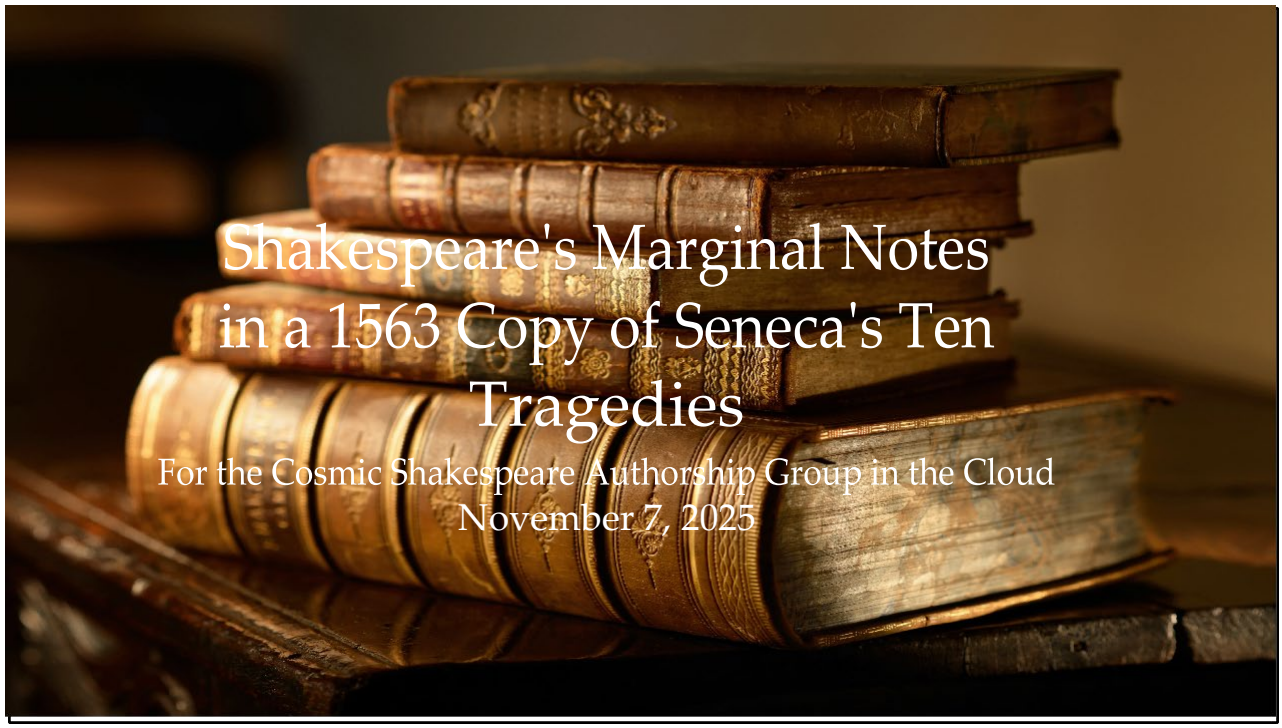

[Remarks delivered at a Mid-Atlantic Arts and Sciences Club that prefers to remain anonymous]

Since what I'm about to tell you may seem wildly improbable, indulge me to begin with some justification of the experience I bring to the inquiry.

I began studying forensic handwriting of historical materials in my 2002 PhD dissertation on the Edward de Vere Geneva Bible at the Folger Shakespeare Library. This involved securely identifying the annotator of a book, purchased in 1925 by Henry Clay Folger, the founder and patron of the library. I worked with my friend and collaborator M.K. Anderson, to prepare samples for study by a board-certified forensic handwriting expert, Emily Will, and she prepared an independent report concluding that the annotations were very probably in the handwriting (as we might rationally expect) of the book's first owner. In the process of writing the dissertation I collected many facsimile reproductions of Edward de Vere's handwriting from U.S. sources including the Huntington Library and The Folger Shakespeare Library, as well as British sources such as Hatfield, the Public Records Archives, and the British Library.

Over the last five years, I've conducted a detailed study of a group of Elizabethan

history books at Audley End in Essex, about which I spoke about here at the Anonymous Club in June 2024. A 2023 study in an internationally recognized forensics journal had already established that annotations are de Vere's handwriting.

The book I want to discuss today has a very different and more complicated history. It was purchased about ten years ago by an Oxfordian collector from a leading US dealer in books. The buyer allowed me to photograph and study the book over an extended time, and I prepared a substantial research report on it, from which I'll be drawing from in my talk.

The book is today in the collection of the Senate House Library in London, under the care of librarian and early modern book expert Karen Attar, in the Shakespeare Authorship archive at the library, which also holds recently acquired collections of John Thomas Looney, Katherine Eggar, and Edwin Durning Lawrence as well as this book.

But as a refresher, for some background and context, let's review a few of the things we learned from the Audley End Books, before turning to the even newer findings in a 1563 edition of *Seneca's Ten Tragedies*.

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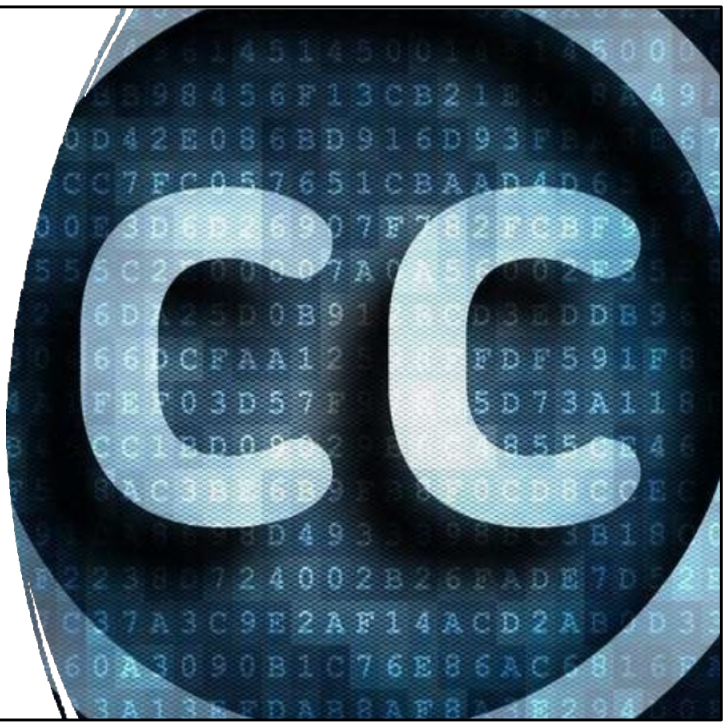

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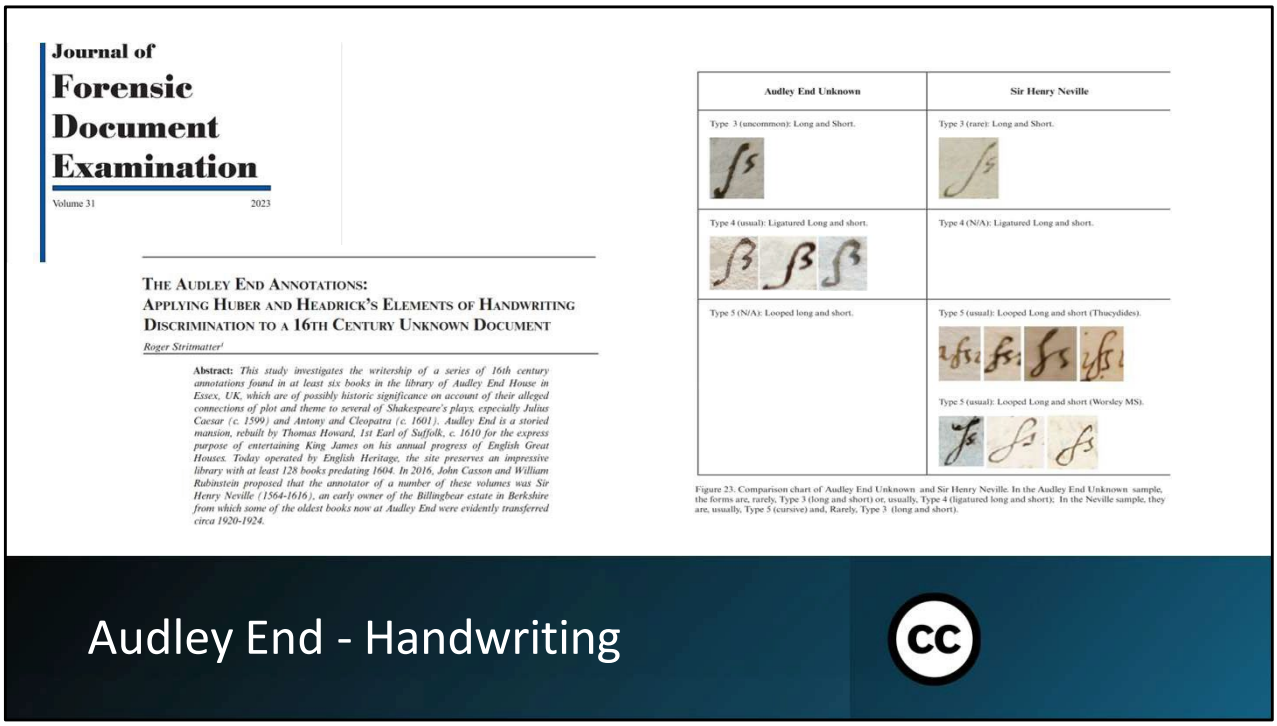
You are reading a lightly-edited revision of a talk recently given at a Mid-Atlantic Club for inquiring minds that requires anonymity to exist in peace. Thank you for your interest and curiosity.

The Audley End library contains around a hundred pre-1603 books, of which my wife Shelly and I examined around 20 on our two trips in 2022 and 2023. Six of them, published between 1546 and 1586 contain annotations by the person first identified in my own study as the "Audley End Unknown."

These annotations were first brought forward by John Casson and William Rubinstein in their "Sir Henry Neville Was Shakespeare."

