

Annotations to “The Life and Death of Queen Margaret”

by Josh Platt, dramaturg, and Toby
Bercovici adaptor/director

Note:

‘NCS’ stands for the ‘New Cambridge Shakespeare’ edition.
‘AS’ stands for the Arden Shakespeare edition.

pronunciation/meter notes are in orange

ACT I

Scene 1. 1438 (Margaret is 8 years old)

pp 3



Chateau Tarascon (Margaret's childhood home)



Court of Honor in the Chateau Tarascon

'time is come round' -- This phrase sets in motion a core metaphor of *Queen Margaret*. Time is figured as a halfway-spatial entity. Time and space will be alternative forms of dramatic 'passage' between many scenes.

howling furies -- Spirits of punishment, originally from Greek mythology, typically depicted as three goddesses, sometimes as a multitude. They form the chorus of Aeschylus' *The Eumenides*. In Aeschylus and elsewhere, they are frequently known by the euphemistic name 'the kindly ones'. In the classical context, the furies existed to avenge blood guilt, to punish a person for killing a member of his family. Aeschylus' trilogy cemented a particular legal/political significance for the figures: the furies pursue Orestes in order to punish sins that have not been (or cannot be) prosecuted by human authorities. They are nature's alternative to

trial-and-punishment. Orestes is finally saved from them by means of the intervention of the goddess Athena, at a trial over which she presides, and which has the foundation of the city of Athens as an end result. The ability of the polity to manage serious crime renders the furies unnecessary and powerless. For more information on the mythological background: <http://www.theoi.com/Khthonios/Erinyes.html>.

Although brief, the most remembered representation of the Furies in medieval literature (although probably not known to Shakespeare) is in Dante's *Inferno*:

...my eye drew me wholly to the tower
Whose battlements glowed like an open oven,

Where suddenly, by some elemental power,
Three infernal Furies -- bloodstained shapes,
With female body frames and limbs -- appeared.

Their belts were made of live green hydra snakes.
And lithe little asps and vipers served for hair.
Which writhed down over their brows in horrible shocks.

And he [Dante's guide Virgil], who knew these apparitions were
The handmaids of the Queen of Lamentation,
Named these Erinyes for me: 'There's

Megaera on the left; the weeping one
On the right, Alecto; in the middle, meet
Tisiphone'; and he fell silent thereupon.

Each one clawed at herself with her nails, and beat
Her breast, and screamed with such a ghastly tone
That out of fear I squeezed up to the poet.

'Fetch Medusa, turn him into stone,'
They leered and glowered from their lurid height;
'For Theseus' assault he will atone.'

'Turn round quick, and keep your eyes shut tight;
For if the Gorgon show, and should you see
Her face, you'd ne'er return unto the light.'

Thus said my guide, and he himself turned me.
Nor did he trust my hands upon my eyes.
But with his own he further hooded me.

(from Canto IX, trans. Ciaran Carson)

MS. Holkham misc. 48, p. 13

© Bodleian Library, University of Oxford



From a 14th century manuscript

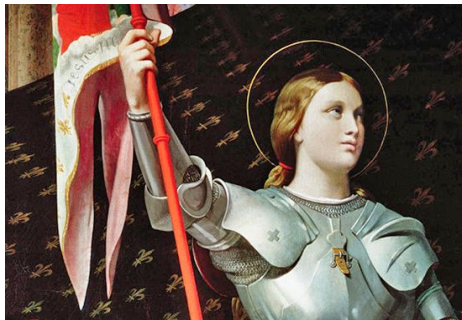
Joan of Arc



Joan of Arc, from a manuscript c. 1450



Joan of Arc from a 1505 manuscript



an 18th or 19th century image (?)



From Dreyer's "The Passion of Joan of Arc" (1928)

It's clear even just from the four images above how quickly Joan became a myth. Neither of the first two images is a portrait, but the earlier image, crafted when Margaret was about 20-25, puts Joan in realistically-depicted armor, with historical events and personae unfurling around her. The second image, from the early Renaissance, puts Joan into chivalric armor, a figure of legend, about as near in historical time and reality as the Knights of the Round Table.

The second two images reflect two important aspects Joan has taken on in the modern imagination: in the first, we see Joan clearly identified with a Saint's halo. Joan wasn't officially canonized by the Church until 1920, but her iconic status as a saint and an embodiment of the French national spirit began much earlier. The final image is a still from Carl Theodore Dreyer's silent film "The Passion of Joan of Arc". Joan, played by [Renée Jeanne Falconetti](#), becomes in Dreyer's imagination a woman tortured as much by her visions as by her accusers. The film was closely based on the records of her trial. It is available online to watch for free:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3Q6FVhqlY0>

In the Shakespearean context, the Joan/Furies sequence recalls I Henry VI V.3 in which 'la Pucelle' (Joan of Arc) summons up a swarm of "choice spirits" to support her and the French effort as the tide of battle turns against them. The spirits refuse to do her bidding. In Margaret's dream life, Joan is still very much in command.

Comme j'ai passé une nuit horrible and following -- Margaret speaks first in her native French. The French language itself is both gendered and politicized in Shakespeare. Although individual words and phrases are sometimes included in verse passages, when characters speak in French they speak in prose. Already Margaret's speech marks a clear departure from that tradition. Furthermore, here are scholar David Steinsaltz's thoughts on the characterization of languages:

As the English nation is perpetually at war with the French, so must their languages be at war....As the Englishmen are virile, rugged, honest, and virtuous, so must be their language, in opposition to the womanish, effete, deceptive, and perfidious language of the French. Contrary to Watson's suggestion, this linguistic ethnicity rooted in the language's ancient Anglo-Saxon loam, forming the core of English nationhood itself, was not Shakespeare's own discovery.¹¹ Not only was it a fashionable topic for Elizabethan writers, but it was also backed by an estimable literary and political tradition, in which the historical Henry V himself had played a substantial part.

Because the first words of the play are spoken in an unexpected and largely foreign language, we meet both the protagonist and the play as a whole as strangers.

No, no, no, in English, Marguerite -- Theophanie is perhaps more of a drill-sergeant than a nurse when it comes to Margaret's education: she expects Margaret to speak English even upon waking from a nightmare is extreme. Just as English nobility would have been at a serious disadvantage without fluency in French, so would the French suffer from an ignorance of English, though less so, especially in a region as far from England as Margaret's home.

pp 4

When Reignier inherited the Duchy of Lorraine and following -- René of Anjou ("Reigner" in Shakespeare), also known as the Good King René, was indeed Duke of Lorraine from 1431-1453, as well as, during different periods, Count of Guise, Count of Piedmont, Duke of Bar, Count of Provence, King of Naples, King of Jerusalem, King of Aragon including Sicily, Aragon and Corsica. French/continental politics were even more confusing and tempestuous than English politics during this period. For our purposes, the most relevant fact is that although

in his early adulthood René found himself in partial allegiance with the Burgundian faction, an important conglomerate of territorial interests in France, he ultimately found himself in opposition to the Burgundians in the form of a battle with his brother-in-law Alfonse of Aragon, culminating with a siege and defeat precisely as Theophanie describes. René was an important patron of the arts in Italy and France, and an important artist and poet in his own right.

his daughter to the wolves. / When I have a mouth, I'll bite. -- this is the first time one important metaphorical thread in QM is touched on. Language and imagery around wolves and shepherds recurs throughout the play, culminating in Henry's meditation on the shepherd's life in II.3 and York's famous epithet for Margaret, 'she-wolf of France', at the molehill in II.4. Also, in Margaret's imagination, Joan of Arc begins her account of herself by calling herself "a shepherd's daughter" (I.2). Among many cultural resonances, the most important may be from the New Testament, which has become proverbial: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." (Matthew 7:15). As noted elsewhere, prophecy is an important theme of Act I. Also Margaret saying to Henry 'such safety finds the trembling lamb environed with wolves,' and other instances.

Lie there, my art -- In "The Tempest," as Prospero prepares to tell Miranda about her past in I.2, he takes off his robe and puts it on the ground. He speaks these words to the robe. He's done conjuring the storm, and it's time now to do the very unmagical paternal work of Having the Big Talk.

This meaning is irrelevant to Theophanie saying these words to Margaret in an attempt to lull her to sleep. We interpreted the word as referring metaphorically to Margaret as Theophanie's creation.

little pear -- Margaret did have a pet name as a child, 'le petite creature'. Theophanie's version was possibly inspired by the popular Anjou variety of pear.

golden round -- crown

Scene 2. 1445 (Margaret is 15 years old)



Chateau Tarascon





pp 6

My wit untrain'd in any kind of art -- Throughout Shakespeare's plays and poems, 'artfulness' is a two-faced coin. On the one hand, art is celebrated as the vehicle of beauty; on the other, it is condemned for its falseness. 'Wit', on the other hand, is almost always treated with respect and enthusiasm by Shakespeare. The distinction between wit and art is a fine but important one. Wit moves swiftly and lightly, free-associating and capturing fresh meaning almost more quickly than the conscious mind can grasp. Art, on the other hand, is all about deliberate control, serving specific motives. Shakespeare frequently links his ambivalence toward 'art' with the feminine. And although several of his great comic heroines are brilliant wits, their wit 'masculinizes' them in one way or another. The art/wit duality will be an important way that the play evaluates Margaret, and specifically Margaret's speech.

God's mother -- The Virgin Mary. Although Shakespeare wrote under an Anglican monarch, and although Protestantism was very much alive on the Continent, the world of QM is 100% Catholic.

An earl I am, and Suffolk am I call'd -- Suffolk's errand to France to fetch Margaret for Henry also occasioned a significant elevation in rank. QM departs slightly from the historical sequence, but essentially upon completion of the errand, Suffolk became a Marquess, the next rank up in the peerage system, and then upon successful delivery of Margaret to the court in I.3, Henry makes him a Duke.

Be not offended, nature's miracle -- possibly in response to Young Margaret's Joan of Arc fantasy, which he has overheard, Suffolk complements Young Margaret for her artlessness (but not her wit). He calls her a natural beauty, which might include her character as well as her looks, but tacitly this excludes her capacity for independent thought and expression, qualities essential to Joan of Arc.

**So doth the swan her downy cygnets save,
Keeping them prisoner underneath her wings.**

Yet, if this servile usage once offend,

Go, and be free again, as Suffolk's friend. -- Suffolk attempts to temper the demand behind his physical touch, which Margaret has responded to, with a cuddly, emasculating simile: he figures himself as a mother-swan, keeping her young safe, which only seems like imprisonment. Unfortunately, the tactic does not seem to work, so Suffolk tries a new tactic. 'Friend' is not only a term of personal intimacy, between an earl and a soon-to-be-Queen: it is synonymous with 'ally'. We may feel the scene to be private as contemporary readers, but the way in which Margaret interprets and responds to Suffolk's invitation will have serious political consequences for Anglo-French relations.

pp 7

For princes should be free. -- 'Prince' in the middle ages and Renaissance, up through 18th century usage, is a general term that denotes a secular ruler. Machiavelli's *The Prince* (c. 1513) is a manual which offers rulers of any sort advice on how to consolidate and sustain their power. The term could technically be applied to rulers of either gender. In this moment, Margaret makes it clear to Suffolk that she expects to govern as a political agent herself, not only as consort to a man.

If happy England's royal king be free. -- Shadowing this line is the major political problem of Act I, of which Suffolk is already aware. Happy England's royal king *isn't* free, as Margaret quickly discovers, because Gloucester is unwilling to cede his power as Lord Protector to the now-adult King Henry.

Your wondrous rare description -- In QM we are not privy to how Margaret is described to Henry before their meeting. See Appendix: A, however, a *Henry VI V*, scenes i and v, for Shakespeare's imagining of how Henry would have responded to a description of Margaret before meeting her, and what arguments (Shakespeare's) Suffolk uses to counter Gloucester's objections to the match. Much of Henry's language is used in QM I.3, but it carries a different meaning when she's not present -- in QM, his praise of her sounds courtly, like a formal greeting, but in Shakespeare, Henry truly sounds seized by his mental image of her in the moment, painted in words by Suffolk. (See Appendix A for the relevant portions of both scenes.) TB suggests the possibility that in our version of the story, we might imagine Henry having been shown a painted portrait of Margaret.

Also note: this is the first time an important metaphorical strand in the play is touched: the sea. Imagery of the sea pervades the play.

pp 8

**Now climbeth Margaret Olympus' top,
Safe out of fortune's shot, and sits aloft,
Advanc'd above pale envy's threat'ning reach.
As when the golden sun salutes the morn,
And, having gilt the ocean with his beams,**

Now overlooks the highest-peering hills.... -- This is one of the few instances in which a referral to a Shakespearean source outside the Wars of the Roses plays might be of assistance. These lines, benign as they may seem, have been plucked by TB & DM from the mouth of Aaron the Moor in *Titus Andronicus*, a murderous villain and about as far from Theophanie as you might imagine. The link, though, may suggest an uncanny depth to Theophanie's orientation toward power, though not a powerful figure herself. This distinguishes her from the generic type of nurse, and certainly from Juliet's nurse. This is the woman that has raised Margaret into young adulthood, and nurtured her concepts of self and power. Margaret will pick up more language from Aaron's speech with the lines "Away with slavish weeds and servile thoughts. / I will be bright and shine in pearl and gold." (In the Arden Shakespeare, these lines are at I.i.500-524, which is also listed as II.i.1-24.)

**And then we'll o'er to England with this news,
And make this marriage to be solemniz'd** -- Margaret and Suffolk will marry by proxy in France, and the marriage will be 'solemnized,' in other words made legitimate, when Margaret and Henry meet and Margaret is crowned Queen Consort.

pp 9

Adonis' gardens -- Theophanie refers to only half of Adonis' mythological importance. He was not simply a figure of fertility: he was a figure of death-and-rebirth. This line may hold some tragic irony, foreshadowing the simultaneity of Suffolk's death and the birth of Prince Edward in I.9. **TB Note: The festival of Adonis in Ancient Greece involved the planting of quick-germinating seeds in shallow baskets, which grew and bloomed for 8 days and then were thrown into the ocean. So, talk about foreshadowing!!!!**

bereave -- To deprive, rob, strip, dispossess; to snatch away, to remove or take away by violence.

