had banished quite  
112 All rancour from his thought, and bare to me  
Such hearty love, as I did owe to him:  
114 But after once we left your grace's court,  
And from your highness' presence lived apart,  
116 This egal rule still, still, did grudge him so,  
That now those envious sparks which erst lay raked  
118 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,  
If mine own servant, hirèd to this fact,  
124 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:

136 Even nature moved me then to hold my life  
 More dear to me than his, and bad this hand,  
 Since by his life my death must needs ensue,  
 138 And by his death my life to be preserved,  
 To shed his blood, and seek my safety so;  
 140 And wisdom willèd me, without protract,  
 In speedy wise to put the same in ure.  
 142 Thus have I told the cause that movèd me  
 To work my brother's death, and so I yield  
 144 My life, my death, to judgment of your grace.

146 **Gorb.** Oh cruël wight, should any cause prevail  
 To make thee stain thy hands with brother's blood?  
 148 But what of thee we will resolve to do  
 Shall yet remain unknown: thou in the mean  
 150 Shalt from our royal presence banished be,  
 Until our princely pleasure furdur shall  
 152 To thee be showed; depart therefore our sight,  
 Accursèd child!

[Exit Porrex.]

156  
 158                   What cruël destiny,  
 What froward fate hath sorted us this chance,  
 That even in those, where we should comfort find,  
 160 Where our delight now in our agèd days  
 Should rest and be, even there our only grief  
 162 And deepest sorrows to abridge our life,  
 Most pining cares and deadly thoughts do grow.

164  
 166 **Aros.** Your grace should now, in these grave years of yours  
 Have found ere this the price of mortal joys;  
 How short they be; how fading here in earth;  
 168 How full of change; how brittle our estate;  
 Of nothing sure, save only of the death  
 170 To whom both man and all the world doth owe  
 Their end at last; neither shall nature's power  
 172 In other sort against your heart prevail,  
 Than as the naked hand whose stroke assays  
 174 The armèd breast where force doth light in vain.

176 **Gorb.** Many can yield right grave and sage advice  
 Of patient sprite to others wrapped in woe,  
 178 And can in speech both rule and conquer kind;  
 Who if by proof they might feel nature's force,  
 180 Would show themselves men as they are indeed,  
 Which now will needs be gods. But what doth mean  
 182 The sorry cheer of her that here doth come?

184

*Enter Marcella.*

186

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

188

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

190

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

192

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

194

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

196

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

198

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

200

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

202

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

204

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

206

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

208

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

210

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

212

His heart stabbed in with knife is reft of life.

214

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

216

O loathsome life, O sweet and welcome death!  
Dear Eubulus, work this we thee beseech.

218

**Eubu.** Patient your grace, perhaps he liveth yet,  
With wound received, but not of certain death.

220

222

**Gorb.** O let us then repair unto the place,  
And see if Porrex live, or thus be slain.

224

**Marc.** Alas, he liveth not! it is too true.  
That with these eyes, of him a peerless prince,

226

Son to a king, and in the flower of youth,  
Even with a twink a senseless stock I saw.

228

230

[*Exeunt Gorboduc and Eubulus.*]

232 | **Aros.** O damnèd deed!

234 | **Marc.** But hear his ruthful end:  
 236 | The noble prince, pierced with the sudden wound,  
 236 | Out of his wretched slumber hastely start,  
 238 | Whose strength now failing, straight he overthrew,  
 238 | When in the fall his eyes even now unclosed  
 240 | Beheld the queen, and cried to her for help.  
 240 | We then, alas, the ladies which that time  
 242 | Did there attend, seeing that heinous deed,  
 242 | And hearing him oft call the wretched name  
 244 | Of mother, and to cry to her for aid,  
 244 | Whose direful hand gave him the mortal wound,  
 246 | Pitying (alas, for nought else could we do)  
 246 | His ruthful end, ran to the woeful bed,  
 248 | Dispoilèd straight his breast, and all we might,  
 248 | Wipèd in vain with napkins next at hand  
 250 | The sudden streams of blood that flushèd fast  
 250 | Out of the gaping wound. O, what a look!  
 252 | O, what a ruthful, steadfast eye, methought  
 252 | He fixed upon my face, which to my death  
 254 | Will never part from me! when with a braid,  
 254 | A deep-fet sigh he gave, and therewithal  
 256 | Claspng his hands, to Heaven he cast his sight;  
 256 | And straight pale death pressing within his face,  
 258 | The flying ghost his mortal corpse forsook.