But Casson and Rubinstein were mistaken in their assumption that the annotations they discovered were in Sir Henry Neville's handwriting.



Journal of
Forensic
Document
Examination
Volume 31 2023

THE AUDLEY END ANNOTATIONS:
APPLYING HUBER AND HEADRICK'S ELEMENTS OF HANDWRITING DISCRIMINATION TO A 16TH CENTURY UNKNOWN DOCUMENT

Roger Stritmatter[1]

Abstract: *This study investigates the writership of a series of 16th century annotations found in at least six books in the library of Audley End House in Essex, UK, which are of possibly historic significance on account of their alleged connections of plot and theme to several of Shakespeare's plays, especially Julius Caesar (c. 1599) and Antony and Cleopatra (c. 1601). Audley End is a storied mansion, rebuilt by Thomas Howard, 1st Earl of Suffolk, c. 1610 for the express purpose of entertaining King James on his annual progress of English Great Houses. Today operated by English Heritage, the site preserves an impressive library with at least 128 books predating 1604. In 2016, John Casson and William Rubinstein proposed that the annotator of a number of these volumes was Sir Henry Neville (1564-1616), an early owner of the Billingbear estate in Berkshire from which some of the oldest books now at Audley End were evidently transferred circa 1920-1924.*

Audley End Unknown	Sir Henry Neville
Type 3 (uncommon): Long and Short.	Type 3 (rare): Long and Short.
Type 4 (usual): Ligatured Long and short.	Type 4 (N/A): Ligatured Long and short.
Type 5 (N/A): Looped long and short.	Type 5 (usual): Looped Long and short (Thucydides). Type 5 (usual): Looped Long and short (Worsley MS).

Figure 23. Comparison chart of Audley End Unknown and Sir Henry Neville. In the Audley End Unknown sample, the forms are, rarely, Type 3 (long and short) or, usually, Type 4 (ligatured long and short); In the Neville sample, they are, usually, Type 5 (cursive) and, Rarely, Type 3 (long and short).

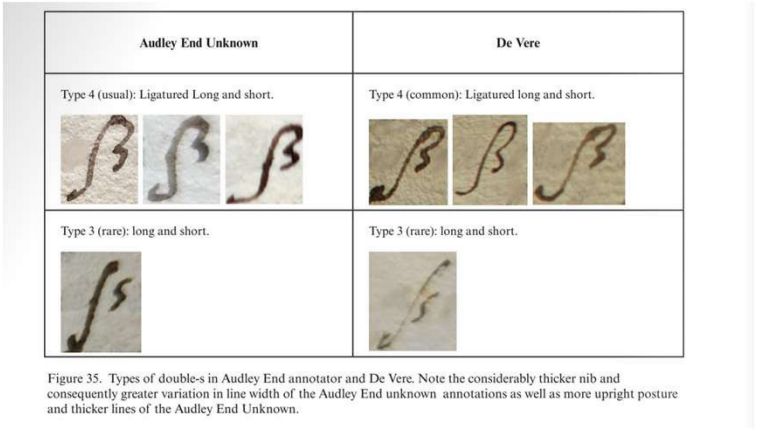
Audley End - Handwriting

My detailed and comprehensive 2023 *Journal of Forensic Document Examination* study proves their error. It is available for free online and includes over sixty illustrations of this type, all supporting the conclusion illustrated in miniature in this and the next slide. The annotations in question are not by Sir Henry Neville and they are, with a high degree of probability, by Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford.

Double-s is a useful bigram for comparing hands since there are at least five distinct ways that this combination of letters can be constructed in 16th century Italic handwriting. Three are visible in this figure illustration from the *JFDE* article, a peer reviewed international journal for forensic experts.

While the annotator regularly prefers either a long and short (Type 3) or a ligatured long and short (Type 4), Neville in most of the exemplars prefers a third type, the looped or cursive long and short. While the first two types are formed with two strokes in which the pen leaves the page between the initial and second letters, to produce the cursive form, the pen has continuous contact with the page. These habits and the resulting letter forms are inconsistent with the hypothesis of shared writership.

"Double-S," de Vere and Audley End Unknown compared



Audley End Unknown	De Vere
Type 4 (usual): Ligatured Long and short.	Type 4 (common): Ligatured long and short.
Type 3 (rare): long and short.	Type 3 (rare): long and short.

Figure 35. Types of double-s in Audley End annotator and De Vere. Note the considerably thicker nib and consequently greater variation in line width of the Audley End unknown annotations as well as more upright posture and thicker lines of the Audley End Unknown.

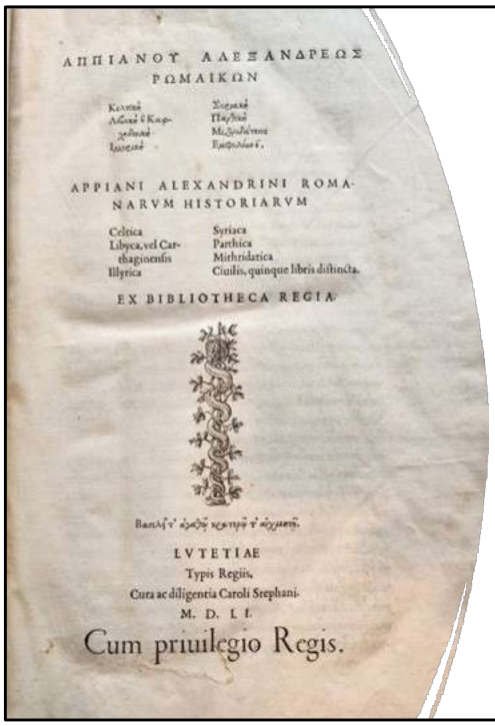
When we compare the Audley End Unknown and the de Vere exemplars, we see only two types, and they both match.

Again, the long and short form (type 3) on the bottom row is found, but in very small numbers in both samples, while the predominating form Type 4, long and short with ligatures, occurs over 95% of the time in both samples. While conclusions in forensic evaluation should never be based on a comparison of only one or two letters, these two comparisons already point towards the conclusion elsewhere documented in detail, that Henry Neville was not the annotator and Edward de Vere was.

While multiple similar proofs would be required for a fully conclusive argument, this one comparison already disproves the Neville hypothesis and points towards the ultimately undeniable conclusion that de Vere the annotator.

When John Thomas Looney first identified de Vere as the real author of the plays. Looney's seminal 1920 study, *"Shakespeare" Identified in Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford.* The book not only put the name "Shakespeare" under quotation marks for the first time; it also identified the maker of these annotations as the true heart and mind behind the name. At that time, Looney also predicted that "new data may be unearthed," leaning to "larger and truer results" (414), when others assumed the quest.

The two samples do show some discrepancies. The Audley End exemplars are written with a wider-nibbed pen, and the lines show more variation in width, the character of the letter more upright. The de Vere samples, written on a full sheet of paper with a thinner pen nib, show a stronger slant on account of the forward momentum of the pen as the hand moves across the page. But despite these differences in circumstance and the variations they induce in the samples, these two samples constitute a strong match that was not seen in the comparison to Neville's hand. *The Journal of Forensic Document Examination* article illustrates these conclusions with over sixty such sets of comparison and has yet, nearly two years later, to receive any reasoned criticism that could invalidate or call into question the conclusions it reached regarding de Vere's writership of the notes.


ΑΠΠΙΑΝΟΥ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΕΩΣ
ΡΩΜΑΙΚΩΝ

APPIANI ALEXANDRINI ROMANARVM HISTORIARVM

Celtica
Libyca, vel Carthaginensis
Illyrica
Syriaca
Parthica
Mithridatica
Ciuilis, quinque libris distincta.

EX BIBLIOTHECA REGIA

LVTETIAE
Typis Regiis,
Cura ac diligentia Caroli Stephani.
M. D. L I.

Cum priuilegio Regis.

Cassius Dio's Historia Romana

- Most important of the Audley End books
- Published 1551 by Charles Stephanus (Estienne).
- Cassius Dio a Greek administrator in the Roman Empire
- History of Rome from the arrival of Aeneas in Italy (7th c. B.C.E.) to Severus Alexander in 229 C.E.

The most important of the Audley End Books is Cassius Dio's *Historia Romana*, written in Greek, by a Greek 2nd century C.E. administrator in the Roman Empire.

It is, after Plutarch, the second most obvious potential source for raw materials for both *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. Shakespeare also used Appian's *Historia Romana*, an account covering the same Julius Caesar history as Cassius Dio and Plutarch.

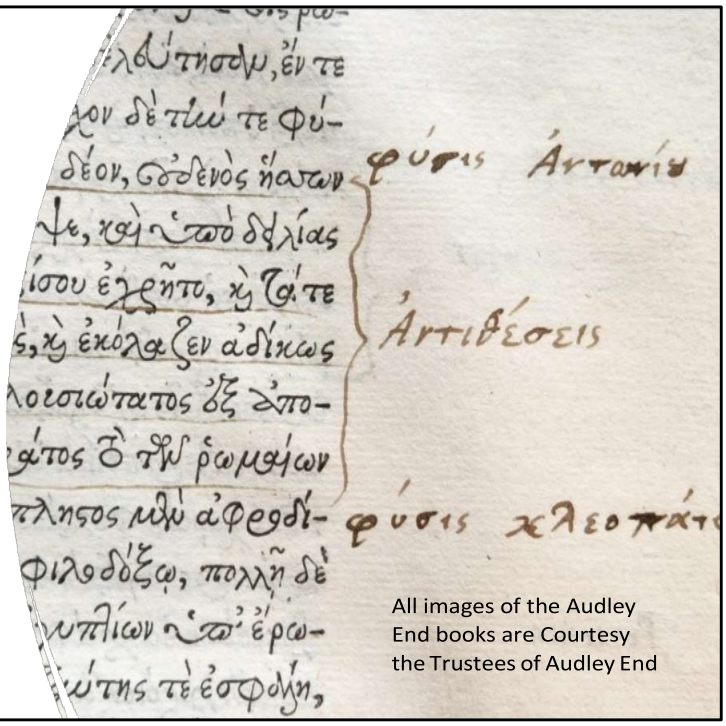
But Cassius Dio has been neglected by Shakespeare scholars on account of only being translated into English in the 19th century. For Shakespeare to have used this book, he had to know Greek. The evidence – both from the literary and the material evidence now joined together in this analysis – suggests that he did.