The passage of space. -- The first two scenes take place at the Castle of Tarascon on the River Rhone in Southern France. This passage will take us to the south coast of England, by way of Tours, where Suffolk and Margaret will have their proxy marriage performed. Tarascon is on the other side of France from England, and the diversion to Tours would take them

significantly out of their way. This journey would have been months-long, and it was probably the longest journey geographically and temporally of Margaret's life. Much of their route would have traced the pathway of the most recent series of battles between England and France. The trip culminated with the brief but dangerous passage across the English channel. **Include note on time for crossing the channel.**

Scene 3. (Margaret is 15 years old, Henry is 24 years old)



The Marriage of Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou (from an illustrated manuscript of *Vigilles de Charles VII* by Martial d'Auvergne)

Historically, the meeting of King Henry and Margaret took place in Titchfield Abbey in Hampshire on the south coast of England. Although the Abbey had occasionally seen royal visitors, it was a fully-functioning monastery. It was fundamentally a religious space, not a political one. Henry's lifelong preference for monasteries and Universities (then religious-scholastic institutions) was famous. The wedding took place on April 23, 1445. The historical Margaret was 15 years old at the time.

[Our wedding will take place in April 1446 in Westminster Palace in London](#)

pp 10

As procurator to your Excellence,

**To marry Princess Margaret for your Grace;
So in the famous ancient city Tours,
I have perform'd my task, and was espous'd;
And humbly now upon my bended knee,
Deliver up my title in the Queen**

To your most gracious hands, that are the substance

Of that great shadow I did represent... -- There was nothing unusual about a proxy marriage among the nobility at this historical moment, although it was not common.

In courtly company, or at my beads -- at prayer, with her rosary.

With you, mine alder-liefest sovereign -- most-beloved. The phrase was already archaic in Shakespeare's day, and we can understand Margaret as deploying the archaism deliberately. In fact, it may signify the over-artful quality of the entire speech. TB suggests that the term might arise from an oddly- or imperfectly-learned English from Theophanie or old books. Whatever the reason for it, "alder-liefest" might provoke a response in those meeting her for the first time, just as if you met someone who referred to the American President as 'sovereign'.

With ruder terms, such as my wit affords -- see note above on wit and art.. Her linguistic subtlety was no doubt nourished by the culture of her father's court. 'ruder terms' = cruder, plainer words; 'rude' may even suggest 'peasant-like'.

My Lord Protector -- Henry's coronation and assumption of government was in 1437. The fact that Suffolk -- and everyone else -- continues to regard Gloucester as Protector despite the fact that Henry has been fully adult and King for 8 years is precisely the problem that needs to be solved by Margaret, in league with Suffolk, if she and Henry are to become fully empowered monarchs.

The articles of contracted peace -- known as the Treaty of Tours, for the location of Margaret's proxy marriage.

French King Charles...the King her Father -- King Charles VII was Margaret's uncle. The Treaty was meant to ensure a 21-month truce in hostilities between England and France, with the exchange of Maine for Margaret as the primary terms. According to the terms of the treaty, Margaret was meant to come with a significant dowry of 20,000 livres, a promise which was not delivered on; this violation is interpreted by the English court in QM as signifying Margaret's poverty. Henry would decide not to cede Maine, after marrying Margaret, and Margaret tried to persuade her new husband to follow through on the Treaty. Eventually he did yield, but only when Charles threatened to invade England with a large army. The Treaty was not made public at first, because Henry and his advisors knew that the exchange of a dowry-less second rate niece of the King for an important French territory would be unpopular.

We here create thee the first Duke of Suffolk. -- At the time, the rank of Duke was typically reserved for close relatives of the monarch. Henry has just recently made Suffolk a Marquess, and now he is essentially inventing a new political position for him at the very highest level. William de la Pole was the first Duke of Suffolk.

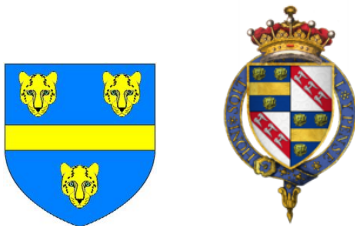
In this play men have at least five different ways they are named:

1. Their first names: William, Humphrey
2. Their family names: de la Pole; we do not learn Gloucester's, but Neville is Warwick's family name. Henry was named Plantagenet, but York would claim "Plantagenet" for himself as part of his ideological warfare.
3. Their late-feudal territories: Suffolk, Gloucestershire, Warwickshire, Yorkshire etc. It was not unusual for an individual to have lordship over more than one territory at a time, and these would also often change over the course of a Lord's life depending on marriages, treaties and occasionally (before the Wars of the Roses) military conflict.
4. Their military and chivalric position: most if not all of the Englishmen in the play were knights of the Order of the Garter
5. Their peerage ranks: Earl, Marquess, Duke, which would

In addition to his status as a Duke, Gloucester is Protector of the Realm, a position that only existed when the king was too young or otherwise unfit to rule himself. The historical York actually served as Protector during Henry's madness.

Henry was a contested King in two senses--whether he was the legitimate King of England in his conflict with the Yorkists, but also challenges to his status as King of France from his birth until 1453, when Henry fell into madness.

The distinct coat of arms associated with each man in this play is either linked to his family or it is linked to his status as a knight (not to his territory, or his status in the peerage system, or even his family name, although titles in some cases became hereditary). It's also worth mentioning that the wealth of these men comes fundamentally from taxation and fealty in their own territories, but also from wartime spoils and relative proximity to the crown.



Coats of arms associated with Suffolk. Wikipedia has emblems for all characters.

As doth a ruler with unlawful oaths. -- This is the first glimmer of the major theme of Act II: the breaking of oaths. Here it is Suffolk, Margaret's greatest ally, who makes the case for the legitimacy of oath breaking; in Act II it will be the Yorkists, Margaret's enemies, who will be the oath-breakers first, followed by Margaret.

A poor earl's daughter is unequal odds -- John IV, Count of Armagnac (Earl is the English equivalent), and his daughter Isabella of the Four Valleys.

**And so the Earl of Armagnac may do,
Because he is near kinsman unto Charles.** -- Armagnac was indeed a relative of the King's, but had gotten himself into hot water by aligning himself with a party of French insurrectionists. Although eventually pardoned, he suffered the consequences.

pp 13

**Did my brother Henry spend his youth,
His valor, coin, and people, in the wars
To conquer France, his true inheritance?** -- 'Spend' in this context means 'to waste, to use pointlessly'. 'Coin' means wealth or property. Henry is King Henry V, Henry VI's father and Gloucester's brother. For 'France, his true inheritance', see historical timeline.

Studied so oft -- A slight detail, but in conjunction with several other lines, quite suggestive. On the next page, York says "I never read but England's kings have had / Large sums of gold and dowries with their wives" etc. And in the scene of York's persuasion of Warwick of his right to the crown, Warwick interjects (somewhat irrelevantly) "This Edmund, in the reign of Bullingbrook, / As I have read, laid claim unto the crown". The text underscores the extent to which this is a highly literate Privy Council who turn to historical precedent to guide their political judgment and decision making. In this "history play," the characters themselves rely on a study of political history to navigate the confusion of their times. Historically, Henry was a passionate investor in and visitor of the Universities, and enjoyed scholarly ceremony as much as he enjoyed religious ceremony. Finally, note that Gloucester includes his wife Eleanor in the company of the councilors, suggesting that she is as politically literate and positioned to advise as the rest. She holds an unprecedented role for an Englishwoman in politics at the time.

Contrast this with Young Margaret, whose study of political history is oral, transmitted by her nurse Theophanie.

**And hath his Highness in his infancy
Crowned in Paris in despite of foes?** -- Henry VI was crowned King of England and then King of France as an infant, just months after the Dauphin, son of Charles VI, was crowned Charles VII, King of France.

rules the roast -- takes the head of a celebratory feast

King Reignier, whose large style

Agrees not with the leanness of his purse. -- in other words: he's a big spender and has no money, so he's gotten himself into debt.

pp 14

For Suffolk's duke, may he be suffocate, -- silenced, strangled, shut down.

I never read.... -- See note on 'studied so oft' above, but also looking ahead, York seems to have a particular interest in doing things by the book, as manifested in his upcoming scene with Warwick. We can extrapolate that perhaps he was the most invested in the study of political history, especially English history.

Pride went before, ambition follows him. -- "Pride" refers to Gloucester, and "ambition" refers to Eleanor. York's point of view on Gloucester is suddenly made clear. We (the audience) may at first see the justice of Gloucester's claim, that the bargain struck to make this marriage possible invalidates years of military and political effort. The structure of the scene encourages us to stand with him as Warwick and York speak up with further arguments supporting his case. But as soon as he leaves the stage, York and Warwick are instantly on the same page regarding the self-interest of Gloucester and Eleanor. With this one line the curtain is lifted, and we too see their self-interest, through York's swift, brutal assessment of them. This sort of thing happens again and again in QM.

In fact, it happens again right away: York suggests to Warwick that *they* will do the real business of 'laboring for the realm.' Of course, this turns out to mean a major stroke of self-interest on York's behalf. He claims that the crown belongs to him by right. Warwick appears to be relatively without self-interest in his support...until in the middle of page 15 he says "My heart assures me that the Earl of Warwick / Shall one day make the Duke of York a king." A leading comment if ever there was one, and York gets the point: "And, Warwick, this I do assure myself, / Richard shall live to make the Earl of Warwick / The greatest man in England but the King." Tit for tat.

Edward the third, my lord, had seven sons.... -- See longer historical note for explication of York's complex case for his right to the throne.

pp 15

In craving your opinion of my title,

Which is infallible, to England's crown. -- Samuel Johnson pointed out (according to the NCS) that it is unclear whether it is Warwick's opinion that is infallible or York's title (ie, King), which points to the relative immaturity of York's ambition at this stage in the story.

Pomfret -- Pontefract in Yorkshire.

This Edmund, in the reign of Bullingbrook,

As I have read, laid claim unto the crown -- see note above on political literacy. In addition, I would add the note that actually Shakespeare continued a confusion from one of the chroniclers. This may strike us as a bit of literary metacomedy -- even the *playwright* couldn't keep it all straight.

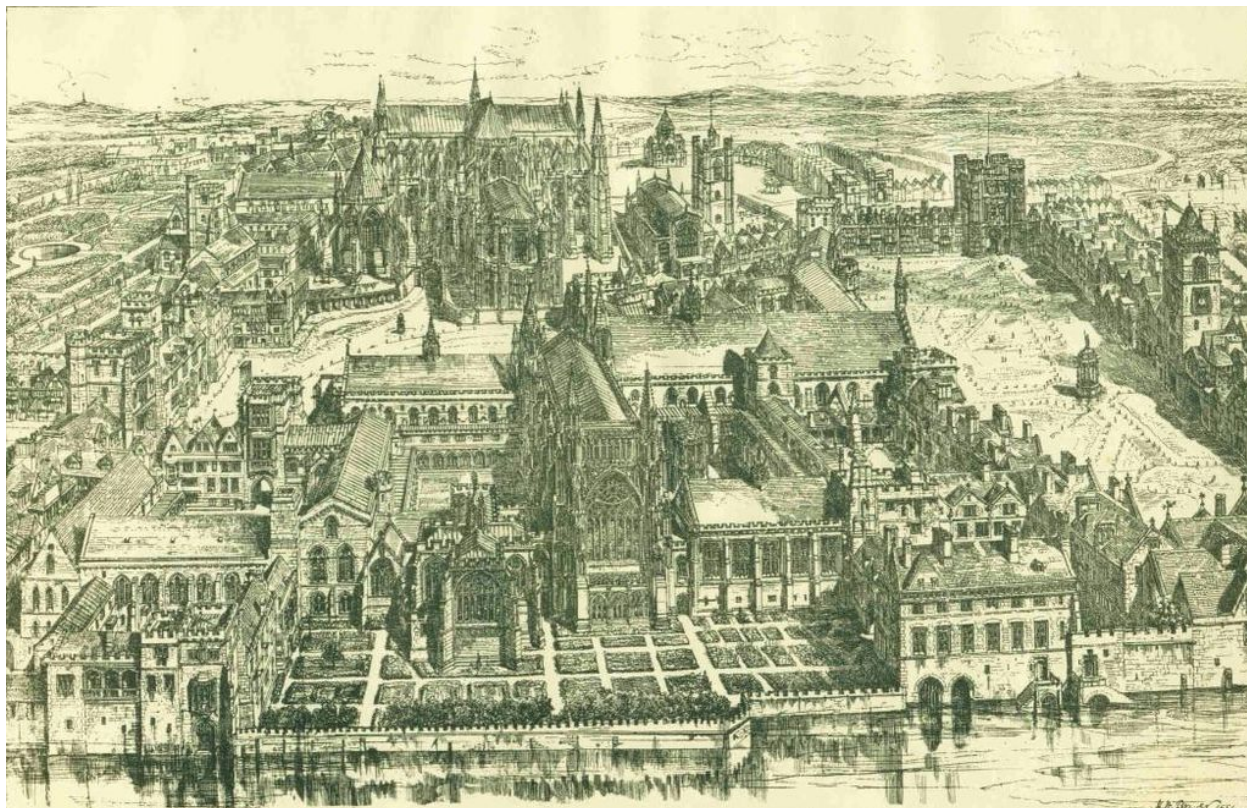
pp 16

In their ambition they'll destroy themselves

And find their deaths, if York can prophesy. -- Theophanie has already recognized Margaret as a 'prophetess', now York makes reference to his own powers of 'prophesy', by which he really means his powers of political acumen. Act I overall is very concerned with the topic of prophecy, which boomerangs around in Act II in the form of the theme of curses and cursing.

Scene 4.

We are still in Westminster Palace in London, the monarch's primary residence, and therefore the primary location of his court. It had also become the primary location for Parliamentary meeting and debate, although it was not built to serve this purpose, and Parliaments were held in many locations.



