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Margaret of Anjou: Tradition and Revision

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Arts in History at Massey University

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Annales</i>	<i>Wilhelmi Wyrcester Annales Rerum Anglicarum</i> , in <i>Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Wars of the Roses</i> , vol. 2, pt. 2, J. Stevenson (ed.)
<i>Arrivall</i>	<i>The History of the Arrivall of King Edward IV A.D. 1471 in Three Chronicles of the Reign of Edward IV</i> , K. Dockray (ed.)
BHIR	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</i>
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
CCR	<i>Calendar of Close Rolls</i>
CFR	<i>Calendar of Fine Rolls</i>
CPR	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls</i>
<i>Crowland</i>	<i>Crowland Chronicle Continuations</i> , N. Pronay, (ed.) <i>Ingulph's Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland</i> , H. Riley (ed.)
DNB	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i>
EHL	<i>English Historical Literature</i> , C.L. Kingsford (ed.)
Flenley/Bale	<i>Six Town Chronicles of England</i> , R. Flenley (ed.)
Flenley/Gough	
Flenley/Rawlinson	
<i>Gregory's Chronicle</i>	<i>Historical Collections of a Citizen of London</i> , J. Gairdner (ed.)
HMC	<i>Historical Manuscripts Commission</i>
<i>John Vale's Book</i>	<i>The Politics of Fifteenth Century England</i> , M.L. Kekewich (ed.)
JMH	<i>Journal of Medieval History</i>
<i>London Chronicle</i>	<i>The Chronicles of London</i> , C.L. Kingsford (ed.)
<i>Milanese Papers</i>	<i>Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts existing in the Archives and Collections of Milan</i> , A.B. Hinds (ed.)
PL, Davis	<i>Paston Letters</i> , Norman Davis (ed.)
PL, Gairdner	<i>Paston Letters</i> , James Gairdner (ed.)
PPC	<i>Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council</i> H. Nicolas (ed.)
PRO	Public Record Office
RP	<i>Rotuli Parliamentorum</i>
Stevenson	<i>Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Wars of the English in France</i> , J. Stevenson (ed.)
<i>Three Chronicles/Brief Latin</i>	<i>Three Fifteenth Century Chronicles</i> , J. Gairdner (ed.)
<i>Three Chronicles/Brief Notes</i>	
<i>Three Chronicles/Short English</i>	
Warkworth	<i>A Chronicle of the First Thirteen Years of the Reign of Edward IV by John Warkworth</i> , J.O. Halliwell, (ed.)

Introduction: The Sources

A broad consensus on the political activities of Margaret of Anjou exists in the scholarship of the late twentieth century; unfortunately it continues to be influenced by the traditional view of a virago who interfered in politics and encouraged faction in Lancastrian England. There are a number of reasons for this, not least that there is no detailed scholarly study of the queen¹ because she has been of peripheral interest to historians of Henry VI and the Wars of the Roses, although it is generally agreed that her participation was important, perhaps crucial; that she dominated her weak and compliant husband, Henry VI, and attempted to rule England herself, preferring factional government and civil war to reconciliation and rule by a representative council of lords under the king.

Margaret of Anjou is not a sympathetic character, although she is sometimes portrayed as a tragic one. She has been savaged by Shakespeare from whom there is no appeal.² She was on the losing side of a struggle in which her Yorkist opponents were masters of the art of propaganda. The portrait of Margaret in the Yorkist chronicles has, in the main, been accepted

¹ A complete list of biographies of Margaret of Anjou is given in the bibliography. cf. T.F. Tout, 'Margaret of Anjou,' for a pithy and accurate commentary on Margaret's early biographers. *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 12, London: Oxford University Press, 1917. Originally published 1893.