Audley End: Character & Antithesis

Φύσις Ἀντονίου.
The Φύσις (nature/character) of Antony.

Ἀντιθέσεις. Antithesis.

Φύσις κλεοπάτρας.
The Φύσις (nature/character) of Cleopatra.



In fact, one huge advantage of this evidence from Audley End is that some notes – here is one example – are in Greek. While this might seem an impediment, think of the forensic bonus that confers. Greek culture and literature, scholars now understand, left a huge imprint on Shakespeare (Findlay and Markidou, Showerman, Pollard, et al.).

Shakespeare uses the word "nature" 394 times in x plays. Here it is, in Greek, twice. Can physis accurately be translated as "character," not "nature." According to Shakespeare, the answer is, emphatically, "yes." He often uses the word "nature" where we would use "character," and his few uses of "character" are almost always in the proper etymological sense as a "thing engraved."

Consider, e.g., when Edmund muses on the naivete of his father and brother:

.

[Exit Edgar.]
A credulous father! and a brother noble,
Whose *nature is so far* from doing harms
That he suspects none; on whose foolish honesty
My practices ride easy! I see the business.
Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit;
All with me's meet that I can fashion fit. Exit.

Nature in this passage is synonymous with one of the three modern senses of character, the ethical one. Edmund's brother has an innocent and trusting character. But Shakespeare uses the word nature across a wide range of applications.

In fact, Shakespeare could well be known as the poet of nature. The word appears 30x in *Lear* alone, and literally dozens if not hundreds of articles and books detail aspects of Shakespeare's treatment of what Raymond Williams has termed this "most difficult" concept in philosophy. In one recent examination, Nic Panagopoulos, in his "All's with me Meet that I can fashion fit: *Physis* and *Nomos* in *King Lear"* (Findlay and Markidou 115-138) sees physis as one of the two conceptual poles of *King Lear*: "The thematic parallels between *King Lear* and *Antigone* are many and extend to the basic tragic conflict dramatized in both between *nature* and *law/convention* – or *physis* and *nomos*" (119). Law (*nomos*) and crime (*scelera*) are also recurrent motives in both the Audley End and Seneca annotations.

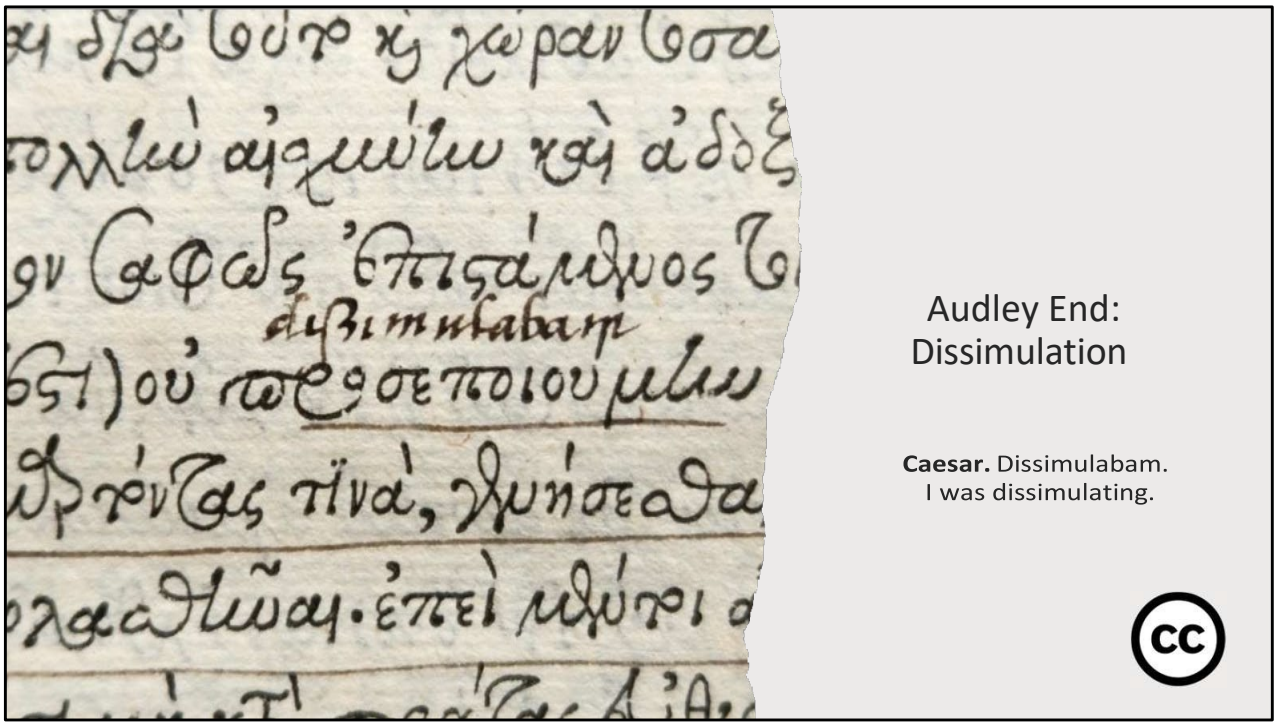
This annotation concerns *physis* but treats it in a figure of comparison. The *nature* of Antony is being related to the *nature* of Cleopatra by an intervening theme, *antithesis*.

Consider what this means. Scholarship on this play have long emphasized its undermining of static antithesis by means of complication. For example, the antithesis male-female is under constant deconstruction in this play, in all kinds of ways, from the prominent role played by the eunuch Mardian in the jesting repertoire of Cleopatra's court to Cleopatra's appropriation of Antony's "sword" in bed or her obviously superiority to him in the art of governance.

The concept of antithesis is also an essential figure more generally in Shakespeare's dramaturgical method. As Sky Gilbert explains:

"One of the most common rhetorical techniques utilized by Shakespeare is antithesis. It is difficult to find a page in a play by Shakespeare that does not contain it. Shakespeare seems compelled – when speaking of one thing – to also think of its opposite" (66).

This extraordinary pattern of annotations reveals the annotator thinking in dramatic terms about what we would call character. Two leading eponymous characters of one of Shakespeare's most ambitious and celebrated plays are here linked by the term "antithesis," as if they writer is constructing the characters in his mind, and thinks of them as related through dynamic antitheses.



A third fundamental concept in Shakespeare, as important in the plays as antithesis is dissimulation, pretense, play-acting – again a concept appearing in the Cassius Dio notes.

Shakespeare's characters are plotters.

Here, in Cassius Dio's narrative, Caesar is delivering a speech cowing his rebellious men before the battle of Placentia in 194 B.C.E. He admits that he has been playing along with the rebels, so he can know how to set at liberty the relatively innocent but punish the ringleaders. The Greek phrase is translated into Latin "I was dissimulating."

Dissimulation is fundamental to Shakespeare's constructions of character, as noted by many scholars. As Hamlet says, "one may smile and smile, and be a villain! at least I am sure it may be so in Denmark" (1.5.108-109).

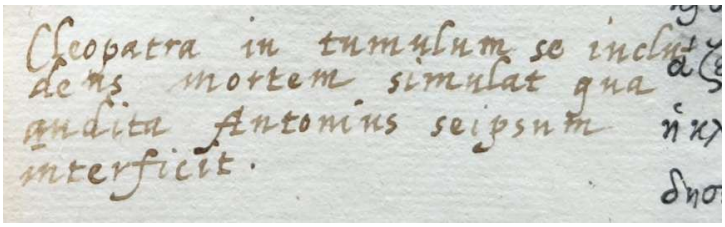
Thus, many dramatic situations involving deception, impersonation, or disguise in the plays confirm how fundamental *dissimulation* is for Shakespeare. Such frequent words as *disguise* (57x); *mask* and variations (54x), *feign* (29x), or even "cloak" as in Lucius's description of the conspirators in *Julius Caesar*:

their hats are pluck'd about their ears,
And half their faces buried in their cloaks,
That by no means I may discover them
By any mark of favour. (2.1.73-76)

Audley End: Cleopatra's Dissimulation and Reciprocal Irony

- Cleopatra in tumulum se includens mortem simulat qua audita Antonius seipsum interficit (Dio

- Cleopatra inclosing herself in her tomb pretends death, which hearing, Mark Antony kills himself.



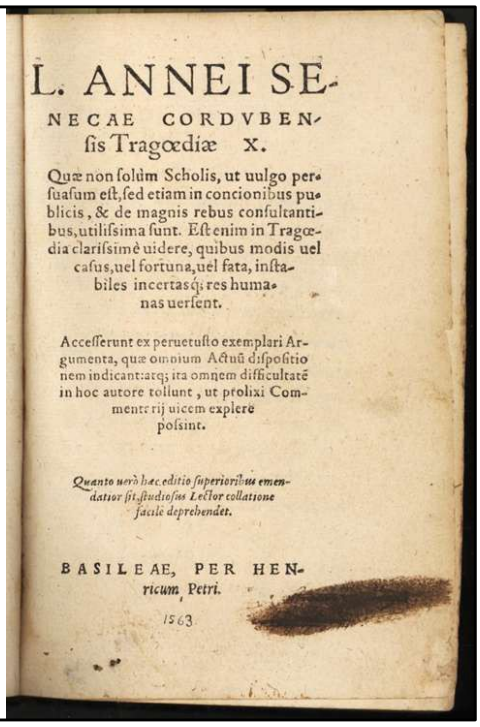
Many notes in the Audley End copy of Cassius Dio deal treat more specific dramatic elements of plot, anticipating much of the action of both *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. This one describes the ironic consequence of Cleopatra's play-acting her own suicide. *Mortem simulat: she pretends* to kill herself.