Conjectural restoration of Westminster during reign of Henry VIII by H.J. Brewer

pp 17

France is revolted from the English quite. -- Despite the Treaty of Tours, Anglo-French relations quickly decayed into further cycles of unrest, even during the five years of relative following the marriage of Margaret and Henry. These letters could refer to any number of upsets. The vagueness may speak to the fact that we are accessing these events through Margaret's memory, not a chronicler's pen. **Henry's ineptitude/unwillingness to be decisive in war or any other arena, caused the loss of territories in France. It's interesting then that M and S, knowing this, perhaps prey on Henry's insecurities by offering him an 'out'--blame Gloucester instead of yourself, (TB).**

Ireland as well is thronged with unrest.... -- The historian Scott Hendrix captures the Irish/England cultural difference even-handedly:

One group [the Irish] was made up of a sparsely populated people who lived in a land that was by-and-large poorly suited to growing cereal crops such as wheat. The Irish had a culture almost completely untouched by the Roman influences that so colored much of the rest of Europe, which was evident in the way they spoke, dressed, practiced their religion, and in a thousand other small and not so small ways. The English, on the other hand, were a people who lived in a comparatively densely populated land, complete with villages, towns, and cities. English society had layers of Roman and continental influences including a social hierarchy based on medieval feudalism emphasizing the importance of birth as the basis of social standing. These were people who saw agricultural land as the primary repository of wealth. This fact influenced their diets, work habits, and most importantly of all the way they viewed the cattle-raising (and cattle-raiding) Irish....

Throughout much of the history of the English in Ireland they would lack the strength necessary to control the island by force. In fact, though they might not have admitted it, the English were normally dependent on the conflict between various Irish factions to make their tenuous grasp on Ireland possible....

[T]he medieval English kings did not try to establish themselves as king of Ireland. Throughout its history Ireland had been a land of competing chieftains and kings....For many centuries, the English would remain one power among many on the island. To simplify a long span of history, English power waxed and waned depending upon the resources the English king was willing and able to invest in maintaining control of the island but throughout most of the history of the English in Ireland, they were not able to exert overwhelming force. This was why it would be the sixteenth century before an English king [Henry VIII] would try to assert royal authority in Ireland. (Hendrix, Scott E. *The Impact of the English Colonization of Ireland in the Sixteenth Century: a "Very Troublesome People"*. Edwin Mellen Press: Lewiston, NY, 2012. Pages 16-22)

The 14th century saw a gradual transition from the surges of military conquest and retreat to a more strategic attempt at an economic and political colonization of Ireland. It is in this context that Henry sends Clifford to Ireland. Margaret will later send York to Ireland, in I.8, from where he will return in II.1.

We must supplant those rough rug-headed kearns -- 'We must oust those primitive shaggy-haired footsoldiers.' But (and forgive the association, but) put behind it the sort of thing some Americans say about Muslims and you've got the tone.

venom -- reptiles (a synecdoche, the part signifying the whole), specifically snakes, as legend said St. Patrick drove all snakes into the sea in the 5th century

Pardon, my liege, that we have stay'd so long -- The text leaves it ambiguous as to where Gloucester has been. TB note: perhaps a meeting has been called without Gloucester and Eleanor, which they have just learned of and showed up for, confused that they haven't been invited.

A heart unspotted is not easily daunted.

The purest spring is not so free from mud

As I am clear from treason to my sovereign. -- The sophistication of the figurative language may indicate an overreaching. (Think of Goneril and Reagan.)

pp 18

Madam, I am Protector of the realm -- The Lord Protector rules in place of a child monarch until the monarch comes of age, or if the monarch is otherwise deemed unfit to rule (as during the period of Henry VI's madness).

I never robb'd the soldiers of their pay, etc. -- More information on their indiscretions.

pp 19

Contemptuous base-born callet -- 'contemptible low-born strumpet' (Margaret will soon repeat this insult)

pp 20

Am I a queen in title and in style -- Margaret repeats her own line from I.2.

Thou ran'st a-tilt in honor of my love

And stol'st away the ladies' hearts of France -- These lines offer a precious window into the long passionate, illicit proxy-honeymoon Margaret and Suffolk shared in France before her coronation. Tournaments ('ran'st a-tilt' refers to jousting) were forms of knightly contest and demonstration that began in the 12th century. In a sense they were a form of medieval theater, although the weapons were real.



Knights at a tournament with ladies applauding above.

'Jousted'



pp 21

Dame Eleanor is known to be a witch -- "Eleanor probably got involved with a woman known for her occult knowledge in the hope of bearing a child with Gloucester. The men she consulted were a learned medic and an astronomer, university graduates both. Margery [the witch in the following scene], the 'witch of Eye', served the noble lady that heady mixture of medicine and magic which so many people believed could cure disease and ward off misfortune. *She was a figure well known at court, who a decade earlier had been arrested for sorcery.* Eleanor had

been lady-in-waiting to Gloucester's first wife, Jacqueline of Hainault, and may have already used Margery's services then. But the heavy spin of 1441 turned the casting of her horoscope into a major act of treason; it was claimed that the horoscope was aimed at hastening the king's death. Her household clerk and her physician, Bolingbroke and Southwell, were accused of predicting the king's illness, thus affecting the king's power in the land. So anxious was the king to counter doubts about his health that he immediately requested that an analytic horoscope be cast for him by two leading scholars....As for Eleanor's clerks, they were tried and suffered horrific deaths.

....Magic was never far from the the official operations of saints' relics and liturgical blessings. If Eleanor had originally hired Margery to use her magic and make Duke Humphrey love her, and later, to help her bear him an heir, such desires were shared by people everywhere -- and still are."

-- *The Hollow Crown: a History of Britain in the Late Middle Ages* by Miri Rubin (2005).
(My emphasis.)

Madam, myself have lim'd a bush for her -- set a trap (as fowlers did by smearing twigs with bird-lime, a pitch-like substance, in order to capture birds)

Scene 5.

Location: this scene likely takes place a few-hours' ride of London, although we might understand Suffolk to have planned to entrap Eleanor at a later date when she has returned to Gloucestershire. Witches' gatherings were, reportedly, held in many locations, both urban and rural, but Suffolks' fowling metaphor and the dramatic structure of the text both suggest an outdoor location.

The equivalent scene in Shakespeare *II Henry VI* I.iv probably owes its existence to the conjuring scenes in Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, a thrilling appropriation from the medieval theatrical tradition. In Shakespeare, the spirit Asmath actually appears onstage.

Evidence of what occurred at assemblies of witches, called 'synagogues' and only later 'covens' and 'sabbats', exists exclusively in documents written by men who were ultimately interested in the persecution of witches. The most consistent fantasies about what happened at these gatherings are 1. Sexual orgies and 2. Magical flights through the night sky. It was also a widely held belief that witches were murderers, especially of children. Witches were imagined to meet both indoors and more often in hidden outdoor locations.

In the twentieth century, witchcraft was rehabilitated and re-claimed by women/lesbians/bisexual women/feminists, through alternative histories, fiction and new/recovered religious practice ('wicca'). Witches have been re-envisioned as unmarried women who served as healers and possessors of orally-transmitted wisdom, persecuted by the patriarchy for presenting an alternative to masculine authority. However, the fantasy of the terrifying ugly malevolent witch thrives especially on TV and in film, with *The Wizard of Oz* as the foundational fantasy in those media.

Witches have had a long and complex history in the English theater, from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* to *The Witch of Edmonton* (a Jacobean play based on historical events, written by committee), all the way through Caryl Churchill's *Vinegar Tom*, a play about 17th witch trials in England written through Churchill's characteristically unconventional feminist-Brechtian lens. In the American theatrical tradition, Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* is the touchstone work, as it is widely staged and studied as part of the High School curriculum; similar to Churchill, Miller handles the Salem trials through a political lens, linking them to the McCarthy hearings and the blacklisting of artists with divergent political views during that period.

Eleanor's interest in divination actually belongs to an inclination to 'high magic,' associated in the late medieval mind with philosophy and even scientific knowledge, whereas witchcraft was typically associated with 'low magic', which descended from elements of paganism and folklore not fully incorporated into the Christianity. (Fairy stories are another example of 'low magic' culture.) Marlowe's dramatization of the Faust legend brought high and low magic together, which made for a smash hit in a theatrical culture made up of both a high and a low audience.



Manuscript.

pp 22

A spirit rais'd from depth of underground -- The spirit in *II Henry VI* would have emerged from the trap door in the floor of the stage.

We will make fast within a hallow'd verge -- circle

Adsum, I am here -- means 'I am here' in Latin. So, the line means 'I am here, I am here.' An invocation.

Asmath -- An anagram of Satan.

pp 23

The duke yet lives that Henry shall depose;

But him outlive, and die a violent death -- The language is doubly confusing: 'the duke' is ambiguous, and may refer to either Gloucester or to York. The ambiguity of oracles in Western drama and literature is a frequent plot point, and Shakespeare would exploit the device in *Macbeth* to heart-wrenching effect. At any rate, Henry will outlive both Gloucester and York, and then himself die a violent death at Richard's hand.

Lay hands upon this traitor and her trash -- worthless woman, in other words, the witch

See you well guerdon'd for your just deserts -- rewarded

Scene 6.

Location: Wherever the conjuring scene took place, we are certainly back in London now, at the King's court.

A sort of naughty persons, lewdly bent -- 'A crew of wicked people intent on evil'

Have practic'd dangerously against the state -- conspired

Such as by God's book are adjudged to death -- "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," Exodus 22.18, among other Biblical and scholastic sources.

The Isle of Man -- throughout much of its history, the Isle of Man had been (and is, today) a self-governing entity. In the 15th century, it was officially an English territory under the crown's sovereignty. Historically, Eleanor was not banished to the Isle of Man; this was an invention of Shakespeare's.

Gloucester, see here the tainture of thy nest

And look thyself be faultless, thou wert best. -- "the ruining of your household", in a figurative sense. Note that Margaret here deploys a couplet, the first intentional rhyme in the play. Perhaps Margaret's feelings of triumph spark this rhyme.

pp 25

...whilst I, his forlorn duchess,

Was made a wonder and a pointing-stock

To every idle rascal follower -- 'an object of derision for every lazy low-born follower'. Here, Eleanor is responding to her 'three days' open penance done' which is about to take place, during which she will be forced to walk barefoot through the city streets and thus publicly shamed for her actions. (Game of Thrones fans, think of Sersei's walk of shame through the streets of King's Landing.)

Have limed bushes to betray thy wings -- Eleanor uses the same metaphor as Suffolk used in I.4, only now she uses it to describe the trap Margaret and Suffolk may have set for Gloucester.

But fear not thou, until thy foot be snar'd,

Nor never seek prevention of thy foes. -- "But you won't be afraid, until you're already caught, and you won't try to forestall the action of your enemies until it's too late."



Eleanor and Humphrey

Ah, Nell, forbear, thou aimest all awry -- the speech is explicitly directed to Eleanor throughout, and the use of an endearing nickname suggests an intimate moment. However, it is likely Gloucester knows he is being overheard by the others.

I must offend before I be attainted -- subjected to attainder. "In English criminal law, attainder or *attinctura* was the metaphorical "stain" or "corruption of blood" which arose from being condemned for a serious capital crime (felony or treason), without judicial trial." (Wikipedia, accessed Feb 3, 2016). The corruption of the blood meant that your next of kin would also be disinherited. Attainure was invoked quite often by the crown, as rebellions of differing degrees became more and more frequent after Henry IV and his faction deposed Richard II in 1400. In fact, Richard, Duke of York was theoretically subject to this law as a young man, but he was issued a royal pardon practically as a matter of course. It made no political sense to disinherit a man who was at that point a strong potential ally. In fact, royal pardons quickly became so common as to render the very structure of attainure more of a formal threat than a regularly enforced law.

We may see Gloucester's chastisement of his wife as narcissistic or cruel from a contemporary dramatic point of view, but in fact in the context of their time he has a valid point.

Whatever may happen to his wife on the Isle of Man, both of them -- *like Margaret* -- are ultimately deeply concerned with the integrity of their line. Gloucester may even be reminding his wife that the very reason she sought out a witch in the first place was help in conceiving a child (according to the historical record). Humphrey had two children, and it is possible that neither of them were Eleanor's but rather an anonymous mistress'.

pp 26

Henry will to himself

Protector be, and God shall be my hope,

My stay, my guide, and lanthorn to my feet. -- lanthorn is another word for lantern, so this means 'God shall light my way.'

Thus is the shepherd beaten from thy side,

And wolves are gnarling who shall gnaw thee first. -- Another instance of the wolf/shepherd imagery. NCS points out a connection to two Bible verses: "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered" (Matthew 26:31) " My sheep were devoured of all the beasts of the field, having no shepherd" (Ezekiel 24:8).

pp 27

How proud, how peremptory, and unlike himself? -- insistant on obedience

By flattery hath he won the commons' hearts -- Consider what a contradiction this is to the suggestion that Margaret and Suffolk made that Gloucester's economic practices were abusive to the commons. Because 'the commons' have no voice in QM (as they do, for example, in II Henry VI in the Jack Cade rebellion sequence), the lords have license to 'read' popular support in diverse ways. This is not so very different from the way our political system works, even with the contribution of opinion polls, voter registration, and media commentary.

Reprove my allegation if you can -- Disprove

Did he not, in his protectorship,

Levy great sums of money, etc -- There are a few ways to read this moment. Perhaps York makes a calculated decision here to take the Suffolk-Margaret line. Warwick unsurprisingly follows suit, adding the gossip that it was Humphrey's encouragement that led Eleanor to witchcraft, a rumor (it seems to me) he's made up on the spot. Or, it has been arranged beforehand between Margaret, Suffolk, York, and Warwick, rather than the latter two making decisions in the moment. York and Warwick did not join in on this Gloucester-baiting the first time Suffolk and Margaret introduced it in scene IV. Then, Gloucester was still an indisputable favorite of King Henry's, and they could not have safely engaged in this, (Margaret, as Henry's wife, is to a certain extent beyond blame; they are not). Now, however, with Eleanor having been convicted, and Gloucester open to suspicion, it is safer for them to join Margaret and Suffolk and to speak publicly what they once spoke privately.

Pp 28

Ah, what's more dangerous than this fond affiance - foolish confidence

Take heed, my lord, the welfare of us all

Hangs on the cutting short that fraudulent man. -- a potential double-meaning: forestalling, but also quite literally beheading. A moment when Margaret may be showing herself a wolf in sheep's clothing to Henry for the first time?