² *Henry VI Part 3*, Act 1, Scene 4: The Duke of York to Margaret of Anjou:
'She-wolf of France, but worse than wolves of France, Whose tongue more poisons than the adder's tooth!
'O tiger's heart wrapp'd in a woman's hide!
'But you are more inhuman, more inexorable - O, ten times more - than tigers of Hyrcania.'
Margaret then stabs York and orders that his head be cut off.

by English authorities.³ French writers are a little kinder, since Margaret was a French princess and more to be pitied than blamed for becoming the wife of Henry VI. The Burgundians are less tolerant as they were allies of Edward IV and their chronicles reflect an Anglo-Burgundian (Yorkist) rather than an Anglo-French (Lancastrian) perspective; but they display the same Yorkist gloss that colours their English counterparts. History is not kind to failure. English historians, assessing the fifteenth century from a moral and patriotic viewpoint, had no difficulty in accepting the verdict of their Tudor predecessors that Margaret was a foreign French woman who interfered in the affairs of a country she neither valued nor understood. The tradition that Margaret dominated English politics from the time of her marriage is discredited, but her part in the political clash that culminated in the Wars of the Roses is still open to debate. Was she responsible for the demise of the Lancastrian dynasty or was she a victim of circumstance as the wife of an ineffectual king, the mother of a child heir and the leader by default of those who opposed Richard of York's bid for the throne?

One of the difficulties in constructing a coherent picture of Queen Margaret is the fragmentary nature of contemporary sources. Because they are so sparse they have been taken at face value without their bias, which is of crucial importance, being examined for prejudice or political constraint. An

³ Patricia-Ann Lee, 'Reflections of Power: Margaret of Anjou and the Dark Side of Queenship,' *Renaissance Quarterly*, 39, (Summer 1986), for a concise, but not always accurate, summary of the views of English historians.

example of such a source is *The Paston Letters*.⁴ Unique and invaluable, their scattered references to Margaret have been accepted without question.⁵ The most famous, ‘The Quene is a grete and strong labourid woman for she spareth noo peyne to sue hire thinges to an intent and conclusion to hir power’⁶ is invariably misread to fit the traditional picture of the queen. A similar misunderstanding of an entry in the *Coventry Leet Book*, taken out of context, appears to demonstrate her arrogance. An examination of the full text does not sustain this conclusion. No Lancastrian chronicles for the years 1445 to 1461 have survived, if any existed. The extant English Chronicles are, inevitably, hostile to the queen. Their detail and animosity varies, so they are quoted as if they were independent sources and as if their multiplicity verified their accuracy, whereas in fact they are inter-dependent.⁷ All are variations on a Yorkist theme, a record of Henry VI’s reign written in the first ten years of Edward IV. Margaret disappears from these chronicles in the years following her marriage (except for Prince Edward’s birth in 1453) until the court moved from London to Coventry in 1456. After the Battle of Blore Heath, for which she is held responsible, she is portrayed as the principal antagonist of the Duke of York until his death at Wakefield, then of the Earl of Warwick, and finally of Edward IV.

⁴ *The Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, Norman Davis (ed.), 2 parts, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971-1976; *The Paston Letters*, James Gairdner. (ed.), 6 vols, London: Chatto, 1904.

⁵ The exception is Anthony Gross, *The Dissolution of the Lancastrian Kingship*, Stamford : Paul Watkins, 1996, p. 47: ‘This is dubious testimony to Margaret’s dominance.’

⁶ *PL* 3, Gairdner, pp. 74 - 76.

⁷ Alison Hanham, *Richard III and his Early Historians 1483-1535*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 103, for the fallacy of quoting sources as independent rather than derivative.

Robert Bale's Chronicle, whose hero is the Earl of Warwick, ends abruptly in 1460 before Warwick's defeat at the Second Battle of St Albans.⁸ There is no hostility to Margaret until the encounter at Blore Heath when Bale states that it was the queen's men who attacked the Earl of Salisbury with the deliberate intention of taking his life.⁹ Bale reflects the propaganda of the Yorkist lords: they portrayed themselves as loyal subjects of the king whose only aim was to restore good government to the country. *William Gregory's Chronicle* continues to 1469¹⁰ but the portion after 1451 was written by a London based continuator with military interests.¹¹ He records that the Yorkist lords tried to entice Margaret to London after they captured the king in 1460 because she was the power behind the throne.¹² *John Benet's Chronicle* resembles Bale and Gregory. It dates the queen's hostility to York from the death of Edmund Beaufort, Duke of Somerset at the Battle of St Albans in 1455 and makes the earliest reference to allegations that Prince Edward was

⁸ *Six Town Chronicles of England*, Ralph Flenley (ed.), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911, containing *Bale's Chronicle*, *MS Gough London 10* and *MS. Rawlinson B. 355*. References will be to Flenley/*Bale*, Flenley/*Gough*, Flenley/*Rawlinson*. See Introduction, p. 67, for the authorship of *Bale's Chronicle*, and pp. 70-72 for it as a 'eulogy' of the Earl of Warwick.