Hearing the false report, Antony kills himself or rather tries to kill himself. We learn in a subsequent note how he will die in Cleopatra's "breast," just as the "worm" will do in Shakespeare's play. The Latin ablative absolute (*qua audita*) in its brevity implies Antony's gullibility, offering a wry comment on his mercurial and unrealistic temperament. He is a man easily led on by Cleopatra's theatricality; she can even fool him into killing himself.

The notion of reciprocal irony embedded in this note is of course a distinctively Shakespearean mode of humor. He uses it not only in *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Romeo and Juliet* but also deploys the pattern in many more subtle ways throughout his works, even in such titles of plays as "Measure for Measure," or "What You Will."

Seneca's Ten Tragedies at London's Senate House Library

- The Audley evidence consists of notes in history books covering the period of these two plays.
- We don't have Sh. Plutarch, his Ovid, etc.
- But let me show you another book that we do have.



L. ANNEI SE-
NECAE CORDVBEN-
sis Tragœdiæ X.

Quæ non solùm Scholis, ut uulgo persuasum est, sed etiam in concionibus publicis, & de magnis rebus consultantibus, utilissima sunt. Est enim in Tragœdia clarissimè uidere, quibus modis uel casus, uel fortuna, uel fata, instabiles incertasq; res humanas uersent.

Accesserunt ex peruetusto exemplari Argumenta, quæ omnium Actuũ dispositionem indicant: atq; ita omnem difficultatẽ in hoc autore tollunt, ut prolixi Commentarij uicem explere possint.

Quanto uerò hæc editio superioribus emendatior sit, studiosus Lector collatione facilè deprehendet.

BASILEAE, PER HENricum Petri.

1563

This is the title page of the copy of Sen*eca's Ten Tragedies,* published in Basil in 1563. On Edward de Vere's 1575 entourage to Venice and the Eastern Mediterranean he would have passed near if not stopped at this city during his southern transit down the Rhine river valley from Strasbourg towards the Brenner pass over the Alps.

The book is today owned by the Senate House Library as part of their authorship collection and will soon be made available in electronic facsimile on the Library's website.

It contains many annotations in a tiny fine italic handwriting adjusted to its octavo size. While the margins on the most important of the Audley End books are two inches wide, in 12x19" Folio sized books, the margins in this duodecimo book (~5x7.5 inches), are about ½".

Using the additional data from Audley end, this Seneca Report identifies de Vere as the annotator

SHAKESPEARE ILLUSTRATED IN EDWARD DE VERE'S NOTES IN SENECA

A Preliminary Report

ABSTRACT

The document presents the results of a twelve-year study of the marginal annotations of a 1563 copy of Seneca's Ten Tragedies to demonstrate two interrelated propositions: 1) they are in the handwriting of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, and 2) They reveal a series of intimate connections to Shakespeare's Senecan influences that permits the conclusion that these are Shakespeare's notes on Seneca. The study is premised on the writer's thirty-year experience with Edward de Vere's annotations, first in his Folger Shakespeare Library Geneva Bible (2002), and then in several books of Roman history now at Audley End in Essex (Stritmatter 2023; see Appendix A).

Roger Stritmatter, PhD

Along with plans to publish a high-resolution virtual facsimile of the book, the Senate House library also has a copy of this report, *Shakespeare Illustrated in Edward de Vere's Notes in Seneca*.

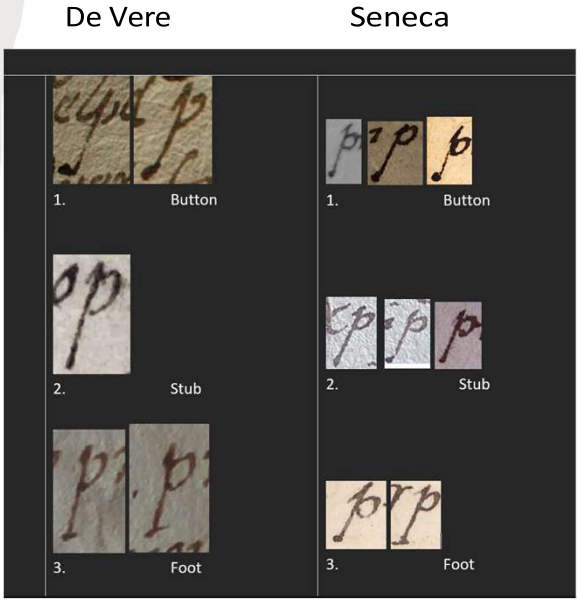
This report was only enabled by the prior study of the Audley End annotations. Before that, we had at most 27 words and part words of de Vere's marginal annotations available for study, all in English.

The Audley End books – especially the three with the most abundant annotations – supplied us with another 18,000 words, all written in differently sized margins of books, with different pens, revealing a large range of natural variation, and in Latin, French, Italian, Greek, and – mostly – Latin.

The notes in this Seneca volume, like those in the Audley End books, are in Latin and Greek, but they are written in a tiny pen in a very narrow marginal space.

Natural Variation in de Vere and Seneca Samples

- *p*– a highly variable letter.
- The comparative sizes show how tiny the Seneca annotations are.
- All three types – ending a button, a foot, and a stub, occur in both samples
- An accumulation of this type of evidence allows an identification.



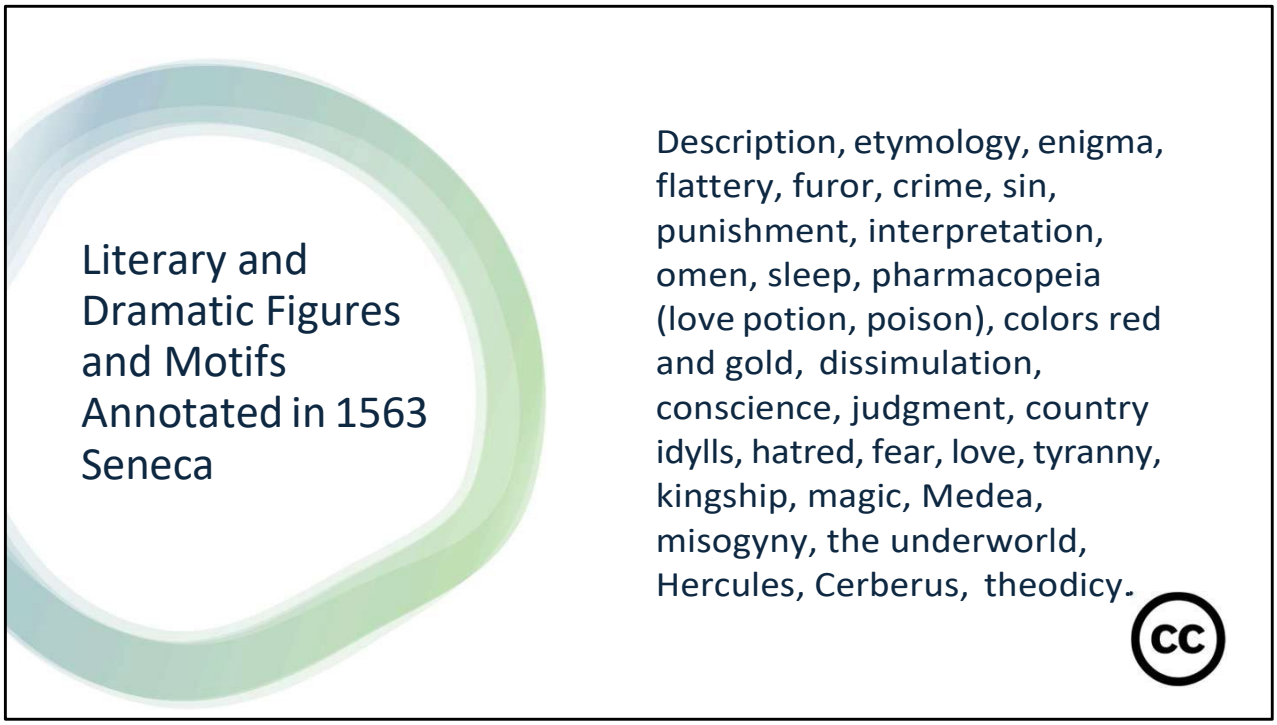
I the previous slide, examining the double letter *Ss*, we made use of a central idea of handwriting analysis, which is "natural variation." Natural variation is a key and often underappreciated aspect of forensic handwriting analysis.

Lower case "p" is a useful example. De Vere uses five forms of the letter, of which five three are also present in the Seneca sample, as the slide shows.

The first ends in a button caused by a backward twist of the pen in the termination; the second just ends in a blunt end, and the third adds a third stroke to create a foot at the bottom of a letter otherwise of Type 2.

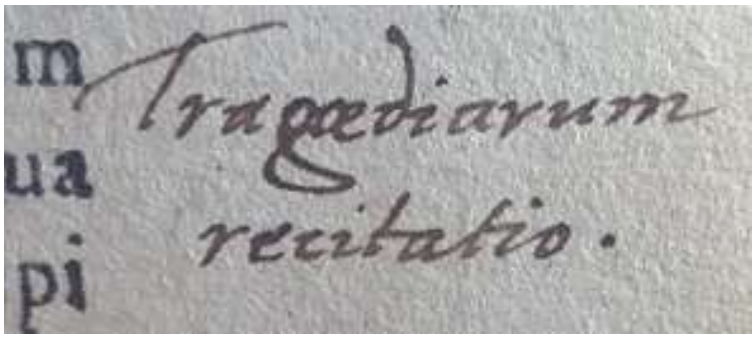
Corresponding to the much smaller writing space, the annotations in the Seneca volume are written in very small lettering with a tiny pen. The difference of size has been roughly preserved in the sizes as shown in these reproductions.

A complete demonstration of the identity of the Seneca and Audley End/de Vere samples is given in the 380-page Research Report shown in the previous slide, from which this example is excerpted.



The themes of these nearly a hundred notes and four hundred underlined passages in this book show an astounding literary range, one readily comparable to leading themes in Shakespeare.

Seneca Plot Summaries



Tragediarum recitatio. The plot of the tragedies.