260 | **Aros.** Never did age bring forth so vile a fact!

262 | **Marc.** O hard and cruël hap, that thus assigned  
 262 | Unto so worthy a wight so wretched end:  
 264 | But most hard cruël heart, that could consent  
 264 | To lend the hateful destinies that hand,  
 266 | By which, alas, so heinous crime was wrought!  
 266 | O queen of adamant! O marble breast!  
 268 | If not the favour of his comely face,  
 268 | If not his princely cheer and countenance,  
 270 | His valiant active arms, his manly breast,  
 270 | If not his fair and seemly personage,  
 272 | His noble limbs, in such proportion cast  
 272 | As would have rapt a silly woman's thought; —  
 274 | If this mought not have moved thy bloody heart,  
 274 | And that most cruël hand, the wretched weapon  
 276 | Even to let fall, and kissed him in the face,  
 276 | With tears for ruth to reave such one by death:  
 278 | Should nature yet consent to slay her son?  
 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. —  
 Ah, noble prince, how oft have I beheld  
 282 Thee mounted on thy fierce and trampling steed,  
 Shining in armour bright before the tilt,  
 284 And with thy mistress' sleeve tied on thy helm,  
 And charge thy staff to please thy lady's eye,  
 286 That bowed the head-piece of thy friendly foe?  
 How oft in arms on horse to bend the mace?  
 288 How oft in arms on foot to break the sword?  
 Which never now these eyes may see again.

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

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

[Exeunt.]

304 **Chorus.** When greedy lust in royal seat to reign  
 306 Hath reft all care of gods and eke of men,  
 And cruël heart, wrath, treason and disdain,  
 308 Within ambitious breast are lodgèd, then  
 Behold how mischief wide herself displays,  
 310 And with the brother's hand the brother slays.  
 312 When blood thus shed doth stain the Heaven's face  
 Crying to Jove for vengeance of the deed,  
 314 The mighty god even moveth from his place,  
 With wrath to wreak; then sends he forth with speed  
 316 The dreadful Furies, daughters of the night,  
 With serpents girt, carrying the whip of ire,  
 318 With heare of stinging snakes, and shining bright  
 With flames and blood, and with a brand of fire:  
 320 These for revenge of wretched murder done,  
 Do make the mother kill her only son.  
 322 Blood asketh blood, and death must death requite:  
 324 Jove by his just and everlasting doom  
 Justly hath ever so requited it;  
 326 The times before record, and times to come



328 | Shall find it true, and so doth present proof  
Present before our eyes for our behoof.

330 | O happy wight that suffers not the snare  
Of murderous mind to tangle him in blood;

332 | And happy he, that can in time beware  
By others' harms, and turn it to his good:

334 | But woe to him, that fearing not t' offend,  
Doth serve his lust, and will not see the end.

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  
harquebusiers and of armed men, all in order of battle.  
4 These, after their pieces discharge, and that the armed  
men three times march about the stage, depart, and  
6 then the drums and flutes cease.

8 Hereby is signified tumults, rebellions, arms and  
civil wars to follow, as fell in the realm of Great Britain,  
10 which by the space of fifty years and more, continued  
in civil war between the nobility after the death of  
King Gorboduc and of his issues, for want of certain  
12 limitation in the succession of the crown, till the time  
of Dunwallo Molmutius, who reduced the land to  
14 monarchy.

ACT V, SCENE I.

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

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

1 **Clot.** Did ever age bring forth such tyrant's hearts?  
2 The brother hath bereft the brother's life;  
The mother she hath dyed her cruël hands  
4 In blood of her own son, and now at last  
The people, lo, forgetting troth and love,  
6 Contemning quite both law and loyal heart,  
Even they have slain their sovereign lord and queen.