⁹ Flenley/*Bale*, p. 148.

¹⁰ *The Historical Collections of a Citizen of London in the Fifteenth Century*, James Gairdner (ed.), London: Camden Society, 1876. References will be to *Gregory's Chronicle*.

¹¹ Charles Lethbridge Kingsford, *English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911, pp. 96-98 for the authorship of *Gregory's Chronicle*. See Keith Dockray and Richard Knowles, 'The Battle of Wakefield,' *The Ricardian*, vol. 9, number 117 (June 1992), p. 4, for the interesting, if novel, suggestion that the continuator may have been a London clergyman.

¹² *Gregory's Chronicle*, pp. 209 and 210. 'for they knewe welle that alle the warkyngys that were done growe by hyr, for she was more wytyver than the kyng,' and the chronicler refers to the Lancastrian lords as 'the quenys party.'

not Henry VI's son.¹³ *A Short English Chronicle* is consistently hostile to Margaret.¹⁴ the Yorkist lords were loyal to King Henry but his queen did her best to thwart them at every turn. She was responsible for Blore Heath and she raised the northernmen to march on London in 1461 allowing her forces to plunder countryside. However the Londoners stood firm and did not allow her to enter the capital. Even more hostile is *An English Chronicle from 1377 to 1461*.¹⁵ It is a detailed apologia for the Yorkist lords and tends to be as much pro-Warwick as pro-York. John Stowe possessed a copy and quoted it, without attribution, in his *Annales of England*.¹⁶ It contains the well known sentence, 'The quene with such as were of her affynyte rewled the reame as her lyked, gaderyng ryches innumerable.' But her wicked attempt to persuade the king to abdicate in favour of her (bastard) son came to nought, 'she coude nat bryng her purpos aboute.'¹⁷

It is obvious from a comparison of the most influential of the chronicles, *The Brut*, *Continuation G*, with its predecessor, *Continuation F*, that substantial alterations took place after 1461.¹⁸ *Continuation F* records

¹³ *John Benet's Chronicle for the Years 1400-1462*, G.L. and M.A. Harriss (eds), London : Camden Miscellany, vol. 24, 1972. Introduction, p. 162, for the author, and p. 169 for Margaret's hostility to York. *Benet's Chronicle*, p. 216 for Edward's bastardy.

¹⁴ *Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles*, James Gairdner (ed.), containing the *Short English Chronicle*, *Brief Notes* and *Brief Latin Chronicle*, London: Camden Society, 1880.

¹⁵ *An English Chronicle from 1377-1461*, J.S. Davies (ed.), London: Camden Society, 1856.

¹⁶ John Stowe, *Annales, or a General Chronicle of England*, E. Howes (ed.), London, 1631. J.S. Davies relied heavily on Stowe for his notes to *An English Chronicle*.

¹⁷ *English Chronicle*, pp. 79-80.

¹⁸ *The Brut, or the Chronicles of England*, F.W.D. Brie (ed.), London: Early English Text Society, 1908.

that Margaret's marriage formed part of the Earl of Suffolk's peace negotiations with France. It does not gloss the costs of bringing the queen to England¹⁹ but neither does it criticise the marriage nor condemn Suffolk's peace policy. *Continuation F* breaks off with the statement that a French embassy visited England after Margaret's coronation. It is a contemporary version of events and the light in which they were viewed at the time.²⁰ Perhaps nothing further was added, but it is possible that a portion of it was destroyed after the recension in *Continuation G* became the official version for 1445-1461. *Continuation G*, compiled between 1464 and 1470,²¹ repeats the account in *Continuation F* from an entirely different perspective. Its emphasis is on the cost of a disastrous marriage and a peace policy that brought only shame to England. It laments that proposals for Henry VI to marry a daughter of the Earl of Armagnac were negated by the Earl of Suffolk²² If Henry VI had married the Armagnac lady her dowry would have enriched England and gained a valuable ally.²³ Instead, the price of the Angevin marriage was a promise to cede Anjou and Maine to Margaret's father, which led to the loss of English Normandy. From the time of his marriage good fortune deserted