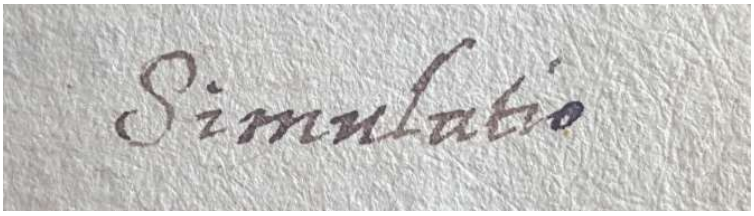
The first annotation in the book shows the annotator thinking in structural terms.

Recitatio – the *recitation*, or the *plot*, of the tragedies.

The passage marked here is essentially a series of short plot summaries for the plays of the book.

Note the period.

Pretense



Simulatio. Pretense. ***Thyestes*** 77 (507-511).

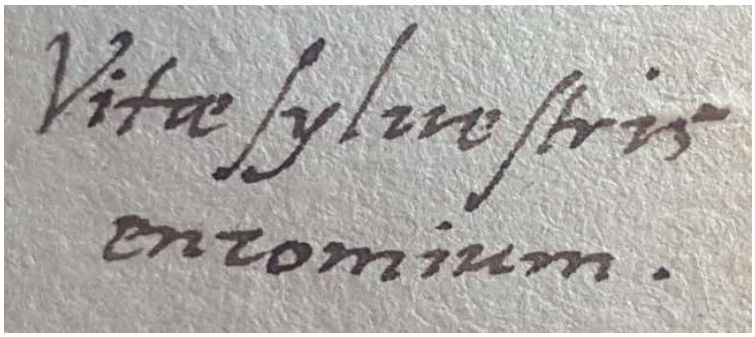
Atreus. When rage scents blood, it cannot be concealed; yet let it be concealed.

Note the echo of *dissimulabam* ("I was pretending") in the Audley End Cassius Dio.

Not only is the handwriting of the Seneca the same as the Cassius Dio volumes, but the themes of the Seneca annotator often echo those earlier seen in the Audley End annotations. We already saw how the omnipresent Shakespeare theme of dissimulation is also a recurrent motif in the Audley End notes, even anticipating specific applications of this motif in the play, such as Cleopatra's play-acting her suicide.

In a Senecan context, the note evokes the conspicuous dissembling of characters in such plays as *Richard III* and *Titus Andronicus*.

Praise of the woodland life.



Vitae sylvestris encomium. In praise of the woodland/country life. *Thy.* 77 (507-511).

Another note concerns "praise of the country life."

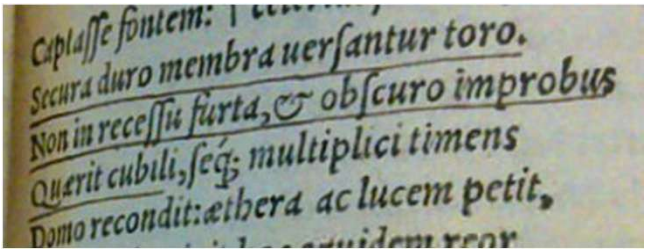
This note belongs to a series in this play that contrasts the dangerous duplicities of the court with the careful life of the country.

The idea is written all over the Shakespeare plays in many ways.

We might think first of the Arden Forest of "As You Like It" or Perdita's sheep shearing in the wilds of rural Bohemia in *Winter's Tale*.

Both the romantic view of poverty and the realistic expose of the dangers of high politics are of typical of Shakespeare and embodied in these Seneca notes.

The Poor Man Sleeps Soundly



The man who rests his carefree limbs on a hard bed. He does not shamefully look to conceal his actions in seclusion on a dark couch. ***Hippolyta*** (521-23).

In this underlined passage from another play, the poor sleep easily at night while the rich, caught up in the struggle for power in the court, suffer from insomnia.

These two elements – the praise of the country life, and the specific application of the praise – that the poor country man sleeps soundly while the courtier or the monarch direct influence of these notes could evoke resonance with Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking, but the motif was already evident in *3 Henry VI, where we see that the same association between the court and insomnia, and between healthy slumber and the country:*

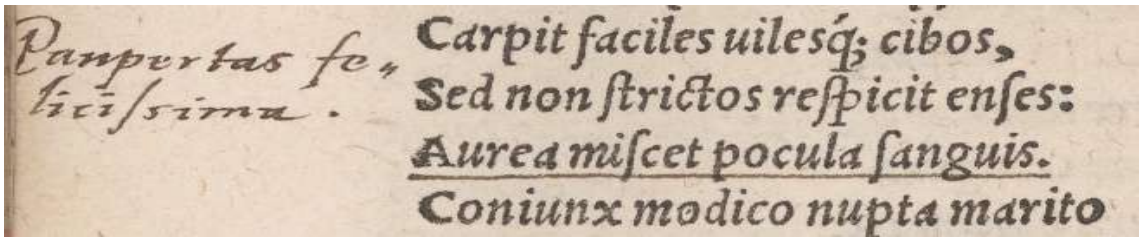
Gives not the hawthorn-bush a sweeter shade
To shepherds looking on their silly sheep,

Asks Henry VI,

Than doth a rich embroider'd canopy
To kings that fear their subjects' treachery?
O, yes, it doth; a thousand-fold it doth.
And to conclude, the shepherd's homely curds,
His cold thin drink out of his leather bottle.

His wonted sleep under a fresh tree's shade. (*3 Hen. VI* 2.5.42-54)

Surely there is a comic suggestion here of Henry's inability to actually enumerate all the wonders of country life when he leaps immediately to the "to conclude," but the lapse only draws further attention to the force of what follows: Shakespeare, apparently inspired by this and other underlined passages from Seneca, associates insomnia with the court and sound sleep with the simple life rural life.



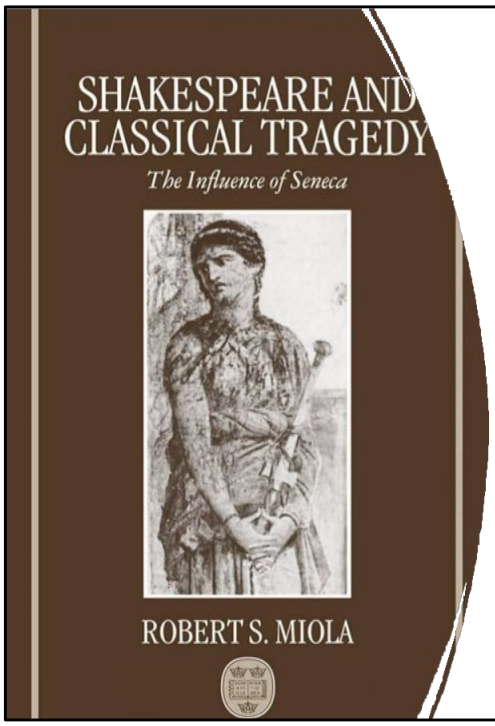
Paupers are most happy. / Golden cups mixed with blood (*Hercules Oetaeu*s, 418).

This underlined passage from another play reads: "golden cups mixed with blood," a vivid metaphor for the dangerous, conspiratorial politics of the 16th century English court. The complexity of the whole thought process is reflected in the adjacent note, "paupers are most happy."

Henry completes his speech the same ambiguous metaphor.

His viands sparkling in a *golden cup,*
His body couched in a curious bed,
When care, mistrust, and treason waits on him.
(*3 Hen. VI* 2.5.42-54)

Between them the three previous notes have shown first the annotator has taken note of the pastoral theme of the superior life in the country, even in poverty, preferring a place untroubled by the intrigues of the court. It was further shown that two specific features of Shakespeare's treatment of this theme, namely the sleep-insomnia contrast and the golden cups in a bloody place, have been recorded by the annotator of this book.



Senecan Influence on Shakespeare

- Multiple books and dozens of articles, including the Arden editions of *Richard III*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Titus Andronicus, Hamlet, 3 Henry VI*, and even *Lear*, etc. (Cunliffe 1893 et al.). Colin Burrow et al.
- Most recently, Curtis Perry, *Shakespeare and Senecan Tragedy* (2020) and "Andrew J. Powers' *Stages of Madness: Sin, Sickness, and Seneca in Shakespearean Drama* (2023).
- Miola: "Throughout Shakespeare's career, Seneca provides an important paradigm of tragic style, character, and action" (1992 10).

Let's "zoom out" for better context. Seneca and Shakespeare are a big deal, according to many scholars.

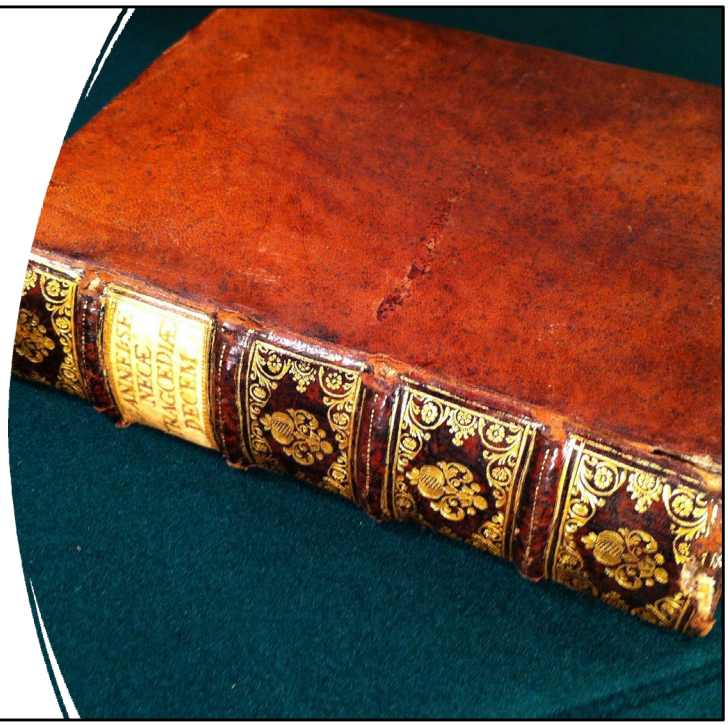
Two recent contributions are Curtis Perry's *Shakespeare and Senecan Tragedy* (2020), which argues Shakespeare's tragic characters were influenced by Senecan tragedy, and Andrew J. Power's *Stages of Madness: Sin, Sickness and Seneca in Shakespearean Drama* (2023). The findings of these and other scholars, from Cunliffe et al up to the present, are only lightly acknowledged in this presentation, because it is written for a general audience, and also because providing a direct encounter with the primary evidence of the case is my objective. The history of scholarship on Seneca and Shakespeare as represented in this and many other titles richly corroborates the significance of the primary evidence and provides ample opportunity for further inquiry.