What, will your Highness leave the parliament? -- **And she means the room [TB] -- actually I've been wrong about this, Parliament isn't a room/building, it's the name of governing body that could be convened at any time by the King, made up of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. [JP]**

pp 29

**What low'ring star now envies thy estate,
That these great lords, and Margaret our Queen,
Do seek subversion of thy harmless life?**

low'ring -- frowning, angry-looking, sullen

envies thy estate -- 'envies' can also carry the meaning of 'feel malice toward' (NCS)

Rough paraphrase: "What angry star is envying your position and thus sending Queen Margaret & co to take you down"?

Henry will enjoy the fruits of Margaret and Suffolk's ousting of Gloucester (Margaret reads the positive change even in his body in earlier lines). But at the same time he wants to chastise them for their political violence. He recognizes that they are establishing a pattern of taking matters into their own hands. So he addresses his comments to no one, perhaps to God, but includes Margaret and the lords in his comments as though they are not there.



Scene 7

A month has passed. We are still in the palace. This time, in the king's personal chamber.

pp 30

If he be guilty, as 'tis published -- 'published' as in 'made public' as in 'rumored.' Henry may mean rumored by Margaret and Suffolk rather than truth.

Meg -- for the first time, Henry uses an intimate version of Margaret's name, perhaps suggesting emotional/physical intimacy sparked by Margaret's seeming change of heart about Gloucester (and/or tactics she's taken between the scenes to assure Henry of her devotion). It is worth noting that Suffolk never does such a thing.

Margaret: Marry, God forfend!

Henry: O heavenly God!

Margaret: How fares my gracious lord?

Suffolk: Comfort, my sovereign! Gracious Henry, comfort!

--forfend = forbid. This is the climax of the act and therefore reverberates backwards and forwards, meriting an extended note.

This scene inevitably plays off of the scene in which Duncan's death is discovered in *Macbeth*, simply because that scene is so famous (II.3). It is helpful to compare Margaret's response to Lady Macbeth's to trace the difference in both situation and character. Lady Macbeth's first response is "Woe, alas! / What, in our house?" (87-88) to which Banquo responds "Too cruel anywhere" (88). Several critics and theater-makers have heard in Banquo's reply a reproach to an overly self-concerned Lady M -- she nearly gives herself away as guilty by not playing the moment adequately. "What...in *our* house?": she sounds like an improviser

scrambling for a line, and the one she finds is actually relevant to her *real* situation as the murderer's accomplice.

TB and DM have summoned up an iconic counterpoint for Margaret, one which might bear fruitful investigation for this moment and for the rest of the play. A further point in the association would be Lady M's summoning of the spirits to "unsex" her (I.v.40-54) and Joan's summoning of the spirits in *I Henry VI*, as mentioned in the notes to QM I.1 above. Joan, Lady M and Margaret embody three different ways that women seeking political agency in a time of war might navigate the social construction of their femininity as weakness. One notices how the same categories arise again and again: witch, soldier, wife....the interest in these archetypes in Shakespeare arises at least partly from the women in Seneca's tragedies, Phaedra and Medea chief among them. Joan "marries" the Dauphin as a fellow leader (other characters in *I Henry VI* comment on the spousal nature of their relationship) and finds herself, at the end, a witch, through no design of her own. Lady M plays the wife all too well, leaving the armor to her husband, and she fails totally at playing the witch, despite the ardor of her demand and its temporary effectiveness. What sets Margaret apart from these women, and indeed from all of Shakespeare's female political leaders, is her motherhood. She goes to war with York for the sake of her son's power, a motivation that is unique in the canon. (The one exception to that rule might be Gertrude, if you accept the argument some critics and theater-makers have made that Hamlet is in fact Claudius' illegitimate son.)

I imagine that "O heavenly God!" is the most extreme thing Henry could possibly say. It is both prayer and curse, as well as an admonishment and/or plea directly to the being he believes is ultimately responsible. He has truly been dealt a blow, and based on both Margaret and Suffolk's responses, I imagine he might even collapse physically in this moment. (In *II Henry VI* the stage direction is "*The king swoons*".) Gloucester fought on behalf of Henry his entire life, as uncle and Protector, and Henry's love for him becomes clear in the previous scene. He will certainly speak to it later in the scene (see his prayer on the bottom of page 31, "O Thou that judgest all things, stay my thoughts" and following.) And it is all the more agonizing a loss because Henry knows that he has benefited from Gloucester's disempowerment in the previous scene and is at the start of this scene summoning him to a legal trial which would likely have culminated in his execution anyway.

pp 31

Upon thy eyeballs murderous tyranny

Sits in grim majesty, to fright the world. -- The bizarre use of 'eyeballs' suggests to me that we see the first glimpse of Henry's madness here. And as for "tyranny," again, the comparison to *Macbeth* is helpful. Suffolk went from Earl to Marquess to Duke in a matter of months, just as Macbeth swiftly ascended the ladder from Glamis to Cawdor in an afternoon, with the promise of the crown hovering just ahead...this is how tyrants arise.

Why do you rate my Lord of Suffolk thus? -- berate, chide

Although the Duke was enemy to him,

Yet he most Christian-like laments his death; -- Suffolk has not actually lamented Gloucester's death yet, at least not aloud in the King's presence. So there is perhaps some sideways prompting here from Margaret to Suffolk -- 'look more upset! be more pious about it!' Which I imagine Suffolk would do his best to respond to. Does he not grasp as quickly as Margaret that the King might have him killed for the murder of Gloucester at any moment?

And for myself, foe as he was to me,

Might liquid tears etc -- the grotesquerie of this passage is so extreme that it must be a tactic, calculated or instinctual. I hear it as raw and instinctual, a brutal tactic (not an artful one). It shows us how dark and almost carnal Margaret's mind can be. The cluster of images and bodily responses here do have some kind of deep psychological connection for Shakespeare because they recur in other places in his writing.

What know I how the world may deem of me,

For it is known we were but hollow friends? -- "wanting soundness, solidity or substance; empty, vain; not answering inwardly to outward appearance; insincere, false." According to the OED, this abstract usage was still relatively new by the time *II Henry VI* was written, so the physicality and freshness of the metaphor would still have been felt.

So shall my name with slander's tongue be wounded -- possibly in part a response to Henry's fear of "serpent's sting" earlier.

And princes' courts be fill'd with my reproach....

Be woe for me, more wretched than is he. etc -- Margaret is trying to divert Henry's attention away from Suffolk onto her, trusting that, even if he were to suspect her of killing Gloucester, he would not punish her the way he might punish Suffolk. In addition, the more Henry refuses to pay attention to her, the more important it seems to *make true*, by speaking aloud/being heard, her innocence and Suffolk's.

MARGARET: Erect his statue and worship it -- pronounced "státu-úh", a common Elizabethan form of the word and metrically appropriate.

And twice by awkward wind from England's bank -- adverse

The pretty vaulting sea refus'd to drown me -- 1. rising and falling, 2. referring to the vault-like form of a curling wave (NCS)

pp 32

**The commons, like an angry hive of bees
That want their leader, scatter up and down
And care not who they sting in his revenge.**

Myself have calm'd their spleenful mutiny.... -- The vividness of this metaphor belies its antiquity; Warwick is deploying it effectively, not inventing it. Plato (*Republic*) used the structure of the beehive as a metaphor for facets of human political life, and the metaphor found its way into other Greek and Roman political philosophy, and on from them into the work of earlier medieval theorists. Given the portrait of a highly literate court sketched for us earlier in the act, it makes sense that Warwick would try to trigger the King's sense of himself as a leader using their shared vocabulary.

spleenful = passionate, irritable, peevishly angry. This meaning of the word derives from the medieval theory of the humors, but by Shakespeare's day had an independent meaning as an adjective describing an emotional state.) (OED)

mutiny = in the sense of 'discord, tumult, contention' rather than 'revolt' (also OED).

O Thou that judgest all things, stay my thoughts -- the NCS points out, following another critic [Mahood] that 'stay' can mean both 'stop' and 'strengthen', and is thus a perfect word to express Henry's wild ambivalence in grief.

Fain would I go to chafe his paly lips --

'Fain' = the word carries a spectrum of feeling. Gladly, rejoicingly, eagerly; but also, 'gladly under the circumstances, out of obligation' and even 'out of necessity or requirement'.

'Chafe' holds both the meaning 'to warm' and also 'to irritate or rub', even to excess 'paly' -- somewhat pale. 'Chafe' and 'paly' are counterpoised to one another perfectly in the line, as Henry is viscerally engaged with the thought of Gloucester's still-cooling corpse.

Since Henry V died when Henry VI was an infant, Gloucester was somewhat of a father figure, which explains the depth of Henry's grief.

To tell my love unto his dumb deaf trunk -- 'dumb' = unspeaking. 'trunk' = in this period can mean the entire human body without the head, often suggesting a body that has been decapitated (OED). Henry may literally be envisioning for himself his uncle's body without a head. No one has told him directly how Gloucester was killed. Margaret suggested poisoning, but she hasn't seen the body--that was clearly her invention.

The body of Gloucester is brought on. -- According to the principle chronicles consulted by Shakespeare, Holinshed and Hall, the body of Gloucester was shown to the nobles, but no one could detect a cause of death. Warwick will vividly describe the evidence of a strangulation, but this would suggest that Warwick may be superimposing his own narrative on events.

WARWICK: I do believe that violent hands were laid

Upon the life of this thrice-famed duke.

SUFFOLK: A dreadful oath, sworn with a solemn tongue! --

“Dreadful” -- dangerous, perilous (now this meaning is rare)

“Oath” --An emphatic confirmation of a statement similar to an oath, which traditionally involves an invocation of the sacred

“Sworn” -- that is bound by [an oath]

“Solemn” -- performed with, accompanied by due formality or ceremony

“Tongue” -- Manner of speaking or talking, with regard to the sense or import of what it said, the form of expression or form of words used, or the sound of the voice

“A dangerous [non-religious] oath, bound by a formal, ceremonious manner of speech!”

Oft have I seen a timely-parted ghost -- according to NCS, ‘ghost’ in this instance means ‘body,’ rendering the whole phrased as ‘the body of one who has died in a natural manner’.

Of ashy semblance, meagre, pale, and bloodless-- emaciated (NCS)

His eyeballs further out than when he lived -- If Henry’s accusation of Suffolk (‘Upon thy eyeballs murderous tyranny / Sits in grim majesty, to fright the world’) has the tint of madness, as I suggest above, Warwick’s attention to the specific physical detail of Gloucester’s corpse’s eyeballs might be a grotesque trigger for him.

But here’s a vengeful sword, rusted with ease -- ‘with ease’ = from lack of use

pp 34

murder’s crimson badge -- according to NCS, ‘badge’ refers to knight’s badges/insignia. Suffolk is saying that because Warwick has pinned the badge of murder on him (as the scarlet letter is pinned on Hester Prynne), meaning accused him of being a murderer, Suffolk is ready to go to war with Warwick.

He dares not calm his contumelious spirit

Nor cease to be an arrogant controller -- insolent (NCS); critic (NCS)

If every lady wrong’d her lord so much,

Thy mother took into her blameful bed

Some stern untutor’d churl, and noble stock

Was graft with crab-tree slip, whose fruit thou art

And never of the Nevilles’ noble race. -- ‘stern untutor’d churl’ = a bold, ignorant and/or unmannered country bumpkin. “slip” = twig. “If it’s even possible that a woman could wrong her husband so much, then your mother slept with a stern untutored churl, so that you aren’t descended from the noble family the Nevilles after all, just as the fruit of a grafted crab-tree limb

belongs to the crab-tree, an ignoble fruit.” This is Shakespearean trash talk (‘yo mama’), as evidenced by Warwick’s retort: “And say it was thy mother that thou meant’st, / That thou thyself was born in bastardy” and so on.



But that the guilt of murder bucklers thee -- ‘buckler’ = a kind of small shield. Marlowe and Shakespeare seem to have been responsible for turning the noun into a verb meaning ‘shields’. Warwick is saying, ‘**If it weren’t for the fact that** you are so obviously guilty, and that you will thus be put to death by an executioner (who I want to be paid for his work), which will be more shameful than it would be if I killed you now, **then** I would first make you apologize, then make you admit you were talking about *your* mother who slept with a peasant, and finally give you your hire (just desserts) and kill you.’



A buckler

‘Tis like the commons, rude unpolish’d hinds, -- “it’s probable that the commons, those crude, uncivilized animals”. ‘Hind’ specifically means ‘female deer’.

For sure, my thoughts do hourly prophesy

Mischance unto my state by Suffolk’s means. -- Henry regards his suspicions of Suffolk as ‘prophesy,’ thus entering into the ‘prophecy’ thread begun by Theophanie and continued more centrally by Eleanor and the witch in this act.

Ungentle queen, to call him gentle Suffolk! -- The meaning of 'gentle' has not yet split into 'soft, non-violent' on the one hand and 'well-born' (as in, a gentleman) on the other. It's best to think of 'gentle' in this instance as indicating someone noble who acts according to the greatest ethical standards.

pp 36

On any ground that I am ruler of -- an ominous phrase, because it points back to the trade of territory made for Margaret, and also to the more recent troubles in both France and Ireland that we heard about at the start of I.4.

I fear I am not in my perfect mind -- the OED recognizes two definitions originating in Middle English. Henry uses the word in both senses simultaneously: 1. Of, marked, or characterized by supreme moral or spiritual excellence or virtue; righteous, holy; immaculate; spiritually pure or blameless. 2. In a state of complete excellence; free from any imperfection or defect of quality; that cannot be improved upon; flawless, faultless.

Mischance and sorrow go along with you!

Heart's discontent and sour affliction

Be playfellows to keep you company!

There's York and Warwick, the devil make a third,

And threefold vengeance tend upon your steps! -- Margaret's first robust set of curses.

Fie, coward woman and soft-hearted wretch -- in its common sense of a person brought low, but also see the first OED definition, which is in fact the originating usage: One driven out of or away from his native country; a banished person; an exile.

Would curses kill, as doth the mandrake's groan -- a folk belief in the period: when a mandrake root is uprooted, it makes a terrible noise and the sound kills anyone who hears it.

I would invent as bitter searching terms -- "keenly piercing" (NCS)

lean-fac'd Envy in her loathsome cave -- This allegorical figure of comes out of a passage in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Book II, popular in English Renaissance literature. See "Appendix B" for the relevant passage.