8 **Mand.** Shall this their traitorous crime unpunished rest?  
10 Even yet they cease not, carried out with rage,  
In their rebellious routs, to threaten still  
12 A new bloodshed unto the prince's kin,  
To slay them all, and to uproot the race  
14 Both of the king and queen, so are they moved  
With Porrex's death, wherein they falsely charge  
16 The guiltless king without desert at all,  
And traitorously have murdered him therefore,  
18 And eke the queen.

20 **Gwen.** Shall subjects dare with force  
To work revenge upon their prince's fact?  
22 Admit the worst that may, as sure in this  
The deed was foul, the queen to slay her son,  
24 Shall yet the subject seek to take the sword,  
Arise against his lord, and slay his king?  
26 O wretched state, where those rebellious hearts  
Are not rent out even from their living breasts,  
28 And with the body thrown onto the fowls  
As carrion food, for terror of the rest.

30 **Ferg.** There can no punishment be thought too great  
32 For this so grievous crime: let speed therefore  
Be used therein, for it behooveth so.

34 **Eubu.** Ye all, my lords, I see, consent in one,  
36 And I as one consent with ye in all.  
I hold it more than need, with sharpest law  
38 To punish this tumultuous bloody rage:  
For nothing more may shake the common state

40 Than sufferance of uproars without redress;  
Whereby how soon kingdoms of mighty power,  
42 After great conquests made, and flourishing  
In fame and wealth, have been to ruin brought;  
44 I pray to Jove that we may rather wail  
Such hap in them, than witness in ourselves.  
46 Eke fully with the duke my mind agrees,  
That no cause serves, whereby the subject may  
48 Call to accompt the doings of his prince,  
Much less in blood by sword to work revenge,  
50 No more than may the hand cut off the head,  
In act nor speech, no: not in secret thought  
52 The subject may rebel against his lord,  
Or judge of him that sits in Caesar's seat,  
54 With grudging mind to damn those he dislikes.  
Though kings forget to govern as they ought,  
56 Yet subjects must obey as they are bound.  
But now, my lords, before ye farther wade,  
58 Or spend your speech, what sharp revenge shall fall  
By justice' plague on these rebellious wights;  
60 Methinks, ye rather should first search the way  
By which in time, the rage of this uproar  
62 Mought be repressed, and these great tumults ceased.  
Even yet the life of Britain land doth hang  
64 In traitor's balance of unegal weight;  
Think not, my lords, the death of Gorboduc,  
66 Nor yet Videna's blood will cease their rage:  
Even our own lives, our wives and children dear,  
68 Our country, dearest of all, in danger stands  
Now to be spoiled; now, now made desolate,  
70 And by ourselves a conquest to ensue.  
For, give once sway unto the people's lusts,  
72 To rush forth on, and stay them not in time,  
And as the stream that rolleth down the hill,  
74 So will they headlong run with raging thoughts  
From blood to blood, from mischief unto moe,  
76 To ruin of the realm, themselves and all:  
So giddy are the common people's minds,  
78 So glad of change, more wav'ring than the sea.  
Ye see, my lords, what strength these rebels have;  
80 What hugy number is assembled still:  
For though the traitorous fact for which they rose  
82 Be wrought and done, yet lodge they still in field;  
So that how far their furies yet will stretch  
84 Great cause we have to dread. That we may seek  
By present battle to repress their power,

86 | Speed must we use to levy force therefore;  
 For either they forthwith will mischief work,  
 88 | Or their rebellious roars forthwith will cease:  
 These violent things may have no lasting long.  
 90 | Let us therefore use this for present help:  
 Persuade by gentle speech, and offer grace,  
 92 | With gift of pardon, save unto the chief,  
 And that upon condition that forthwith  
 94 | They yield the captains of their enterprise  
 To bear such guerdon of their traitorous fact,  
 96 | 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 heads;  
 And so much more, because the rascal routs,  
 106 | In things of great and perilous attempts,  
 Are never trusty to the noble race.  
 108 | And while we treat and stand on terms of grace,  
 We shall both stay their fury's rage the while,  
 110 | And eke gain time, whose only help sufficeth  
 Withouten war to vanquish rebel's power.  
 112 | In the meanwhile, make you in readiness  
 Such band of horsemen 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 unarmèd sort  
 Of skillless rebels, whom none other power  
 118 | But number makes to be of dreadful force,  
 With sudden brunt may quickly be oppressed.  
 120 | And if this gentle means of proffered grace,  
 With stubborn hearts cannot so far avail  
 122 | As to assuage their desperate courages,  
 Than do I wish such slaughter to be made,  
 124 | As present age and eke posterity  
 May be adrad with horror of revenge,  
 126 | That justly than shall on these rebels fall:  
 This is, my lords, the sum of mine advice.  
 128 | *Clot.* Neither this case admits debate at large;  
 130 | And though it did, this speech that hath been said  
 Hath well abridged the tale I would have told.  
 132 | Fully with Eubulus do I consent