Many of the examples discussed here could be amply documented for their prior occurrence in the literature. Moreover, several elements of the fact pattern here are anticipated already in my 2002 PhD dissertation on the de Vere Bible. From them, the notes and annotations of the de Vere Bible, the Audley End history books, and the Seneca, a single mind emerges with recognizable themes found in very different kinds of books. Through them, moreover, we begin to see the creative process, to peer into

the workshop, of the author of the plays.

Facts about the 1563 Seneca Annotations

- **Greek Notes: 17**
- **Latin Notes: 83**
- **Hybrid Grk./Lat.: 2**
- **German: 1**
- **Total Underlined passages: 417**
- **Previously identified passages influential in Shakespeare: more than 83.**



Here's the aggregate data. Most of the notes are in Latin, but seventeen are in Greek, and two involve both languages. One, unexpectedly, is in German. Did Edward de Vere know German. Apparently, his adoptive mother, Mildred Cook Cecil, herself a noted classical scholar, especially in Greek, was also a fluent speaker of German. It appears that the young Edward grew up with precisely the same educational opportunities and family history that would be needed to produce a "Shakespeare."

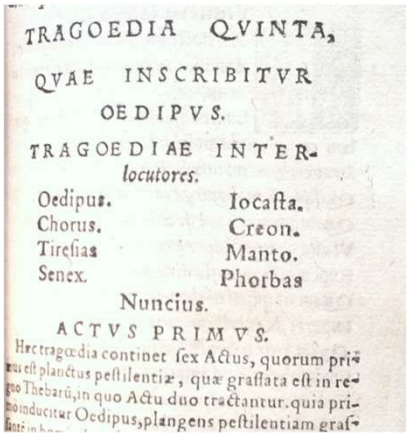
His ancestors had long cultivated the arts, and his grandfather patronized the John Bayle, the inventor of the English history play. Tutored until he was thirteen by the Anglo-Saxon scholar Lawrence Nowell, de Vere almost certainly read and wrote Anglo-Saxon, as well as Greek, Latin, French, and Italian. The evidence of this book suggests that we may need to also add German to that already impressive list, a finding that need not surprise us in light of the linguistic aptitude of the student and the linguistic resources of his immediate milieu.

Over four hundred total underlined passages add further interest, as with them we get the annotator's emphasis on the underlined passages, which range from one work to long sequences of dialogue, often illustrating or explaining the note by a reference point in a different type of data set.

Of these four hundred, well over eighty are documented in prior scholarship as

influencing Shakespeare, and this includes many of the most well-known and widely acknowledged instances of Senecan influence, some at least in every play among the half dozen or so most “Senecan” Shakespeare plays.

Oedipus and *Lear: One on One*



TRAGOEDIA QVINTA,

QVAE INSCRIBITVR

OEDIPVS.

TRAGOEDIAE INTER-

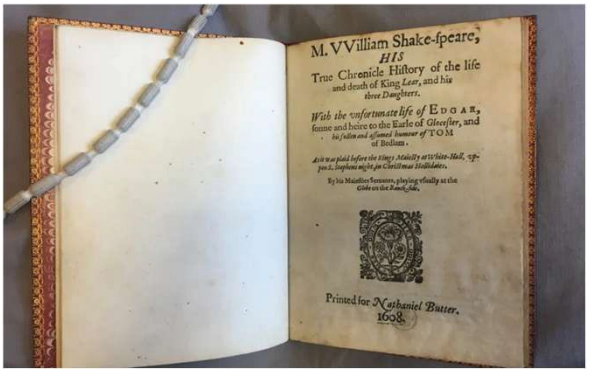
locutores.

Oedipus.	Iocasta.
Chorus.	Creon.
Tiresias	Manto.
Senex.	Phorbas

Nuncius.

ACTVS PRIMVS.

Hæc tragœdia continet sex Actus, quorum pri-
mus est planctus pestilentiæ, quæ grassata est in re-
gno Thebarũ, in quo Actu duo tractantur. quia pri-
mo inducitur Oedipus, plangens pestilentiam gras-



M. VVilliam Shake-speare,
HIS
True Chronicle History of the life and death of King *Lear*, and his three Daughters.

With the unfortunate life of EDGAR, sonne and heire to the Earle of Gloucester, and his feigned and assumed humour of TOM of Bedlam.

As it was plaid before the King's Majestie at White-Hall, upon S. Stephens night in Christmas Holidaies.

By his Majesties Servants, playing vsually at the Globe on the Bancke-side.

Printed for Nathaniel Butter.
1608.

Let's go mano a mano.

Can we fit the Seneca data from one play, for Example *Oedipus*, and another play – *Lear*, for example? In a March 2021 *Notes and Queries* article *Notes and Queries* article, I already showed that this can be done with the notes in *Phoenician Women* in this copy of Seneca.

At the root of this Senecan influence on Shakespeare is the stoic concept of "sympatheia," meaning "mutual interdependence" or the idea that "all things are interwoven with each other and therefore have an affinity for each other."

Few passages in Shakespeare illustrate this concept more clearly than *Lear* 3.2, where the elder protagonist on the heath, raging in the storm, not only embodies Senecan *ira* and *f*uror, but does so in sympathetic relationship with the raging storm around him. And here we should recall that *Lear* not only rages with the storm, but in the middle of it (as if in the eye of a hurricane), a trial supervised by a madman (*Lear* himself).

The use of this stoic *sympatheia* in the plays is confirmed by modern psychology in the form of Elisabeth Waugaman on Shakespeare's character profile as an empath.

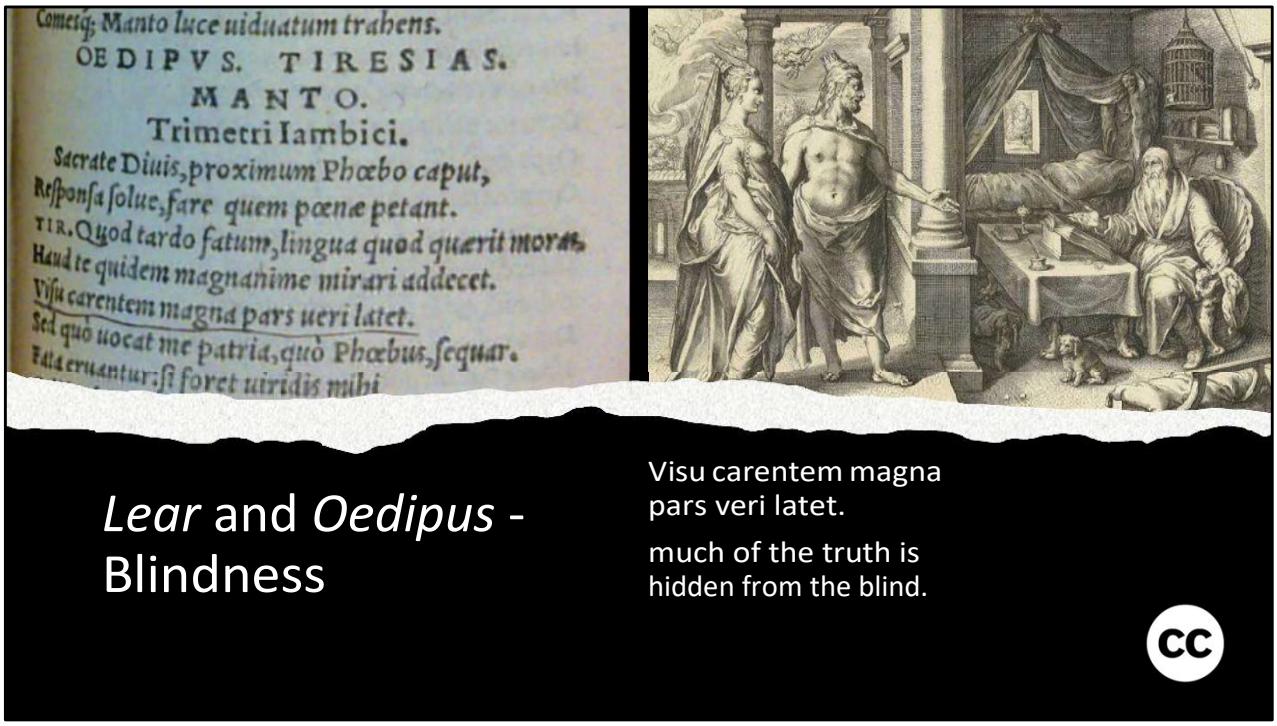
A key source in shaping Shakespeare's exploration of this idea of *sympatheia* was a copy of Seneca's plays like this one. Both *Phoenician Women* and *Oedipus*, in fact, had an oversized influence on *Lear.* Both belong to Seneca's series of plays on the house of Oedipus, which were written under the influence of Sophocles three famous plays on this theme. The emphasis here on Seneca's influence in the Shakespeare plays should not be mistaken for a claim that diminishes the significance of the influence from Greek sources. Indeed, the evident Greek fluency in both sets of annotations, there is little remaining doubt, as already suggested by Findlay and Marikidou, Showerman, Pollard, and other recent studies. Both the "small Latin" and "less Greek" parts of Ben Jonson's famous expression have been wrongly misinterpreted for generations of scholarship.

Note that the characters are here described as "interlocutors" and are listed at the head of play, including Manto, the soothsayer and daughter of the blind prophet Teiresias. She will be important in the notes.