Their chiefest prospect murd'ring basilisks -- The basilisk was a mythical lizard or serpent, king of the reptiles. He belongs to the same order of beings as the mandrake root: his gaze kills whomever it falls on. The etymology of the word basilisk is *basilikos*, a Greek word for King.

Their softest touch as smart as lizards' stings -- "as painful as snake venom"

All the foul terrors in dark-seated hell -- situated in the dark (NCS)

And these dread curses, like the sun 'gainst glass -- Margaret is thinking of a mirror, not a window: the curses rebound off of their objects back onto Suffolk.

Or like an overcharged gun, recoil, -- Margaret's warlike spirit begins to shine through. The meaning is that the weapon harms the shooter, not the target. From a discussion of artillery in the Wars of the Roses: "By the early years of the fifteenth century artillery was steadily becoming the dominant arm in siege warfare....Another arm, growing in significance and potency, was the smaller handgun or 'gonne'. These were little more than a miniature cannon lashed onto a basic wooden stock. Such 'hagbuts' were held underarm, or over the shoulder, rather than pressed into the shoulder as with a modern firearm. Once loaded with powder and shot, the gun was fired by means of a lit length of slow match, the burning end of which was applied to a touchhole, drilled in the side of the breech." (Sadler, John. *The Red Rose and the White: the Wars of the Roses, 1453-1487*. Pearson Education Ltd. Harlow, UK: 2010. Pages 8-9.) And see this video for an amateur reenactment:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wEFOOH4Qw9Q>

pp 37

You bade me ban, and will you bid me leave? ban = curse (OED sense II), leave = stop. Thus: "You told me to curse, and now you're telling me to stop?"

To wash away my woeful monuments -- ie, her tears. The metaphor underscores her point that her grief is massive and permanent. To my ear, Margaret's language undergoes a significant shift in this sequence. An oratorical quality enters into it, a quality that will only enlarge until it becomes one of the main themes of Act II. It takes over Suffolk as well.

O, could this kiss be printed in thy hand,

That thou mightst think upon these by the seal -- 'seal' = a token or symbol of a covenant; something authenticates or confirms; a final addition which completes and secures (OED). This is the 'figurative' meaning. The literal meaning is also relevant: A device (e.g. a heraldic or emblematic design, a letter, word, or sentence) impressed on a piece of wax or other plastic material adhering or attached by cords or parchment slips to a document as evidence of authenticity or attestation.

As one that surfeits thinking on a want -- 'Like someone who is overstuffed with thinking about a desire/lack'.

I will repeal thee, or, be well assured -- I will call you back from exile. (NCS)

Adventure to be banished myself -- venture

And banished I am, if but from thee -- If I am far away from you, I'm banished anyway. We might also think about how Margaret is now twice-banished: first, from her homeland, now from her lover.

With every several pleasure in the world -- several = separate, individual

pp 38

As mild and gentle as the cradle-babe

Dying with mother's dug between its lips -- Margaret will shortly become pregnant with a child that may be Suffolk's. Her love for her son Prince Edward, born at the end of Act I, will in many ways supplant and supersede her love for Suffolk later in the play. dug = nipple. The general scenario of a child dying while breast feeding, though of course tragic in any age, was much more common in 15th century Europe across all social classes. (No modern medicine, cold climate, perpetual waves of the Black Death....)

Though parting be a fretful corrosive,

It is applied to a deathful wound. -- fretful = irritating, corrosive = caustic medication (NCS). 'Separating is a terrible fix, applied to a situation that would end in your death.' It is impossible for me not to hear Juliet's dismissal of Romeo in this line, "parting is such sweet sorrow," and indeed I feel the star-crossed lovers hovering behind this scene (although Shakespeare wrote that play after he wrote these lines). The precise magnificence of that play's language casts a shadow over what we know to be a genuine passion between Margaret and Suffolk. They love and feel just as deeply, but they are operators, they know too much. They are too artful to truly be star-crossed lovers, but perhaps that makes them more genuinely human.

I'll have an Iris that shall find thee out -- Iris is the personification of the rainbow and Juno/Hera's messenger in classical mythology. Iris appears in *The Tempest* as one of the attendants on Ceres in Prospero's masque in order to celebrate the marriage of Miranda and Ferdinand:

Ceres:

Hail, many-colour'd messenger, that ne'er
Dost disobey the wife of Jupiter;
Who, with thy saffron wings, upon my flowers
Diffusest honey-drops, refreshing showers;
And with each end of thy blue bow dost crown
My bosky acres and my unshrub'd down,
Rich scarf to my proud earth....(4.1.76-82)

Even as a splitted bark, so sunder we -- "just like a ship torn in two, we split apart from one another"

The passage of time -- The first note of this kind since the “passage of space” at the end of I.2, and before that the “passage of time” at the end of I.1. This parting marks off a significant block of dramatic action. In the transition between I.1 and I.2, seven years passed. Less than a year will pass this time, but Margaret may feel or remember it as just as great a passage.

Scene 8

pp 39

Queen Margaret, now with child -- there is a clear suggestion that Suffolk, not Henry, is the father of Margaret's child, given Henry's fairly immediate plunge into madness that begins during the previous scene.

Good morrow to my brave and resolute Queen -- the terms of Clifford's compliment here illuminate his fealty to Margaret: he identifies the qualities he most prizes in himself with qualities she possesses.

O Clifford, look on him, that grieves no more.

He sleeps in fitful starts, distractedly.

His eyes are open, but their sense are shut,

And none have heard him speak this past six month. -- Margaret explicitly links Henry's grief for Gloucester with his madness. There is no clarity among historians as to what exactly was wrong with Henry. The social construction of madness itself, and its relationship to spiritual troubles and physical illness, shifted between the middle ages and the Renaissance, and certainly the difference from their time to ours is dramatic. Although the trouble sleeping and the unseeing eyes suggest depression/melancholia, Henry's silence feels like a spiritual choice--an attempt at penance? Others have suggested that this collapse was in response to a particularly terrible defeat in France (not mentioned in QM).

pp 40

A braver soldier never couched lance -- lowered a lance to the position of attack, grasping it in the right hand with the point directed forwards; to level as a gun. (OED)

The passage of time. -- Several months, as the baby will be born in the next scene. There is also a change in location from Westminster, where presumably all of the court scenes have taken place so far, to Windsor Castle, about 20 miles from London.

Scene 9. 13 October 1453 (Prince Edward born) Margaret is 23; Henry is 32.

pp 41

Suffolk's Death -- In *Henry VI Part 2* Suffolk is beheaded by pirates. Asmath tells Eleanor he will die 'by water.' In QM, he drowns in Margaret's nightmare. This nightmare, which closes the act, parallels her nightmare at the beginning of the play.

ACT II

September 1459. Margaret (29), Prince Edward (11), Catherine Clifford (9), York (39), Warwick (39), Edward (18), Richard (16), Henry (38), Clifford (54).

General Note about Oaths: ‘Oaths’, ‘swearing’, ‘cursing’ -- these words form a tight network throughout Act II.

Scholar Frances A. Shirley offers the following definition of ‘oath’ for the 1600s, when the *Henry VI* plays were written and which we should adopt:

The calling to witness of something, divine or otherwise, to seal vows of allegiance and promises of love or to attest the truth of a statement; and the inclusion of a similar phrase in a more exclamatory fashion to add emphasis to one’s speech.

‘Swearing’ in this period is used in the same way as how we would use the word, although it can also couple with ‘oath’ in the above sense.

In the period, ‘cursing’ and ‘swearing’ were not synonyms, as they are today, but because in the 21st century we *hear* them as synonyms, Margaret’s cursing lessons at the end of the play are verbally linked to Henry’s sworn oath to allow the throne to pass to York upon his death in II.1.

This reasoning leads us to what is perhaps the central question of the play: whose speech (and what kind of speech, and spoken when) has the power of a political act? An important secondary question, following from this one: under what conditions might speech have the power of violence?

The political oaths sworn and then violated and argued over in this Act may begin to seem absurd to us, as the justification for the war seems increasingly small in relation to the death toll. But it is perhaps similar to the comedy of York’s accounting for his right to the throne in I.3: York takes it absolutely seriously, and so we laugh. So, too, the elaborate insults and pronouncements that seem to take the place of immediate action are taken absolutely seriously by all characters, and as a consequence we laugh. But the play does not dissolve into a war comedy, because the audience is required to witness murder upon murder performed right in front of them.

General Note about Warfare and Weapons: a couple of horrific details, from *The Red Rose and the White* by John Sadler:

“Time and romance have, over the intervening years, cast a shroud of pageantry over the harsh realities of medieval combat. The truth is somewhat less attractive. Though lacking the scale and widespread devastation of modern wars, devoid of the full horror of industrialized conflict, warfare, in the fifteenth century, was every bit as frightful. As discussed, many battles opened with an archery duel, regular volleys thudding home into tightly packed ranks, inflicting numerous fatalities and wounds. These preliminaries probably lasted only a short time before that side which was suffering the most was compelled to advance. The movement would be ordered rather than swift, the sergeants bellowing orders to keep the ranks dressed. Cohesion was all important; the divisions that could maintain both order and momentum stood the best chance of breaking a more disordered foe. A commander with an eye for ground would always seek the position of best advantage, though elements in the topography, adverse weather, mist and darkness could combine to upset the best laid plans and...each side might find themselves equally confounded. Once battle was joined in earnest the combat became an intensely personal affair -- a hacking, stamping melee of bills and other polearms, sword, and axe.

Men, half blind in plate, soon assailed by raging thirst and swiftly reaching exhaustion, would become disoriented. Dust and the steam from thousands of sweating men would further obscure any wider view. Few would be killed by a single blow, but a disabling wound, bringing the sufferer to his knees, would expose him to a further flurry, his skull then shattered, pierced through the visor or groin by daggers, hacked by bills, stamped on, kicked and slashed. Not a swift death, nor an easy one. Illustrations from the period show the field heaped with the press of the slain; garnished by a slew of severed limbs, blood would run in great rivulets, splattering the living.”

“One of the most popular knightly weapons of the age was the fearsome poleaxe; a heavy axe blade on a stout ash shaft, some four to six feet in length, a hefty ‘beak’ or hammer head on the reverse of the blade, and the head tapering to a wicked spike. This tool was designed to defeat the armourer’s art by ‘opening up’ a harnessed opponent, in the manner of a crude but deadly can



opener.”



[a halberd, variation on the poll axe]

Also, lances carried on horseback were real death-weapons, not just for show at tourney. They required significant specialist training due to their weight.



the 'Bastard' sword, called 'King of Swords'



Dagger, worn by everyone, as helpful in planting vegetables as in killing enemies

Bows and arrows were also prevalent:



“Few who had encountered the deadly hail of the arrow storm could have forgotten the experience. If gentlemen, secure in fine plate, enjoyed greater protection than their predecessors [as new, better armor technology developed], then the rank and file were less fortunate.”

“By the early years of the fifteenth century artillery was steadily becoming the dominant arm in siege warfare....This new science of gunnery had begun to surpass that of the military architect....Another arm, growing in significance and potency, was the smaller handgun or ‘gonne’. These were little more than a miniature cannon lashed onto a basic wooden stock. Such ‘hagbuts’ were held underarm, or over the shoulder as with a modern firearm. Once loaded with powder and shot, the gun was fired by means of a lit length of slow match, the burning end of which was applied to a touchhole, drilled in the side of the breech.”



“Although artillery had radically diminished the status of castles as centres of resistance, guns remained frightfully expensive to procure and difficult to move.”

NOTE: neither of the battles represented in QM would have involved much artillery, because they are not siege battles. But ‘hagbuts’ would likely have been used insofar as they were available.

General Note on Parliament:

“The upper house, the Lords, was a relatively small body of men, never many more than a hundred in number, made up of two archbishops and eighteen bishops, between twenty-six and twenty-seven abbots and priors, a dozen dukes, marquises and earls and forty or less barons. All were great men, the heads of noble families, religious houses and/or administrative organisations, each a monarch within his limited compass, accustomed to making decisions, to respect and to having his way. From the late fourteenth century at least parliament channelled them into estates, lords spiritual to the king’s right hand and temporal on his left, and into hierarchies. They sat in order of precedence distinguished by their parliamentary robes, none being at apex and many relatively junior. Not all attended, the abbots being particularly slack and probably also relatively silent. In 1454 only 48 out of 105 peers attended, and even in 1461, when 67 attended altogether, a fifth absented themselves. Justices and serjeants-at-arms sat with the Lords, but were not full members....

The Commons were an essential part of parliament. They made it into a representative assembly that could bind everyone. Their presence made parliament sovereign. MPs were either gentry or members of the highly select urban oligarchies....The theory that parliament represented all was a fiction necessary to bind everybody. No commoners sat in parliament. Even allowing for genuine townsmen, parliament consisted of the privileged, propertied and aristocratic, who had much in common with one another. Shared outlook and interests did not preclude divisions, but made them much less likely....

Parliaments were enormous set-piece occasions that needed a great deal of preparation and management before and during the actual sessions. Meeting six days a week, perhaps already only in the morning, they preoccupied the government. King, ministers, councilors and many others were involved and deferred their normal duties. Moreover parliament could spin out of control. Kings therefore needed good reasons to conjure it into existence. It was normal to summon parliament at the start of a new reign....

Parliament was much more than the king's instrument. The Lords concentrated the independence, expertise and power of the king's greatest subjects, without whose counsel and support major initiatives could not proceed. They alone acted as the judges in state trials, both impeachments...and in attainders....The Commons handled not merely what was passed down to them by king and Lords and such official bills as were introduced to the Commons, but they also raised many other issues, local, private and 'commonweal', grievances that cried out for remedy. They were the mouthpiece of all kinds of individuals, communities and pressure groups with complaints, grievances to remedy and hobby-horses to promote, which the king's agents could not always steer or stifle to their master's advantage. Parliament had a role as safety valve for thwarted and potentially explosive aspirations and energies to which every king must sometimes defer."

"Parliament was a political occasion, often the venue for set-piece political drama, sometimes of major political crises. These were of four principle types: parliaments summoned as the forum for state trials; the first parliaments of usurping kings; parliaments dominated by financial considerations, especially taxation; and parliaments where criticism of the regime became acute or even overpowering. The categories overlap."

