8. In the II Filostrato this reassurance comes after Troilo has told Pandaro that he loves his cugina (cousin, or—Gordon 40—"kinswoman"). In mentioning the relationship as he does here, Troilo shows less cunning than Chaucer's Troilus, who never at any point mentions the difficulty that is most on his mind.

9. For the more usual opinion, cf. Windeatt, who refers to Troilus's "naturally passive disposition" and describes him as "a relatively simple character, in the sense that there is nothing withheld or unknowable about him." See his Troilus and Criseyde (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992) 277, 278. David Benson writes: "The reader is allowed full access to Troilus's psyche." See Troilus and Criseyde (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990)98. His "prey" here is Pandarus's guarantee of support. Troilus rightly believes that by winning this he is moving closer to his ultimate prey, Criseyde herself.

10. For the uniqueness of Chaucer's version, see my notes 2, 3, 4, 7, and 9-11 above.

Shakespeare's CORIOLANUS

When a Volscian guard mocks Menenius Agrippa's would-be appeal as "the palsied intercession of a decayed dotant" (Coriolanus 5.2.44),1 the note makers read the latter term as "dotard"—despite the harsh slur of senility that "decayed" has already enforced (although the redundancy increases in that one of the definitions for dotard in the OED happens to be "decayed" trees). But Shakespeare has not paired two words meaning the same thing; he has rather balanced two phrases—"decayed dotant" and "palsied intercession"—so that they simply reconfirm, in effect, an elderly pleader.

It is dramatically more likely (and more logical to the language) that the soldier means not only that Menenius—who has just referred to Coriolanus as "my lover" (5.2.14)—is known to dote on Marcus Caius, but also that the old politician has been sent to beg, in doting mode, that the general not sack his native Rome. To intensify that connection, Shakespeare apparently creates a term for someone who dotes, a dotant, whose effect is enhanced by the contrast of a surly guard blocking the old man's entreaty.

Coriolanus is enough involved with modes of reverence—military homage, public idolatry, and in-family rites of respect—that the appellant image of Menenius as dotant belongs to that wider purpose, whereas the sheer insult of old age has been sharply fixed in palsied and decayed. That Shakespeare uses "dotard" on three occasions elsewhere in the plays might also indirectly support the need here for a word of some distinction,2 for he certainly knew one term from the other, and did not, I suggest, consider them interchangeable.

The venerable Menenius had come to appeal to the awesome power of his godson ("my son Coriolanus" 5.2.63); and the general also speaks of having been "godded" by Menenius, who loved Marcius "above the measure of a father" (5.3.10). It is in such context that Menenius appears as the elderly statesman supplicant—"a decayed dotant" essentially detained under guard. The "dotard" explanation of the editors forces this passage into repetition and mistaken description; while losing the thematic fondness pre-established between Menenius and Coriolanus, the editorial note pre-empts necessary dramatic detail.

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NOTES


2. See Pelican, Riverside, or Arden editions of Shakespeare's works.

3. Taming of the Shrew 5.1.106; Much Ado About Nothing 5.1.59; A Winter's Tale 2.3.75

Shakespeare's KING LEAR 4.2.47-51

If that the heavens do not their visible spirits
Send quickly down to tame these vile offences,
It will come
Humanity must performe prey on itself,
Like monsters of the deep. (King Lear 4.2.46-50, Alexander)1
If that the heavens do not their visible spirits
Send quickly down to tame these vile offences,
It will come:
Humanity must performe prey on itself,
Like monsters of the deep. (King Lear 4.2.47-51, Fowkes)2

These passages are quoted from Alexander's and Fowkes's editions because the editorial punctuation of the two texts clearly reflects two quite different interpretations of the passage: In the first, there is no punctuation mark after come in line 3, whereas in the second, there is. It is not, however, as though there is anything special about these two editions as distinct from all others; rather they are representative. For example, George Ian Guthrie and John Dover Wilson's edition of the play has no mark after come either, and the same is true of Horsman's text. On the other hand, G. K. Hunter prints a dash in his edition.