Incidentally, we can also see that the title page of this first 1608 quarto places the name – with the hyphen, in a very prominent location on the title page. We might deduce from this emphasis that it was especially important that this play be firmly detached from the real author and attributed to the scarecrow.

All quotations and translations to Seneca are from the Loeb *Seneca*, John G. Fitch ed., Harvard University Press (2002).

Line numbers to Lear are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2nd edition (1997).



Seneca's *Oedipus* and Shakespeare's *Lear* are linked in this underlined passage –

> Visu carentum magna pars veri latet
> much of the truth is hidden from the blind (Oedipus 295)

Blindness, delusions of the eyes, and ocular violence, are leading motifs in both the Oedipus tradition and several Shakespearean plays, most prominently *King John, Titus Andronicus*, *Hamlet*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Love's Labour's Lost*. Often, including in *King Lear*, the theme appears in a Senecan idiom. Both Shakespeare and Seneca are exploring the ironic divorce between *sight* and *insight.* The soothsayer must be blind.

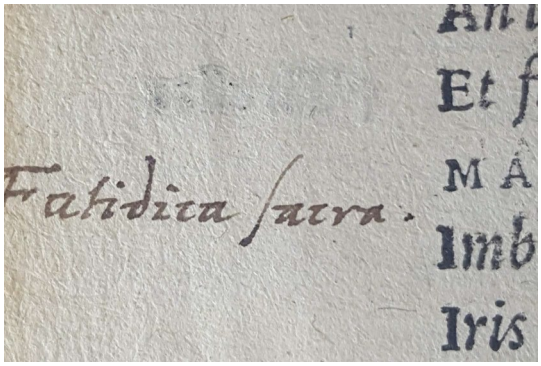
In Act 2 of Seneca's play, the blind prophet Teiresias, urged by Oedipus to consult the oracle to explain Oedipus half-concealed, dangerous past, replies, in part, with the underlined line.

Teiresias' "Visu carentum" (literally, "one lacking in sight") anticipates the oracular utterance of the blinded Gloucester, who announces to his guide, Mad Tom, "I have no way, and therefore want no eyes; I stumbled when I saw" (4.1.19).

It is almost as if Shakespeare is wringing variations on the “one lacking in sight,” playing with the distinction/association of the idea of sight and insight.

The same scene seems to have left an imprint on more than one play. Teiresias instructs his daughter Manto to carry out the ritual. Her name is from the Greek, *mantis*, meaning "prophet" or "seer".

Lear and *Oedipus*: Sacred Omens



Oedipus. 192 (314-320): Prophetic sacraments.

Only a few lines after Teiresias tells us that "truth hidden from the blind," we get a veritable cascade of color in Manto's vivid description her own magic, her *fatidica sacra* or sacral omens:

"The flame was changeable, with more than one appearance. As Iris the shower-bringer *waves various colors into herself* (*qualis implicat various sibi Iris colores*) when she spans a great section of sky and heralds storm clouds with her variegated bow (you would hesitate to say *what colour* is or is not there), so it shimmered, its *bluish colour mottled with the yellow* (*Caerulea flavus mixta*) and then *blood red (Sanguinea*) at the end, it trailed into blackness" (314-320).

The passage is not only a vision of sacred things but, for Shakespeare, an inspiration for character development.

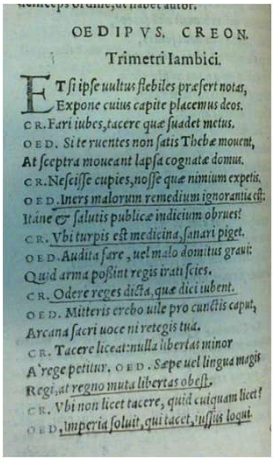
The invocation of Iris as the "shower bringer" in Seneca, who "waves various colors into herself" (*implicat various sibi colores*) irresistibly recalls Ceres' description in *The Tempest* of Iris, the spirit of the rainbow, the "many-coloured messenger" (4.1.76) of the *Tempest* masque.

Shakespeare's most androgynous and Iris-like creation, the aeronautical and multi-

colored Ariel, produces the masque for Prospero and apparently appears in the masque as Ceres, who gives this description of Iris, as inspired by this passage in Seneca's *Oedipus*. Iris wears "saffron wings" (78), and her bow is "blue" (80-81), the same as the *flavus* (yellow) mottling and *caerulea* (blue) of Seneca's *fatidica sacra* in this passage.

I fear I have digressed from *Lear* for the sake of hitching a ride on Seneca's rainbow but there's much more from this copy of Seneca's *Oedipus* that relates to *Lear.*

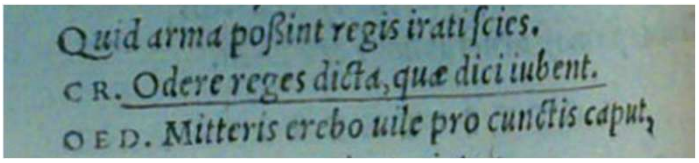
Lear and *Oedipus*: "One who is silent when bidden to speak undermines Authority"



OEDIPVS. CREON.

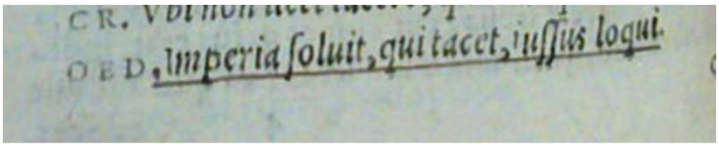
Trimetri Iambici.

ET ſi ipſe vultus flebiles præfert notas,
Expone cuius capite placemus deos.
CR. Fari iubes, tacere quæ ſuadet metus,
OED. Si te ruentes non ſatis Thebæ mouent,
At ſceptra moueant lapſa cognatæ domus.
CR. Neſciſſe cupies, noſſe quæ nimium expetis,
OED. Iners malorum remedium ignorantia eſt:
Itáne & ſalutis publicæ indicium obrues?
CR. Vbi turpis eſt medicina, ſanari piget.
OED. Audita fare, uel malo domitus graui:
Quid arma poſſint regis irati ſcies.
CR. Odere reges dicta, quæ dici iubent.
OED. Mitteris erebo uile pro cunctis caput,
Arcana ſacri uoce ni retegis tua.
CR. Tacere liceat: nulla libertas minor
A rege petitur. OED. Sæpe uel lingua magis
Regi, at regno muta libertas obeſt.
CR. Vbi non licet tacere, quid cuiquam licet?
OED. Imperia ſoluit, qui tacet, iuſſis loqui.



Quid arma poſſint regis irati ſcies.
CR. Odere reges dicta, quæ dici iubent.
OED. Mitteris erebo uile pro cunctis caput,

"Kings hate the words they command others to speak."



CR. [illegible]
OED. Imperia ſoluit, qui tacet, iuſſus loqui.

"One who is silent when bidden to speak undermines authority."

Read the Headline.

This, at any rate, is the conviction of the tyrant Creon in Seneca's *Oedipus.*

After a long chorus to Bacchus, the third scene opens with this exchange between Oedipus and Creon. Oedipus, having received only a rainbow from the prophet's daughter, now appeals to an equally reluctant Creon to answer his questions.

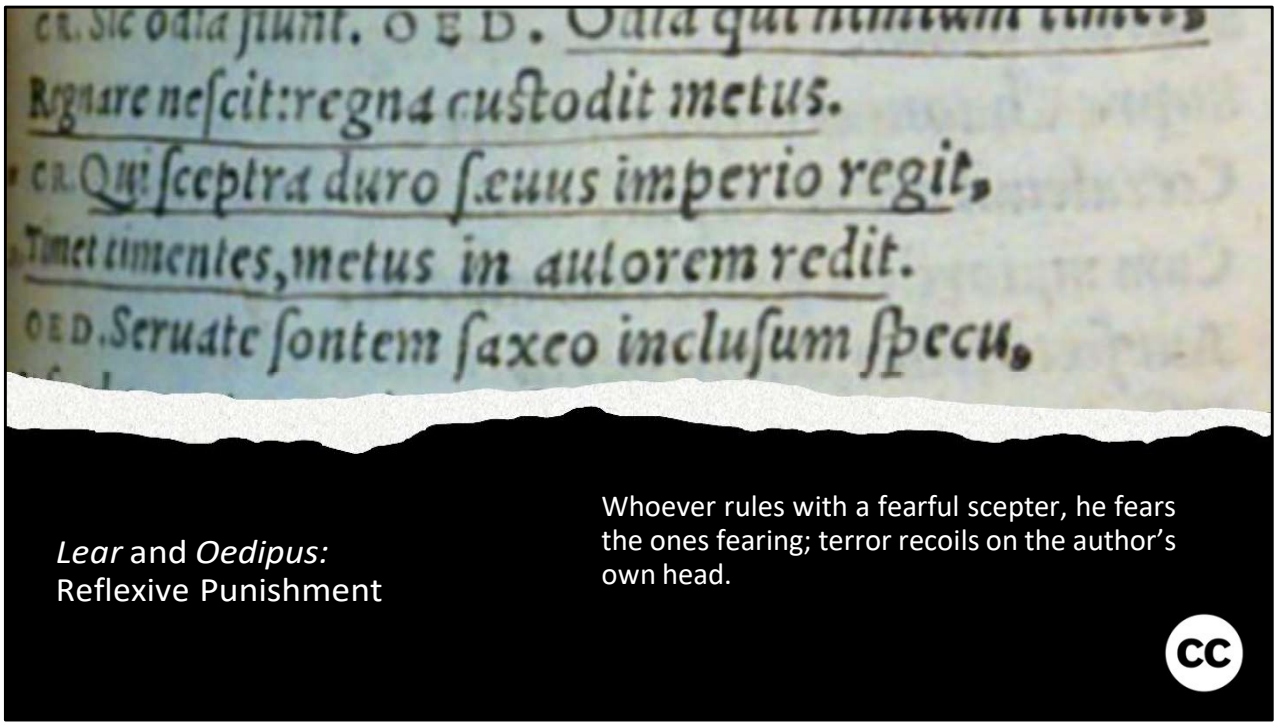
Oe. Tell us what you have heard, or you will learn, broken by suffering, what an angry king's might can perform.
Cr. Kings hate the very words they bid be spoken (*Odere reges dicta quae dici iubent*).
Oe. You will be sent to Erebus as a scapegoat for all, unless *your words* reveal the secrets from the ritual.
Cr. *Allow me silence.* Can any smaller freedom be requested from a king? (*Tacere liceat. ulla libertas minor a rege petitur?*)
Oe. *Often the freedom of silence* is more dangerous than speech to king and kingdom.
Cr. If silence is not allowed, what is anyone allowed? (*ubi non licet tacere, quid cuiquam licet?*
Oe. One who is silent when bidden to speak undermines authority (*Imperia soluit qui tacet iussus loqui*).