--*English Political Culture in the Fifteenth Century* by Michael Hicks, pp 97-100, 191

pp 42

The web of our life is of a mingled yarn -- the line which introduces Act II is on one level a play on the double meaning of yarn as string (from which a web might be woven) and as tale. On another level, the word 'web' suggests an important question in the subtext: whose web has been woven, or will be woven? Is Margaret the spider at the center, waiting for her unsuspecting prey? Or is she tangled in the web of history, or the patriarchy, or her own ambition? 'Mingled' Also carries a double meaning: on the one hand, it literally describes a style of weaving which brings multiple contrasting colors together; on the other, it means 'mixed', suggesting that the yarn we are about to be told is less than pure. Perhaps this line is even the play's single

metadiagetic reference to the mingled nature of QM itself, cobbled together as it is from many sources.

The parliament in Westminster Palace. -- Could kids play in the parliament do you think? I think the flavor of their play is that they're a little spoiled because Henry allows the behavior from Edward and Clifford doesn't care, and Margaret perhaps even encourages it. It's actually pretty interesting to think that Henry would be oblivious to that as a transgression.

pp 43

And welcome to your two stouthearted sons -- 'stout' carries a rich variety of meanings: proud, valiant, brave, resolute; but also haughty and arrogant; also stately, magnificent, splendid; and yet again, fierce, furious, fearsome in appearance, formidable, menacing. 'Stouthearted' is a precise word to capture the qualities of both of York's sons, Richard and Edward, at once.

It's been ten years since the birth Prince Edward -- this should perhaps be read more in the sense of 'a decade,' a looser description of the time that has passed than a precise accounting.

Assist me then, sweet Warwick, and I will. -- Why does York need Warwick's support so much? What does Warwick have to offer other than lacky-ism? Hopefully York bio will help. Maybe he doesn't want to take such a huge step alone but knows that with Warwick's full backing and implications (literally helping him onto the throne), he won't be solely accountable and will be more likely to keep hold of it. Plus Warwick was The Kingmaker, richer and more powerful than anyone else in the kingdom. (TB)

pp 44

The Queen this day here holds her parliament -- 'parliament' is either used here to describe the council of nobles that surrounds the monarch *or* the Parliament House, where the Great Council of the nation meets and where the equivalent scene in Shakespeare is set.

But little thinks we shall be of her council -- ie, I don't think we'll be part of her Privy Council any longer. The privy council was a trusted inner circle of noble advisors who together "constituted the executive branch of government" (AS).

Hath made us bywords to our enemies -- 'bywords' = parables, in other words, a lesson. (The term is likely Biblical.) 'Become objects of scorn or contempt to our enemies'

I'll plant Plantagenet; root him up who dares. -- York did not always claim the name 'Plantagenet'; he took it on as part of his campaign for popular recognition.

My lord, look where the sturdy rebel sits -- 'sturdy' = intractable, hard to manage.

**My lord, look where the study rebel sits,
Even in the chair of state. Belike he means
Back'd by the power of Warwick, that false peer,
To aspire unto the crown and reign as king.** -- 'belike' = probably

That head of thine doth not become a crown -- "doth not become" = is not fit to bear

That gold must round engirt these brows of mine -- "engirt" = encircle

**Give place! By heaven, thou shalt rule no more
O'er him whom heaven created for thy ruler.** -- York's claim to the throne culminates with an appeal to divine authority, a move both characteristic of the medieval political structure and particularly meaningful in the present context, facing off with the pious King Henry.

pp 45

We are thy sovereign, Clifford, kneel to us -- This is the first time York takes on the royal 'we'

My gracious lord, here in the parliament -- "parliament" decisively means the location in which the scene takes place.

**Ah, know you not the city favors them,
And they have troops of soldiers at their beck?** -- Although QM does not include this aspect of history in its narrative, it may be helpful to know what else happened 'during the intermission' historically. In history, York actually governed as Lord Protector *twice* during Henry's illness, showing himself a more-than-capable governor. He had positioned himself by this time not only with military support from the Irish front but also with an extraordinary degree of popular support. He would not have made his move against Henry without it. According to one of the essential chroniclers of the Wars of the Roses (Hall), it was actually Margaret who was afraid to challenge York in London because of the extent of popular support. (AS)

To a shambles of the parliament house! -- "shambles" = slaughter-house. Henry is not speaking figuratively: he is afraid that a bloody coup is about to break out any moment.

It was my inheritance, as the earldom was. -- 'York inherited both the duchy of York and the earldom of Cambridge from his grandfather, Edmund Langley, Duke of York, fifth son of Edward III.' (AS) York is thinking back to the complex family tree sketched in I.3.

Thy father was traitor to the crown. -- Clifford is referring to the fact that York's father was arrested for treason and executed by Henry V. York's father collaborated with Edmund Mortimer in an attempt to seize the throne from Henry V ('the Southampton plot'). York actually inherited

his earldom and his dukedom from his uncle, and was raised as an orphan under his uncle's roof. *In the above note, you said he inherited from his grandfather?*

pp 46

And in my conscience do repute his Grace -- "repute" = consider

Canst thou dispense with heaven for such an oath? -- Two possible meanings: 1. Do without God. 2. Gain dispensation from God. (AS)

**It is great sin to swear unto a sin,
But greater sin to keep a sinful oath.** -- see general note on oaths at the start of this section

To reave the orphan of his patrimony -- "reave" = rob

A subtle traitor needs no sophister --

"subtle" = crafty, cunning, especially in a deceitful or treacherous way; sly, wily, devious, underhanded

"sophister" = sophist, 'adept at specious reasoning'

So the sense is: "A deceitful, crafty traitor doesn't need someone making fancy excuses and arguments on his behalf [because he'll just do whatever sneaky thing he's planning on doing, regardless]."

Clifford is formulating an epigram to sum up the situation, and to insult and threaten York: "You know what, York? If you're going to be an underhanded, manipulative traitor and stage a coup, you don't need this jack-ass windbag Warwick making grand excuses for you." But the thought is rendered with great self-possession and wit, which in this courtly setting is always an attempt at claiming status (though not always an effective one).

Foul stigmatic -- "stigmatic" = two meanings. Literally, the word refers to being actually branded, but the more relevant meaning is the insinuation that Richard's deformity is a 'foul' branding or marking. (AS)

Hence, heap of wrath, foul indigested lump -- *check NCS; this needs something*

pp 47

Nay, we shall heat you thoroughly anon. -- "heat you...anon" = make you hot with fighting soon (AS)

Whom should I follow but my natural king? -- “natural” = rightful

Who made the Dauphin and the French to stoop -- “dauphin” is pronounced ‘dolpin’. I thought it was pronounced dough-fanh? In Shakespeare/in English, I’m 75% sure one says ‘dolpin,’ but I will check the pronunciation reference book.

You are old enough now -- ‘You are’ should be elided to ‘you’re’ for the sake of the meter.

pp 47

Let’s fight it out, and not stand caviling thus. -- “caviling” = raising sophisticated objections. The objection to caviling will itself be a theme of this act: over and over again, men and women on both sides will become frustrated with what they take as verbal evasions from the issue at hand, which should be resolved by violence. See, for example, Clifford’s refusal to “bandy” with York in II.4 (bottom of pp 58).

Henry: Henry the Fourth by conquest got the crown.

York: ‘Twas by rebellion against his king.

Henry hesitates. -- Although York is at pains to establish the legitimacy of his claim to the throne in I.3 through a rehearsal of the lineage, this is truly the turn of the screw: Henry and the Lancastrians’ claim to the throne can be traced back to an act of treason, fundamentally no different from York’s claim to the throne in the present. This should not be interpreted as an appeal to a *realpolitik* attitude to governance and civil strife--there is not a hint of the contemporary cynicism that we often find in *Richard III*, in which monarchy is shown to be as unfounded in divine right as a dictatorship. It is better for us to focus on the psychological power York assumes over Henry in this moment by identifying himself with Henry’s powerful grandfather -- the psychological and the political were continuous in this system of government.

pp 48

Base, fearful and despairing Henry! -- ‘Henry’ should be pronounced as trisyllabic, for the sake of the meter: ‘Hen-uh-ry’.

In whose cold blood no spark of honor bides. -- “cold blood” = the opposite of hot blood (as in, ‘quick to action’).

And die in bands for this unmanly deed. -- “bands” = bonds.

pp 49

But be it as it may; I here entail -- “entail” = cause to descend to a designated series of possessors (AS)

And long live thou, and these thy forward sons. -- “forward” = ready, prompt, eager (OED)

Be patient, gentle Queen, and I will stay. -- “gentle” = in both senses, of ‘noble’ and ‘tender’ (AS)

Who can be patient in such extremes? -- “Patient” should be pronounced with three syllables for the sake of the meter: “Pa-shee-ent.” Margaret is throwing the word back in his face.

pp 50

Had I been there, which am a silly woman -- “silly” = the core meaning is helpless, defenseless (a usage active in the period applied to women, children and animals). (OED) Of course contemporary usage overshadows the Elizabethan definition in performance.

pp 51

Come, son, away, we may not linger thus. -- “may” = must (AS)

The passage of space. -- Act II is characterized by more shifts in location than Act I, which happens mostly at Westminster after Margaret’s arrival in I.3. In a sense this makes it more like a Shakespearean English history play, while the first Act has more the feeling of one of his tragedies.

Scene 2. December 1460.

pp 52

York's castle.



A reconstruction of the 14th century interior of York's main castle.



The remaining outer wall of Sandal Castle, where York and his sons retreated and where this scene actually takes place. It is unknown why York went to this more remote and smaller castle.

No, I can better play the orator -- An ironic claim for Richard to make, considering Richard's desire to "fight it out, and not stand caviling thus" in Parliament in the previous scene. **This is Edward's claim, but perhaps he makes it knowing about Richard his proclivity for violence.** A debatable claim, but it is my reading that Shakespeare wrote two versions of Richard, Duke of Gloucester: in the *Henry VI* plays he is a man of brutal physical violence, which his deformity both symbolizes and enforces. In *Richard III*, he is a man who manipulates political opposition

through language, not direct violence, and who sends bungling murderers to do his dirty work for him. The prospect of an actual battle at the end of the play drives him mad. This is the more famous Richard, but we should look to the Richard of the *Henry VI* plays for guidance, and he is no “orator”, although Shakespeare does give him one soliloquy which must have provided the imaginative seed for *Richard III*. When Richard does use language to his advantage in QM, as in this scene, it is in order to advocate for violence.

Mine, boy? not till King Henry be dead. -- ‘Henry’ should be pronounced as trisyllabic, for the sake of the meter: ‘Hen-uh-ry’.

pp 53

No; God forbid your grace should be forsworn. -- “forsworn” = falsely sworn.

An oath is of no moment, being not took

Before a true and lawful magistrate,

That hath authority over him that swears -- Richard is trying to let his father off the hook of his own oath on a legal technicality. The style of thinking is not so different from the way York sidled up to the prospect of taking the throne by a technicality in his conversation with Warwick in I.3.

Then, seeing ‘twas he that made you to depose, -- “depose” = promise formally upon oath (OED)

Your oath, my lord, is vain and frivolous. -- “frivolous” = in addition to our contemporary usage, this is a legal term meaning ‘manifestly insufficient or futile’ (AS)

Richard, enough; I will be king, or die. -- It is interesting to notice which tactic of Richard’s actually works on York: not the sophistry about oaths, but the seductive, poetic description of the crown itself.

Enter Rutland. -- Historically, Rutland was 17 at this battle, but in Shakespeare as in QM he is much younger. [He’s 15 in ours](#)

And trust not simple Henry nor his oaths. -- “simple” = stupid, half-witted. ‘As York has just broken his own oath to Henry, his denigration of Henry’s intelligence where oath-keeping is concerned seems particularly self-serving.’ (AS)

pp 54

Now Rutland, hide yourself in some safe room. -- Historically, as in Shakespeare, Rutland fled the battle. By having him killed in a safe room by Clifford and Margaret, TB/DM make his death all the more horrific, violating any sense of military propriety.

The army of the queen mean to besiege us. -- Even the phrase “the army of the queen” would have been a bizarre, perhaps even funny, thing to say out loud.

Many a battle have I won in France -- need more info on York's bio; biography of York coming soon via ILL

Scene 3

Look for a literary critic's evaluation of this speech as an example of Shakespeare's early artistry. It is as *artful* a speech as there is in QM, not through Henry's design but through Shakespeare's....I need a smart critic to unpack this for me.

pp 55

Henry sits by a window. Catherine plays at his feet. Outside, the battle rages. -- The surreal split location is a more radical departure from realism than we've so far seen in QM. This dual perspective evokes our tradition's greatest and earliest war poem, Homer's *Iliad*, in which the moments of greatest violence often provoke the poet's imagination to fly off, through metaphor, to pastoral locations, as if to look down upon the traumas of the battlefield from a safely dissociated distance. The Elizabethans had access to Homer through Virgil's *Aeneid*, a massive Roman appropriation of Homeric epic.

The 'battle' is the historical Battle of Wakefield. [More info on the Battle of Wakefield.](#)

Some games Catherine might be playing: cherry stones (a counting game), or a board game like chess or backgammon. She might also be playing with a simple makeshift toy or doll.

This battle fares like to the morning's war, -- "fares" = goes on impetuously, rages (AS, from OED)

What time when the shepherd, blowing of his nails, -- "what time when" = that time when; "blowing of his nails" = blowing on his hands to warm them in the cold before sunrise (AS)

So is the equal poise of this fell war. -- "fell" = fierce, savage, cruel (AS)

To be no better than a homely swain -- "homely swain" = unsophisticated, simple shepherd. This topos returns from the first act; we first encountered it in the play-acting of Margaret as Joan of Arc in which she named herself a "shepherd's daughter."

To carve out dials quaintly, point by point -- "dials" = sundials; "quaintly" = AS suggests 'with ingenious art,' a definition which returns us to Joan's self-proclamation as a woman untrained in any kind of art.

How many makes the hour full complete,

How many hours brings about the day, -- In both cases, 'hours' has two syllables for the sake of the meters: 'ow-ers.'