134 In all that he hath said: and if the same  
 To you, my lords, may seem for best advice,  
 I wish that it should straight be put in ure.

136  
 138 **Mand.** My lords, than let us presently depart,  
 And follow this that liketh us so well.

140 [Exeunt all except Fergus.]

142 **Ferg.** If ever time to gain a kingdom here  
 Were offered man, now it is offered me.  
 144 The realm is reft both of their king and queen;  
 The offspring of the prince is slain and dead:  
 146 No issue now remains: the heir unknown;  
 The people are in arms and mutinies;  
 148 The nobles they are busied how to cease  
 These great rebellious tumults and uproars;  
 150 And Britain land now desert left alone,  
 Amid these broils uncertain where to rest,  
 152 Offers herself unto that noble heart  
 That will or dare pursue to bear her crown.  
 154 Shall I, that am the Duke of Albany,  
 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 Of right should rest above the baser sort,  
 Refuse to venture life to win a crown?  
 160 Whom shall I find enemies that will withstand  
 My fact herein, if I attempt by arms  
 162 To seek the same now in these times of broil?  
 These dukes' power can hardly well appease  
 164 The people that already are in arms:  
 But if perhaps my force be once in field,  
 166 Is not my strength in power above the best  
 Of all these lords now left in Britain land?  
 168 And though they should match me with power of men,  
 Yet doubtful is the chance of battles joined:  
 170 If victors of the field we may depart,  
 Ours is the sceptre then of Great Britain;  
 172 If slain amid the plain this body lie,  
 Mine enemies yet shall not deny me this,  
 174 But that I died giving the noble charge,  
 To hazard life for conquest of a crown.  
 176 Forthwith therefore will I in post depart  
 To Albany, and raise in armour there  
 178 All power I can: and here my secret friends,  
 By secret practice shall solicit still,

180 | To seek to win to me the people's hearts.

182 |

[*Exit.*]

ACT V, SCENE II.

*A Council of the King's Lords.*

*Enter Eubulus.*

1 **Eubu.** O Jove, how are these people's hearts abused?  
 2 What blind fury thus headlong carries them?  
 That though so many books, so many rolls  
 4 Of ancient time, record what grievous plagues  
 Light on these rebels aye, and though so oft  
 6 Their ears have heard their aged fathers tell  
 What just reward these traitors still receive,  
 8 Yea, though themselves have seen deep death and blood,  
 By strangling cord and slaughter of the sword  
 10 To such assigned, yet can they not beware;  
 Yet cannot stay their lewd rebellious hands:  
 12 But suffering, lo, foul treason to distain  
 Their wretched minds, forget their loyal heart,  
 14 Reject all truth, and rise against their prince.  
 A ruthless case, that those whom duty's bond,  
 16 Whom grafted law by nature, truth, and faith,  
 Bound to preserve their country and their king,  
 18 Born to defend their commonwealth and prince,  
 Even they should give consent thus to subvert  
 20 Thee, Britain land, and from thy womb should spring,  
 O native soil, those that will needs destroy  
 22 And ruin thee, and eke themselves in fine.  
 For lo, when once the dukes had offered grace  
 24 Of pardon sweet, the multitude, misled  
 By traitorous fraud of their ungracious heads,  
 26 One sort that saw the dangerous success  
 Of stubborn standing in rebellious war,  
 28 And knew the difference of prince's power  
 From headless number of tumultuous routs,  
 30 Whom common country's care, and private fear,  
 Taught to repent the terror of their rage,  
 32 Laid hands upon the captains of their band,  
 And brought them bound unto the mighty dukes:  
 34 And other sort, not trusting yet so well  
 The truth of pardon, or mistrusting more  
 36 Their own offense, than that they could conceive  
 Such hope of pardon for so foul misdeed;  
 38 Or for that they their captains could not yield,  
 Who fearing to be yielded, fled before,  
 40 Stale home by silence of the secret night:



42 The third unhappy and enragèd sort  
 Of desperate hearts, who, stained in prince's blood,  
 From traitorous furor could not be withdrawn  
 44 By love, by law, by grace, ne yet by fear,  
 By proffered life, nay yet by threatened death;  
 46 With minds hopeless of life, dreadless of death,  
 Careless of country, and aweless of God,  
 48 Stood bent to fight as furies did them move,  
 With violent death to close their traitorous life.  
 50 These all by power of horsemen were oppressed,  
 And with revenging sword slain in the field,  
 52 Or with the strangling cord hanged on the tree;  
 Where yet their carrion carcasses do preach,  
 54 The fruits that rebels reap of their uproars,  
 And of the murder of their sacred prince. —  
 56 But lo, where do approach the noble dukes,  
 By whom these tumults have been thus appeased.

58 *Enter Clotyn, Mandud, Gwenard, and Arostus.*

60 **Clot.** I think the world will now at length beware,  
 62 And fear to put on arms against their prince.

64 **Mand.** If not? those treacherous hearts that dare rebel,  
 Let them behold the wide and hugy fields  
 66 With blood and bodies spread with rebels slain,  
 The lofty trees clothed with the corpses dead,  
 68 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,  
 78 And of my country work and care in me,  
 That if the spending of my breath availed  
 80 To do the service that my heart desires,  
 I would not shun t' embrace a present death;  
 82 So have I now in that wherein I thought  
 My travail mought perform some good effect,  
 84 Ventured my life to bring these tidings here.  
 Fergus, the mighty Duke of Albany,  
 86 Is now in arms, and lodgeth in the fields  
 With twenty thousand men; hither he bends  
 88 His speedy march, and minds t' invade the crown:

90 Daily he gathereth strength, and spreads abroad,  
 That to this realm no certain heir remains,  
 92 That Britain land is left without a guide,  
 That he the sceptre seeks for nothing else  
 But to preserve the people and the land,  
 94 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  
 98 Abuse the vantage of unhappy times?  
 O wretched land, if his outrageous pride,  
 100 His cruël and untemperèd willfulness,  
 His deep dissembling shows of false pretence,  
 102 Should once attain the crown of Britain land!  
 Let us, my lords, with timely force resist  
 104 The new attempt of this our common foe,  
 As we would quench the flames of common fire.

106 **Mand.** Though we remain without a certain prince  
 108 To wield the realm, or guide the wandering rule,  
 Yet now the common mother of us all,  
 110 Our native land, our country, that contains  
 Our wives, children, kindred, ourselves, and all  
 112 That ever is or may be dear to man,  
 Cries unto us to help ourselves and her.  
 114 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,  
 To see the hugy heaps of these unhaps  
 122 That now roll down upon the wretched land,  
 Where empty place of princely governance,  
 124 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  
 156 | Of ancient honour of your ancestors,  
 Of present wealth and noblesse of your stocks,  
 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 ruth,  
 Then, then, have pity on the torn estate;  
 162 | Then help to salve the wellnear hopeless sore;  
 Which ye shall do, if ye yourselves withhold  
 164 | The slaying knife from your own mother's throat:  
 Her shall you save, and you, and yours in her,  
 166 | If ye shall all with one assent forbear  
 Once to lay hand, or take unto yourselves  
 168 | The crown, by colour of pretended right,  
 Or by what other means soe'er it be,  
 170 | Till first by common counsel of you all  
 In parliament, the regal diadem  
 172 | Be set in certain place in governance;  
 In which your parliament, and in your choice,  
 174 | Prefer 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 his or hers, upon whose name  
 The people rest by mean of native line,  
 180 | Or by the virtue of some former law  
 Already made their title to advance.