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The passage appears in the First Quarto text (it does not occur in the First Folio of Shakespeare's works) as follows:

If that the heavens do not their visible spirits
Send quickly down to tame these vile offences, it will come

Humanity must perform pray on it self like monsters of the deep. (Cit. from the facsimile King Lear 1608 [Pied Bull Quart], Oxford: Clarendon, 1939)

What a difference Foakes's colon after *come* makes. As it stands in his edition, the passage makes no sense to me, whereas in Alexander's it does. The speaker is Albany, who is expressing his severe disapproval of Goneril, Regan, and Cornwall for their mistreatment of Lear. In Alexander's, Albany says, in effect: "If the heavens don't quickly send down their visible spirits to tame these vile offences, then it will come about that humanity will inevitably prey on itself, like monsters from the deep." Duthie and Wilson gloss *come* correctly as "*se. come about that*" (237). The syntax runs on after "come" without a break. The word is connected with what follows as though Shakespeare had written "come that," where "come" has the sense of "come to be," which, as C. T. Onions noted under come in his A Shakespeare Glossary, is a frequent sense in Shakespeare. There is absolutely no difficulty about the meaning suggested by the absence of a mark in Alexander's text. Albany's point in this important passage is that unless the heavens, through visible spirits (avenging angels) punish the vile offences committed, then inevitably, humanity will sink so low that it will engage in cannibalism. Heavenly intervention is essential if humanity is not to become yet more monstrous.

In the Arden edition, this meaning is entirely lost. Because of Foakes's colon after *come*, we have a completely different syntactical structure. *It* no longer is used to lead on to what follows (that is, "*It will come about that...*") but, if anything, has become a pronoun, looking back to the previous two lines: If the heavens don't quickly send down their visible spirits to tame these vile offences, *it* [meaning, such action?] will come about anyway: humanity will inevitably prey on itself, like monsters from the deep.

On the face of it, the passage would thus allow two quite different interpretations, and the absence of the colon in Alexander's text is as clear an indicator of the one possibility as the colon in Foakes's is of the other. Jay Halio, in his edition of *King Lear*, says: "Either *It* is a pronoun, with divine retribution as an implied antecedent; or an expletive = it will come to this, that (Greg Variants, 173)." However, in practice Halio discounts the second interpretation, for he prints a full stop after "come," thus making the division between "*If [...] come*" and "*Humanity [...] deep*" even stronger than does Foakes in his edition. Other editors often print a comma, thus (presumably) leaving open both of the possibilities mentioned by Halio, although any mark, even a comma, tends to favor the notion that *It* is a pronoun. 4

To my mind, the passage is not ambiguous, and it is necessary to settle quite firmly for It as an expletive (that is, "*it will come to this, that*") and to reject the notion that It is a pronoun. For one thing, *It* in this context is much too vague, as a referent, to serve as shorthand for something like a supposedly implied "divine retribution" (as Halio suggests) or "such action" (as I suggested). It must be what Halio calls an expletive looking forward to the last two lines of the passage; the structure thus is "*It will come [about that] / Humanity must perform pray on itself, / Like monsters of the deep.*"

Nor is that the only reason why *It* is not a pronoun. To repeat my earlier interpretation of what I take to be the correct sense: *(unless the heavens, through visible spirits (avenging angels) punish the vile offences committed, then inevitably, humanity will sink so low that it will engage in cannibalism)*. This reading offers a clear choice: If the heavens do not avenge the offences committed, then *as an inevitable alternative*, humanity will destroy itself, because people will come to eat each other. There is a firm connection here between what the heavens may or may not do and what, as a consequence, will happen to humanity: If the heavens *do* punish the offences committed, humanity will be firmly controlled by the heavens; if on the other hand, the heavens do not act, then humanity will act on its own, destructively.

Such clear, satisfying sense is absent from "*If the heavens don't quickly send down their visible spirits to tame these vile offences, it [such action?] will come about anyway: humanity will inevitably prey on itself, like monsters from the deep.*" In this reading (where *It* would be a pronoun), the implication is that it will not matter one bit whether the heavens punish the vile offences: if they do not do so, humanity will do of its own accord what the heavens want to happen but cannot be bothered to bring about. Instead of the heavens acting, humanity will and thus automatically perform Providence's work for it, by turning to cannibalism.

Thus, if we carefully reflect on the two seeming possibilities, it becomes apparent that only one of them actually makes sense, and the other one must be discarded. And as a result there should be no punctuation mark after *come*. Editors who add a punctuation mark as though the First Quarto has wrongly omitted it are in error, and they obscure the sense of the passage; in this instance, the absence of punctuation in the quarto should be respected.

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