So many hours must I sport myself, -- "sport" = divert (AS)

So minutes, hours, days, months, and years, -- Change to: So minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, and years,

Would bring white hairs unto a quiet grave.... -- The remainder of the speech has at least two Old Testament allusions. It is important not only that Henry's religious inclinations come through at the end of the speech, but also that he does not make the obvious Biblical association to Christ, 'the shepherd of men,' an allusion that might have rescued him from encroaching terrestrial powerlessness. Christ's redemption is out of reach for Henry now even in the imagination.

pp 56

Gives not the hawthorn bush a sweeter shade --



Hawthorn bush, with a sweet shade.

His wonted sleep under a fresh tree's shade, -- "wonted" = accustomed

All which secure and sweetly he enjoys, -- "secure" = without cares

Is far beyond a prince's delicates-- -- "delicates" = choice, dainty foods

His viands sparkling in a golden cup, -- "viands" = items of sustenance

His body couched in a curious bed, -- "couched" = laid down; "curious" = made with care (OED; AS)

Scene 4

General Notes about the Battle of Wakefield:

Battles were typically fought in the summer. Wakefield was a winter battle. It is possible that, because of weather conditions (mud, etc), little to no artillery was used in the battle, although small arms would still have been used.

Historically, the Lancastrians were actually already stationed nearby, so York was in a sense the aggressor, while in our play the Yorkists come across as defenders against Margaret's onslaught.

The size of the armies:

The various chronicles number the Yorkist army between 700 and 2,800, but the historian Helen Cox suggests that these numbers might represent as little as 50% of the death toll. We can therefore imagine a Yorkist army of up to 5,600 troops. The Lancastrians had twice or three times that number: up to 16,800 troops.

About the location of the battle itself. York's basis of operation was Sandal castle, grand but relatively small, and tiny in comparison to Westminster. Probably only hundreds of men would have been able to fit in the castle at any one time -- *not* thousands. There was no truly safe point of retreat for most the Yorkist troops.

Cox' demythologized summary of the action of the battle emphasized that the Duke of York was *not* "a passive victim who suddenly found himself besieged by enemies who had crept up on him unawares, thanks to his own poor management and the incompetence of his scouts. He did not foolishly sacrifice his mobility, but elected to await...reinforcements in safety, obliging the Lancastrians to bring their troops to do battle on an excellent ground of his choosing (as it presumably appeared to him): the plain field between Sandal and Wakefield, bounded by the river, with a secure stronghold at his back." In short, York was fully confident, going into this battle, that he would win, despite his smaller army and weaker position, and operated with the best kind of military strategy. The Lancastrian forces seemed to have plowed into the Yorkist army head-on, with relatively little flanking action other than a single move at a key moment.

In terms of casualties: the Lancastrians seem to have lost around 200 men, while the Yorkists lost significantly more, perhaps into the thousands.

Finally, it may be worth noting that the historical Margaret was not at Wakefield at all, although the battle was a major victory for her cause.

And so he walks, insulting o'er his prey -- "insulting" = exulting proudly or contemptuously (OED)

I am too mean a subject for thy wrath -- "mean" = inferior

Were no revenge sufficient for me -- "sufficient" is pronounced with four syllables for the sake of the meter: suh-fi-shee-uhnt

Is as a fury to torment my soul -- "Fury" returns us to the opening sequence of the play, the furies who threaten Young Margaret in her dream.

pp 58

**Turn back and fly like ships before the wind,
Or lambs pursued by hunger-starved wolves.** -- A return to two central topoi, ships and the sea, and lambs and wolves.

My ashes, as the phoenix, may bring forth -- "phoenix" = a mythological bird, ancient Greek (possibly Egyptian) in origin. Associated with fire and the sun, the bird is nearly immortal in lifespan, and achieves immortality through a death by fire and a rebirth from the ashes.

And in thy thought o'errun my former time -- "o'errun" = look over, review (AS)

An, if thou canst for blushing, view this face -- 'And if you are not ashamed in spite of blushing, look at this face' (AS)

And bite thy tongue that slanders him with cowardice -- "bite" = control, discipline (AS). For the scansion, the last word should have one emphasis, not two: ców'rdice, not cówardíce.

I will not bandy with thee word for word -- "bandy" = go to and fro, rally. Clifford's frustration echoes Richard's frustration in II.1 with excessive 'caviling'.

But buckler with thee blows, twice two for one. -- "buckler" = see note on 'bucklers' in I.7.

pp 59

Come make him stand upon this molehill here -- see the note above on Henry's molehill in II.3. Also:

"Altogether, the 'anthill throne' [sic] anecdote smacks of the medieval version of the 'urban myth', a nice blend of fact and fiction circulated without too much consideration of its plausibility....The yellow field ant builds small hills in limestone/chalk grassland, but the land between Sandal Castle and Wakefield is not chalky....The mole is a more likely candidate for

the building of hills on Wakefield Green in December, although for an exercise in humiliation, the eminence it generates is paltry -- and as easily squashed as this story. As to the 'crowning': conceivably, reeds or bulrushes could have been obtained on the battlefield, from field ditches or the banks of the Calder. Less plausible is the idea that someone took to the field conveniently armed with a sheet of paper...." -- *The Battle of Wakefield Revisited: a Fresh Perspective on Richard of York's Final Battle, December 1460* by Helen Cox.

That raught at mountains with outstretched arms,

Yet parted but the shadow with his hand.... --

Was't you that revell'd in our parliament,

And made a preachment of your high descent? -- "raught" = reached at (AS). One scholar suggests that "revell'd" has the echo of something like 'riotous masquers' or 'mummers'.

Throughout this speech, Margaret's agenda is to invalidate York's claim to the throne not only politically but metaphysically. He reached out to part mountains, but only parted shadows. His coup was nothing more than a passing entertainment, his claim nothing more than an ineffectual sermon. This is a very Shakespearean attitude. Macbeth deconstructs his own power with similar tools: "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage / And then is heard no more...."

The wanton Edward, that lascivious lout -- Edward's choice of Elizabeth Grey as Queen, a match made in desire rather than out of political expediency, would prove to be a major problem for his reign. Margaret is perhaps less of a prophet in this moment than a good reader of character. **Is there a way we can know that Edward is lascivious from II.1 and II.2 in the way he behaves?**

And where's that valiant crookback prodigy -- "prodigy" = monster

I give thee this to dry thy cheeks withal -- as far as we know, Shakespeare invented the detail of the bloody handkerchief.

Ay, marry, sir, now looks he like a king -- "marry" = a reduction of 'by the Virgin Mary'

pp 60

And will you pale your head in Henry's glory -- "pale" = surround (AS), but of course the word foreshadows the fate of York's head: to be impaled on the spikes at the gate.

Off with the crown; and, with the crown, his head -- AS suggests that because Margaret does not behead York at this point, she may not remove the crown either. Possibly he uncrowns himself at "There, take the crown, and with the crown, my curse" on pp 61.

And whilst we breathe take time to do him dead -- "whilst we breathe" more likely means 'during this interval in the battle,' rather than 'while we are alive'.

This is my office, for King Henry's sake. -- "office" = obligation, service

Nay, stay, let's hear the orisons he makes. -- "orisons" = prayers

She-wolf of France, but worse than wolves of France -- another return to the wolf/sheep topos.

To triumph like an Amazonian trull = the Amazons were an all-female nation from Greek mythology. The Amazons were thought to have their origins in the period before the Trojan War. The ancient Greek historian Herodotus called them "killers of men"; Homer more even-handedly called them "women who kill like men". Sometimes they would keep men they conquered as slaves. In some traditions, the Amazons were chaste, either through choice or by rule. They were also depicted as having cut off one breast in order to more efficiently fire a bow and arrow. The Amazons were coming back into fashion in literary culture in the early 16th century through the influence of *Orlando Furioso*, an Italian epic poem.

"trull" = 'prostitute' is the dictionary definition, and I do think York is alluding to Margaret's sexual inconsistencies. I would suggest to the actor that for a contemporary audience the word should have the force of the c-word behind it in performance. Although we have no reason to believe that our York knew of Margaret's affair with Suffolk based on the play **is that true?**, historically the Yorkists (perhaps even York himself, through indirect channels) were entirely responsible for spreading the rumor that Prince Edward was illegitimate and that Margaret was unfaithful to Henry. There were several versions of the rumor, but ultimately they all served a dual purpose: to undermine Margaret's authority and, even more importantly, to undermine Edward's claim to the throne through the Lancastrian line. The rumors were not only because of Margaret's attempts to assume to political agency, but perhaps even more so because of Henry's many pious writings on chastity. He had made himself an easy target for rumors of cuckoldry. **I've ordered a scan of a document he wrote about the value of chastity when he was 15 or so; it's in a very obscure journal, so it's probably never going to come. But it's historically accurate. Chastity in the period included the notion of what we call faithfulness in marriage, but that was a derivative situation. St. Paul wrote in the New Testament, "Better to marry than to burn".....**

Upon their woes whom Fortune captivates. -- "captivates" = captures.

But that thy face is vizard-like, unchanging -- "vizard-like" = mask-like, expressing no emotions (AS)

Thy father bears the type of King of Naples -- "bears the type" = carries the distinguishing mark (OED)

Hath that poor monarch taught thee to insult? -- It is remarkable that over a decade into her rule as queen consort of England, York (and presumably many Englishmen and -women) saw

her as an impoverished outsider. Again, it's propaganda--but is there still something about Margaret's deportment that makes the accusation land?

'Tis beauty that doth oft make women proud,

But God he knows thy share thereof is small. -- **Although of course it is up to the director :-),** I would suggest that this tactic of York's be understood as reflective of something real, just as the previous tactic reflected Margaret's origins, and that throughout the play Margaret be represented as relatively plain in looks, not as a beautiful woman. Although the portraits of Margaret depict her as a beautiful woman, there is some extant correspondence that suggest that she was plainer than they suggest. The portraitists would certainly have motives for making the queen look beautiful, whether she was or not. **I will get the exact quotes if it they are helpful. But this is real.** (This would also further justify her resentment of Eleanor's gowns -- perhaps Eleanor is simply a more beautiful woman. Certainly, beauty and wealth are linked for Margaret in her estimation of Eleanor.) **The danger of not taking York's comment about Margaret's looks seriously is that it becomes trash-talk--it does not have the terrible bite of the rest of the speech.** **The audiobook I listened to described Margaret as stunningly beautiful...but interesting points! I will reflect on them**

'Tis government that makes them seem divine -- "government" = becoming conduct (OED)

As the Antipodes are unto us,

Or as the south to the Septentrion. -- "Antipodes" = those who live on the other side of the globe, or where they live; "Septentrion" = the north pole. (AS)

pp 61

O, tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide -- This line from *III Henry VI* was famous enough for one of Shakespeare's contemporaries to allude to him using it in order to mock him for his bombast as a writer. A disparaging comment from Robert Greene's *Green's Groatsworth of Wit*: 'an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tygers hart wrapt in a Players hyde*, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you: and beeing an absolute *Iohannes fac totum*, is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrey'. Many scholars agree that this is the first known allusion to Shakespeare as a playwright. (AS)

Beyond this passage's interest as biographical trivia, it may suggest the way the speech landed with Elizabethan audiences, which in turn might help us. On the one hand, it remained in the memory and so it must have been an effective piece of writing for the stage. But on the other hand, maybe we should honor Greene's critique a little. His comments suggest that on the Elizabethan stage, this speech brought out a sensationalistic performance style from the actor playing York. For us, the speech is framed thematically in a richer way: York is suspended in a terrifying situation and responds not with the naturalistic psychological raw response we would expect ('fuck you, you ugly fucking bitch, go ahead and do it--weeping weeping--you killed my boy, my little boy, my prince--etc etc') but rather with a highly structured, though no less

emotionally-charged, piece of oratory. He goes on and on, and Margaret *allows* him to. She wants to hear *every last thing* he has to say, which is probably worth thinking about.

The tension between words and deeds is a major theme of Act II, as we have seen, and this speech is arguably the dying breath of ‘words’ as an alternative to ‘deeds’ in the Wars of the Roses. There’s no turning back now.

Dramaturg’s editorializing: of the speeches in Shakespeare’s early plays, this one may be the most charged with the grandeur of pathos we find in the great tragedies. Titus’ lament over Lavinia is a close second. It cannot be a coincidence that in both cases the scene is a parent lamenting the terrible harm done to an innocent child. (The speech is at *III Henry VI* 1.4.111-149).

To bid the father wipe his eyes withal -- “withal” = with it

Women are soft, mild, pitiful and flexible -- “pitiful” = compassionate, tender; “flexible” = docile, compliant, manageable, governable (OED)

Thou stern, obdurate, flinty, rough, remorseless -- ‘obdurate’ has one emphasis, on the second syllable, for the sake of the meter: ‘Thou stérn, obdúrate, flínty, róugh, remórseless’

O, ten times more than tigers of Hyrcania -- Hyrcania (a real place) was associated with tigers throughout antiquity. This particular reference seems to be connected to a passage in Book IV of Virgil’s *Aeneid* (AS).

Aeneas has strayed from his mission to found a ‘new Troy’ (ie, Rome), as he falls in love with Dido, the queen of Carthage. He is warned by the gods, including his divine mother, that although he has fallen in love, he must press on in order to found a new city for his people. When he tells Dido that he is leaving her in order to complete his mission, she spits back at him:

As he was speaking she gazed at him with hostility,
 casting her eyes here and there, considering the whole man
 with a silent stare, and then, incensed, she spoke:
 “Deceiver, your mother was no goddess, nor was Dardanus
 the father of your race: harsh Caucasus engendered you
 on the rough crags, and Hyrcanian tigers nursed you.
 Why pretend now, or restrain myself waiting for something worse?
 Did he groan at my weeping? Did he look at me?
 Did he shed tears in defeat, or pity his lover?....
 Nowhere is truth safe. I welcomed him as a castaway on the shore,
 a beggar, and foolishly gave away a part of my kingdom:
 I saved his lost fleet, and his friends from death.
 Ah! Driven by the Furies, I burn....
 This is the work of the gods indeed, this is a concern to trouble
 their calm. I do not hold you back, or refute your words:
 go, seek Italy on the winds, find your kingdom over the waves.