182 | Such one, my lords, let be your chosen king;  
 Such one so born within your native land;  
 184 | Such one prefer; and in no wise admit  
 The heavy yoke of foreign governance:  
 186 | Let foreign titles yield to public wealth.  
 And with that heart wherewith ye now prepare  
 188 | Thus to withstand the proud invading foe,  
 With that same heart, my lords, keep out also  
 190 | Unnatural thraldom of strangers' reign,  
 Ne suffer you against the rules of kind,  
 192 | Your mother land to serve a foreign prince.

194 | *[Exeunt all except Eubulus.]*

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?  
 And who will not by force attempt to win  
 212 | So great a gain that hope persuades to have?  
 A simple colour shall for title serve.  
 214 | Who wins the royal crown will want no right;  
 Nor such as shall display by long descent  
 216 | A lineal race to prove himself a king.  
 In the meanwhile these civil arms shall rage,  
 218 | And thus a thousand mischiefs shall unfold,  
 And far and near spread thee, O Britain land;  
 220 | All right and law shall cease; and he that had  
 Nothing to-day, to-morrow shall enjoy  
 222 | Great heaps of gold; and he that flowed in wealth,  
 Lo, he shall be bereft of life and all;  
 224 | And happiest he that then possesseth least:  
 The wives shall suffer rape, the maids deflowered,  
 226 | And children fatherless shall weep and wail;  
 With fire and sword thy native folk shall perish:  
 228 | One kinsman shall bereave another life;

230 The father shall unwitting slay the son;  
 The son shall slay the sire, and know it not.  
 Women and maids the cruël soldiers' swords  
 232 Shall pierce to death, and silly children, lo,  
 That play[ing] in the streets and fields are found,  
 234 By violent hand shall close their latter day.  
 Whom shall the fierce and bloody soldiër  
 236 Reserve to life? whom shall he spare from death?  
 Even thou, O wretched mother, half alive,  
 238 Thou shalt behold thy dear and only child  
 Slain with the sword, while he yet sucks thy breast.  
 240 Lo, guiltless blood shall thus eachwhere be shed.  
 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 suage.  
 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.

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

296

[*Exeunt.*]*FINIS*

## The Dumb-Shows of *Gorboduc*.

Each Act begins with a pantomime, called a Dumb-Show, in which a brief actual or allegorical scene is played out. Traditionally, a copy of the description and significance of each Dumb-Show was handed out to the audience, so that they could follow along and make sense of each pantomime.

### ACT I

First the music of violins begins to play, during which comes in upon the stage six wild men clothed in leaves; of whom the first bares in his neck a faggot of 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. After they do this, they depart the stage, and the music ceases.

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

### ACT II.

First, the music of cornets begins to play, during which comes in upon the stage a king accompanied with a number of his nobility and gentlemen. And after he has placed himself in a chair of estate prepared for him, there comes and kneels before him a grave and aged gentleman and offers up a cup unto him of wine in a glass, which the king refuses. After him comes a brave and lusty young gentleman and presents the king with a cup of gold filled with poison, which the king accepts, and drinking the same, immediately falls down dead upon the stage, and so is carried thence away by his lords and gentlemen, and then the music ceases.

Hereby is signified that as glass by nature holdeth no poison, but is clear and may easily be seen through, ne boweth by any art: so a faithful counsellor holdeth no treason, but is plain and open, ne yieldeth to any indiscreet affection, but giveth wholesome counsel, which the ill-advised prince refuseth. The delightful gold filled with poison betokeneth flattery, which 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 III.

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

### ACT IV.

First the music of howbies begins to play, during which there comes forth from under the stage, as though out of hell, three Furies, Alecto, Megera and Ctisiphone, clad in black garments sprinkled with blood and flames, their bodies girt with snakes, their heads spread with serpents instead of hair, the one 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 had slain their own children. The names of kings and queens were these, Tantalus, Medea, Athamas, Ino, Cambyses, Althea; after that the Furies and these pass about the stage thrice, they depart, and then the music ceases.

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

### ACT V.

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

Hereby is signified tumults, rebellions, arms and civil wars to follow, as fell in the realm of Great Britain, which by the space of fifty years and more, continued in civil war between the nobility after the death of King Gorboduc and of his issues, for want of certain limitation in the succession of the crown, till the time of Dunwallo Molmutius, who reduced the land to monarchy.