The entire exchange – with its focus on the unspeakable – provides a template for the heated confrontation between Lear and Cordelia (and, later, Kent) in the play's opening scene of distribution and banishment. The sequence ends with Lear's curse on his daughter, in which a flawed monarch demands speech from a subject:

Lear…*what can you say* to draw
a third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.
Cordelia. *Nothing, my lord.*
Lear. Nothing?
Cordelia. Nothing.
Lear. Nothing can come of nothing. Speak again.
Cordelia. Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
My heart into my mouth. I love your Majesty
According to my bond; no more nor less.
Lear. How, how, Cordelia? *Mend your speech a little*,
Lest it may mar your fortunes.
*****
Lear. But goes thy heart with this?
Cordelia. Ay, good my lord.
Lear. So young, and so untender?
Cordelia. So young, my lord, and true.
Lear. Let it be so! thy truth then be thy dower!

Both texts invoke a paradigm of censorship to explore complicated questions of truth and speech in the context of political power, but Shakespeare complicates and intensifies the confrontation between Oedipus and Creon by adding the third character, Kent, who will speak, with Cordelia, to witness Lear's error. The third essential member of this conspiracy against royal absolutism is the fool.

Perhaps taking a clue from another Senecan play, he also translates Seneca's *tacere liceat* (allow me silence) into Cordelia's abbreviated, ontological, "nothing."



Oedipus' desire to unravel the enigma by punishing himself introduces yet another common bond between Shakespeare and Seneca, their mutual interest in self-reflexive punishment.

In fact, the exchange between Oedipus and Creon about fear and rulership, becomes paradigmatic for Shakespeare:

Oe. One unduly afraid of being hated is incapable of ruling; a throne is safeguarded by fear.
Cre. Whoever rules with a fearful scepter, he fears the ones fearing; terror recoils on the author's own head (*metus in auctorem redit*) (703-706).

Shakespeare varies this here underlined idea of self-reflexive punishment over and over again, including in *Hamlet* when Horatio reports the on "Purposes mistook, fallen on the inventor's heads (*Hamlet* 5.2.384).

The concept is as fundamental in L*ear* as in *Hamlet.* All the flawed characters are condemned by their own vices. The epicurean Gloucester has his eyes put out, the royal Lear, bereft of daughter, fool, and advisor Kent, is stripped of his royal prerogatives and emblems of rule; and Regan, Goneril, and Edmund (and their

respective partners) meet their corresponding fates.

It takes Shakespeare two versions of the idea to cover all the characters who must be punished on the rack of fortune in this play:

First, Lear applies the moral to himself:

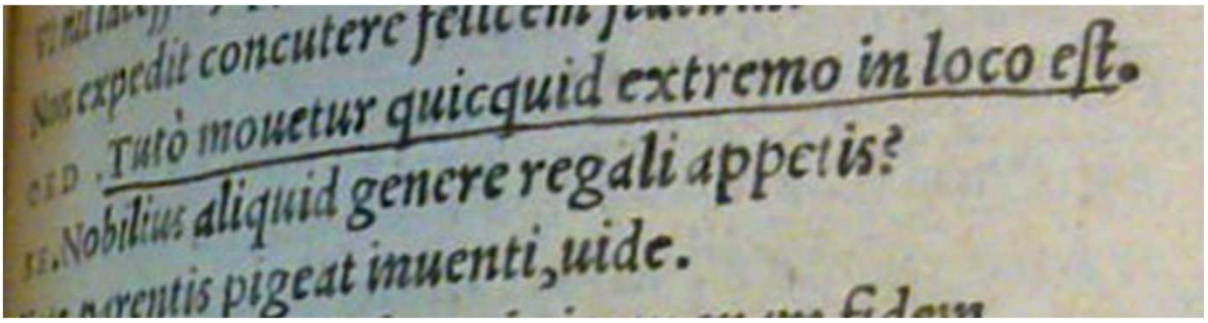
Judicious punishment!
*'*Twas *this flesh* begot these pelican daughters. (*Lear* 3.4.75)

A "Pelican daughter" is an ungrateful or cruelly selfish child, based on an ancient myth that young pelicans would attack their parents, who would then sacrifice their own blood to revive them. In some versions of the myth, the "Pelican parent" voluntarily sacrifices their own blood for the well-being of the offspring.

For the sake of inclusion, Edgar summarizes the concept for all the other characters in the play:

The gods are just, and *of our pleasant vices*
Make instruments to scourge us… (*Lear* 5.3.172)

Lear and *Oedipus*: Desperate Situations



Oed. There is safety in changing a desperate situation (*Oedipus* 834).

In the underlined passage, Oedipus says that "There is safety in changing a desperate situation."

With this maxim Oedipus urge Creon to conduct a further inquiry into his unknown origins.

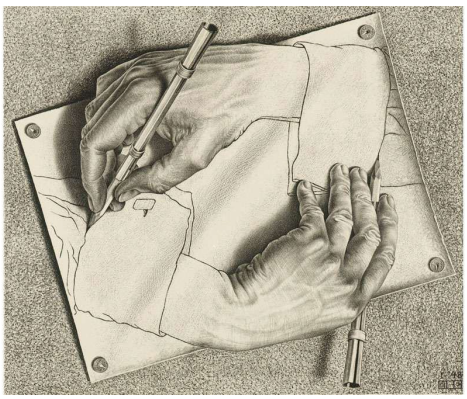
This idea that even a desperate situation may become better or, more likely, worse, becomes Edgar's moral leitmotif in the closing acts of *Lear:*

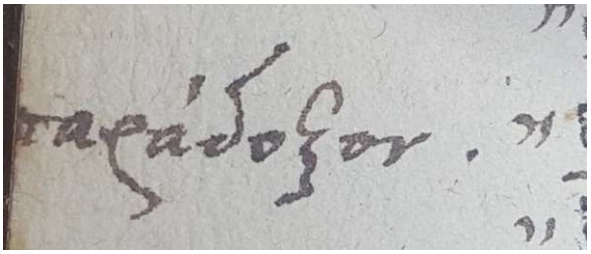
Edgar.....To be worst,
The lowest and most dejected thing of fortune,
Stands still in esperance, lives not in fear.
The lamentable change is from the best;
The worst returns to laughter. Welcome then,
The wretch that thou hast blown unto the worst
Owes nothing to blasts. (4.1.2-9)

Edgar. [aside] O gods! Who is't can say 'I am at the worst'?
I am worse than e'er I was. (4.1.24-25)

Edgar. [aside] And worse I may be yet. The worst is not
So long as we can say 'This is the worst.' (4.1.27-28)

Shakespeare's innovation is here particularly potent, seeing that the worst imaginable, far worse than the present, "at worst returns to laughter." Or at least so "Mad Tom" says.





Paradox

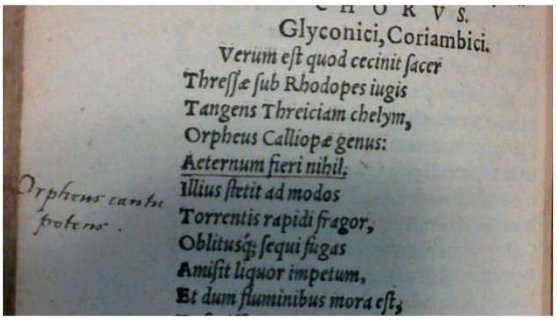
παράδοξον. Paradox. *Troades* 195 (266-269).

The phrase "at worst returns to laughter" constitutes a running example of paradox – a figure of thought that is as essential to Shakespeare's method of dramatic exposition as antithesis, dissimulation, reciprocal irony, or reflexive punishment. Paradox.

Again, written in the margins of this astonishing book, this time in *Troades*, the play from Shakespeare drew so much influence in shaping the Prince Arthur scenes of *King John*, which draw on the parallel action of the planned blinding and execution of prince Astyanax in Seneca's play. Both scenes involve the persecution of a boy by his deceased father's enemies, and in both plays the prince eventually leaps from a great height to commit suicide.

In the interest of your time, I removed several other passages from *Oedipus* that are potently expressed in *Lear.* The few I've shown illustrate the pattern.

The image of the hands drawing each other is of course the illusion of M.C. Escher.



Orpheus cantu potens.
Orpheus, Potent in Singing.

Nothing is made forever.

In the opening banishment scene where Lear encounter's Cordelia's "nothing" by proclaiming that "nothing will come of nothing," editors detect the influence of the pertinent proverbial *nihil ex nihilo* (nothing comes from nothing).

But the counterpart "true" in Cordelia's "so young my lord, and *true*" reveals a possible connection to chorus's Orphic hymn, annotated in *Hercules Oetaus*: "*Verum est* quod cecinit sacer. . . aeternum fieri nihil"/ T*rue* it is that the holy man Orpheus sang that *nothing* is made forever" (1030-1031).

That's the underlined passage. Nothing is made forever.

In Shakespeare's play this is echoed, of course, by Lear's "truth then be thy dower!

The underlined passage in Seneca, the entire pattern of the nothing…truth pattern in *Lear.*

Thank you for your attention.

I hope you grasp my deeper point, that thee longer one studies these annotations, the more they reveal.

The Latin note alongside the chorus's praise of Orpheus, calls the ur-musician-singer in the Roman and Greek traditions, as "potent in singing."

Thank you, Readers. . .

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Thank you for your rapt attention.

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