Yet if the virtuous gods have power, I hope that you
 will drain the cup of suffering among the reefs, and call out Dido's
 name again and again. Absent, I'll follow you with dark fires,
 and when icy death has divided my soul and body, my ghost
 will be present everywhere. Cruel one, you'll be punished.
 I'll hear of it: that news will reach me in the depths of Hades."
 Saying this, she broke off her speech mid-flight, and fled
 the light in pain, turning from his eyes, and going,
 leaving him fearful and hesitant, ready to say more.
 Her servants received her and carried her failing body
 to her marble chamber, and laid her on her bed.

(trans. A.S. Kline)

When Aeneas does in fact leave to go to Italy and ultimately found Rome, Dido kills herself in despair.

The connection to York's monologue is more in tone than in situation. Like Dido, he speaks on the verge of his death (though Dido doesn't know it yet), and he speaks with a contempt on par with Dido's. Dido's accusation that "Hycarnian tigers nursed" Aeneas translates roughly to "you claim to have been raised by gods and princes, but you must have been raised by savage beasts, to treat me this way." York says:

That face of his [Rutland's] the hungry cannibals
 Would not have touch'd, would not have stain'd with blood;
 But you are more inhuman, more inexorable,
 O, ten times more, than tigers of Hyrcania!

He means: "The most savage cannibals could not have brought themselves to touch, let alone eat, Rutland, because of his innocence and purity; but you, Margaret, being the opposite of that, are more inhuman, more rigidly severe, more unbendable from your inhuman purpose [to slaughter me, my family and my followers], than the tigers of Hyrcania, those most most savage beasts!"

"Hyrcania" is pronounced 'her-kane-eeah'.

See, ruthless queen, a hapless father's tears -- "hapless" = unfortunate (not 'helpless')

Scene 5

pp 62

General note: the opening of II.5 is perhaps the most psychologically complex scene in the play. It is the first and only scene featuring just the royal Lancastrian nuclear family, and it occurs in public, before their troops (although this is not indicated in the script). The scene is intensely personal and charged with emotions we think of as private, but at the same time entirely outward and political, as the family and *therefore the regime* is coming apart at the seams.

Ay, as the rocks cheer them that fear their wrack -- another return to the topos of the sea and ships.

My gracious liege, this too much lenity -- "lenity" = lenience, permissiveness

Ambitious York did level at thy crown -- "level" = aim

Full well hath Margaret played the orator,

Inferring arguments of mighty force. -- Margaret pronounced Mar'gret. "Inferring" = bringing in, introducing (AS). It is precisely at the moment that Margaret speaks most honestly to her own motivations--ensuring that her children and grandchildren will be kings--that Henry accuses her of the greatest sophistry. Why this dissonance?

But, Margaret, tell me, didst thou never hear

That things ill got had ever bad success? -- 'But tell me, Margaret, have you not heard that things that come from evil actions always have bad consequences?' Margaret is thinking generations into the future; Henry is the relative pragmatist in this situation!

I'll leave my son my virtuous deeds behind,

And would my father had left me no more! -- Henry alludes for the first time in this moment to 'the guilty legacy of the Lancastrians' (AS) (in front of his troops!) His wish is that his own legacy had been purged of the memory of his grandfather's execution of Richard II and seizure of the throne. The air of illegitimacy haunts Henry VI. This illegitimacy was one of York's charges against the legitimacy of the Lancastrian regime in I.3. We are now privy to one of the unspoken reasons that Henry may have been so quick to concede to York in II.1: his secret feeling that his claim to the throne is no more substantial than York's.

Pp 63

Ah, cousin York, would thy best friends did know

How it doth grieve me that thy head is here! -- However genuine Henry's lamentations may be emotionally, they are also politically performative. He may long for the shepherd's life but on

the other hand he has not renounced the throne and given into his fantasy, and some part of him is still performing the tactic of innocence, over-against Margaret's actions, in order to reconstitute his power; there is always some art to Henry's choices, always something oratorical about his utterances. Perhaps this is why his madness manifested itself in silence. Unfortunately, the tactic misfires, as Margaret points out in her next lines.

My lord, cheer up your spirits, our foes are nigh,

And this soft courage makes your followers faint. -- These lines suggest that, although the only characters onstage are Margaret, Henry and Prince Edward, the Lancastrians troops are also present and able to hear everything the royal family is saying.

Edward Plantagenet, arise a knight,

And learn this lesson: Draw thy sword in right. -- Henry's lesson to his son is no generic slogan: it is a barely indirect chastisement of his wife's conduct. But there has been nothing knightly (in this sense) about the conduct of the Yorkists, or of Clifford for that matter, and to survive and thrive in this moment the Prince would have perhaps benefited from a lesson in ruthlessness, and Edward's reply (commended by Margaret) demonstrates that he understands the inadequacy of his father's point of view. It is interesting to reflect on Henry as a teacher of lessons in light of Margaret's ultimate role as a teacher of cursing in the penultimate moments of the play.

Darraign your battle, for they are at hand -- "darraign" = arrange troops in battle order.

Pp 64

Now, perjurd Henry, wilt thou kneel for grace, -- Note that Edward's first accusation against Henry is not that he is responsible for his father's death, or Rutland's death. He is not especially interested in revenge, although revenge colors the force of his demand. Because of Henry's oath in II.1, Edward's claim to the throne is legitimate, and that's what he's here to assert. This underscores the extent to which the oath was *the* critical legal/political tool in 15th century England. In a very real sense, the fact that Henry has effectually (through the actions of his wife) broken his oath to York is more important than the brute fact that he has (through his wife) killed York and Rutland. Formulated another way, it is the way in which the murders are encoded politically that matters to Edward, not the brute fact of horrific bloodshed or any grief he may feel for his father. Things have landed somewhat differently for Richard, as we shall see.

York's desire to be King could not have been a secret to his sons, but it is interesting to think about how fresh the notion that Edward might actually become King immediately is for Edward, as well as for Richard.

Go rate thy minions, proud insulting boy! -- 'Go scold your favorites/subordinates,' in other words, do not direct such speech toward your King. (AS)

You that are king, though he do wear the crown -- Edward here addresses Margaret.

Are you there, butcher? O, I cannot speak! -- Whereas Edward confronts the Lancastrians with an eye to the political situation, Richard is fueled by grief and rage, especially over the death of Rutland. "I cannot speak" -- he is beyond the range of oratory. I read this as genuine emotion, not *Richard III*-style manipulation, though that's a matter for interpretation.

Pp 65

**But like a could misshapen stigmatic,
Mark'd by the destinies to be avoided,** -- "stigmatic" = a person marked by a deformity

Pp 66

**Iron of Naples hid with English gilt,
Whose father bears the title of a king
(As if a channel should be call'd the sea),
Sham'st thou not, knowing whence thou art extraught,**

--'iron/gilt': ugly, pragmatic continental (ie enemy) woman overlaid with the semblance of English beauty

--'channel/sea': Richard is the only person in the play to point out that the passage from England to France is not *really* that big a deal, relative to the actual ocean.

--"extraught" = derived, descended from (OED)

A wisp of straw were worth a thousand crowns

To make this shameless callet know herself. -- A figure for scolds to rail at would have to be made very precious before Margaret would hold herself to account. (AS)

His father -- King Henry V. Important question for Edward here is to ask who he is speaking to at each moment. An easy one to generalize because it appears to be a description of history. But it's a tactic, or sequence of tactics.

pp 67

Adieu my Lord, I humbly take my leave -- Note that she says goodbye to him with a French word.

Scene 6

pp 68

The Battle of Townton -- more information coming about this when I get the book from ILL

Wert thou environ'd with a brazen wall -- "brazen" = strong

Brother, show we today our valiant strain -- "strain" =

Bring forth that fatal screech owl to our house -- the screech owl, or raven, proverbially brings misfortune.

pp 69

So shalt we sinow both these lands together, -- for 'sinow' read 'sinew', meaning 'bind together as with sinews' (AS). An interesting word choice given our production's matrix.

For in thy shoulder do I build my seat -- 'in thy shoulder' = depending on your strength. (AS). Warwick is a kingmaker.

Henry: ...And tell me then, have you not broke your oath?

Edward: Hence with him to the Tower, let him not speak.

Henry: Ay Warwick, lead; your king's name be obey'd,

And what God will, that let your king perform;

And what he will, I humbly yield unto. -- Edward's unspoken answer is 'yes'. York and his sons did swear an oath of fealty to Henry as King of England. Henry then swore an oath to York, then Margaret broke Henry's oath to York, now Edward breaks his oath to Henry. The system is edging toward crisis, but stabilizes itself by imprisoning Henry in the Tower. Henry's response can be read any number of ways -- genuine acceptance, bitter sarcasm, or even ironic subversion.

The Lady Elizabeth Grey -- We see very little of Elizabeth Grey, who will become Edward IV's Queen later in the play, in QM. [More info on Elizabeth Grey to come.](#) That she was nurse to Catherine Clifford is a fiction concocted by TB/DM.

Lord, give us leave. I'll try this widow's wit. -- Harkening back to the duality of art and wit introduced in Joan of Arc's speech in I.2. An exchange of wit is code for a sexual encounter, for lascivious Edward. The use of the word 'try' is a light play on the legal nature of Elizabeth's suit. In *III Henry VI*, Elizabeth does prove herself to be both witty and artful; QM allows us to imagine a different person.

Scene 7

More info on the Court of France and Louis to come



Louis XI [this portrait is just *too* perfect]

Appendix A: Let us imagine that these two scenes have happened before Suffolk goes to France to marry Margaret for King Henry. Gloucester wanted to be the one to choose a queen for Henry, which would give him an ally close to Henry and further secure his power. Suffolk wanted to do the same. Suffolk knew of Margaret, knew that she as a French princess would make a good allegiance for Henry and England. He commissioned a portrait of Margaret with the hopes of making Henry fall in love with her. (TB)

I Henry VI V.i

King Henry:

Have you perus'd the letters from the Pope,
The Emperor, and the Earl of Armagnac?

Gloucester:

I have, my lord; and their intent is this:
They humbly sue unto your Excellence
To have a godly peace concluded of
Between the realms of England and of France.

King Henry:

How doth your Grace affect their motion?

Gloucester:

Well, my good lord, and as the only means
To stop effusion of our Christian blood
And stablish quietness on every side.

King Henry:

Ay, marry, uncle, for I always thought
It was both impious and unnatural
That such immanity and bloody strife
Should reign among professors of one faith.

Gloucester:

Beside, my lord, the sooner to effect
And surer bind this knot of amity,
The Earl of Armagnac, near knit to Charles,
A man of great authority in France,
Proffers his only daughter to your Grace
In marriage, with a large and sumptuous dowry.

King Henry:

Marriage, uncle! Alas, my years are young!

And fitter is my study and my books
 Than wanton dalliance with a paramour.
 Yet call th' ambassadors, and, as you please,
 So let them have their answers every one:
 I shall be well content with any choice
 Tends to God's glory and my country's weal.

....

I Henry VI V.v

King Henry:

Your wondrous rare description, noble Earl,
 Of beauteous Margaret hath astonish'd me:
 Her virtues graced with external gifts
 Do breed love's settled passions in my heart:
 And like as rigour of tempestuous gusts
 Provokes the mightiest hulk against the tide,
 So am I driven by breath of her renown
 Either to suffer shipwrack, or arrive
 Where I may have fruition of her love.

Suffolk:

Tush, my good lord, this superficial tale
 Is but a preface of her worthy praise;
 The chief perfections of that lovely dame,
 Had I sufficient skill to utter them,
 Would make a volume of enticing lines,
 Able to ravish any dull conceit;
 And, which is more, she is not so divine,
 So full replete with choice of all delights,
 But with as humble lowliness of mind
 She is content to be at your command;
 Command, I mean, of virtuous chaste intents,
 To love and honour Henry as her lord.

King Henry

Whether it be through force of your report,
 My noble Lord of Suffolk, or for that
 My tender youth was never yet attain'd
 With any passion of inflaming love,
 I cannot tell; but this I am assur'd,

I feel such sharp dissension in my breast,
Such fierce alarums both of hope and fear,
As I am sick with working of my thoughts.
Take therefore shipping; post, my lord, to France;
Agree to any covenants, and procure
That Lady Margaret do vouchsafe to come
To cross the seas to England and be crown'd
King Henry's faithful and anointed queen....

Exit Henry.

Suffolk:

Thus Suffolk hath prevail'd; and thus he goes,
As did the youthful Paris once to Greece;
With hope to find the like event in love,
But prosper better than the Trojan did.
Margaret shall now be Queen, and rule the King;
But I will rule both her, the King, and realm.

Appendix B

The “she” in this passage is the goddess Minerva, also known as Pallas Athena. This is Arthur Golding’s Ovid, the translation Shakespeare would have read (although he also read Ovid in Latin, from his school days). I’ve modernized the spelling. I’ve underlined the lines that Shakespeare refers to directly.

She goes me straight to Envy’s house, a foul and irksome cave
Replete with black and loathly filth and stinking like a grave.
It standeth in a hollow dale where neither light of Sun,
Nor blast of any wind or air may for the deepness come.
A dreary sad and doleful den ay-full of slothful cold,
As which ay-dimed with smoldering smoke doth never fire behold.
 When Pallas that same manly maid approachéd near this plot,
 She stayed without, for to the house in enter she might not.
 And with her Javelin point did give a push against the door.
 The door flew open by and by, and fell me in the floor.
 There saw she Envy sit within fast gnawing on the flesh
 Of snakes and toads, the filthy food that keeps her vices fresh.
 It loathed her to behold the sight. Anon the Elf arose
 And left the gnawéd adder’s flesh, and slothfully she goes
 With lumpish leisure like a snail: and when she saw the face
 Of Pallas and her fair attire adorned with heavenly grace,
 She gave a sigh, a sorry sigh, from bottom of her heart.
 Her lips were pale, her cheeks were wan, and all her face was swart:
 Her body lean as any Rake. She lookéd eke askew,
 Her teeth were furde with filth and dross, her gums were waryish blue.
 The working of her festered gall had made her stomach green,
 And all be-venim’d was her tongue. No sleep her eyes had seen.
 Continual cark and cancréd care did keep her waking still:
 Of laughter (save at others harms) the Hellhound can no skill.
 It is against her will that men have any good success.
 And if they have, she frets and fumes within her mind no less
 Than if her self had taken harm. In seeking to annoy:
 And work distress to other folk, her self she doth destroy.
 Thus is she torment to her self.