¹⁹ *Brut, Continuation F*, p. 486: 'all maner of stuff of ordynaunce was made and doon for the Quene's comyng into England'

²⁰ C.L. Kingsford dates its composition to 1446, *EHL*, p. 119, but as it covers an event he dates to October of that year it may have continued for some years thereafter. *Six Town Chronicles*, p. 119 n. 1, where Flenley notes 'Mr Kingsford tells me the real date was Oct. 4, 1446.'

²¹ Kingsford, *EHL*, p. 119.

²² It should be noted that *The Brut, Continuation F, Bale's Chronicle, Gregory's Chronicle and Benet's Chronicle* do not consider the Armagnac alliance worthy of mention.

²³ *Brut, Continuation G*, p. 511: 'for there shuld haue ben delyuered so many castels & townes in Gwyhen; And so moche god shold haue bene yiffen with hir that al Englonde shold haue bene enryched ther-by.'

Henry VI and faction in England led to civil war.²⁴ *Continuation G* was printed by William Caxton as *The Chronicles of England* and so influenced Tudor historiography. *The Great Chronicle* and the *London Chronicle*, [*Vitellius A VII*,]²⁵ are based on a lost source which C.L. Kingsford called *The Main City Chronicle*.²⁶ At times they are identically worded and cannot be read as independent authorities. Their account of the failure of the Armagnac marriage and the cost of the Angevin is substantially the same as *The Brut*.²⁷ The *Brief Latin Chronicle* goes one better, claiming that immediately after Margaret's marriage all English possessions in France were lost (even Paris which had fallen to the French in 1436).²⁸

A theological work interspersed with political criticism by Thomas Gascoigne²⁹ documents the rumours that were rife in England in the uneasy 1450s. A strait-laced cleric, Gascoigne railed against laxity in the English church; courtier bishops served Henry VI for their own profit, and the king did nothing to stem the abuses. Ralph Griffiths dubbed Gascoigne 'the arch

²⁴ *Brut*, *Continuation G*, pp. 509-511.

²⁵ *The Great Chronicle of London*, A.H. Thomas and I.D. Thornley (eds), London, 1938. *The Chronicles of London*, C.L. Kingsford (ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1905. References are to *London Chronicle*.

²⁶ Kingsford, *EHL*, p. 99.

²⁷ *Great Chronicle*, p. 176, condemns Margaret as 'a woman of excellent byrth [but] chargeable to this land,' whose marriage occasioned 'much hevynesse & sorwe' to England

²⁸ *Three Chronicles/Brief Latin*, p. 166.

²⁹ Thomas Gascoigne, *Loci e Libro Veritatum*, James Thorold Rogers (ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1881.

rumour-monger' and he is as outspoken as he is prejudiced.³⁰ His condemnation of Margaret is unequivocal and bears an uncanny resemblance to the Yorkist chronicles. It is based on the popular belief that the Duke of Suffolk's disastrous handling of relations with France resulted in the loss of Normandy, the origins of which Gascoigne traced to Suffolk's negotiations for Margaret's marriage. Gascoigne's work is demonstrably erroneous, but it reflects what was being said in England at the time. He did not invent the rumours and his views were undoubtedly common currency in some circles. Gascoigne's reaction to Margaret's political involvement in 1456 was that God alone knew what would happen next.³¹ He died in 1458 so he did not live to see the outcome.

In 1461 the Lancastrians won the Battle of Wakefield and the Second Battle of St Albans but lost the Battle of Towton. Victory and defeat alike were fatal to the queen's reputation, for Edward IV's seizure of the crown had to be justified. John Whethamstede, Abbot of St Albans, added the years 1459-1461 to his Register to gloss the defeat and death of the Duke of York at Wakefield, and to justify Edward IV's usurpation of the throne.³² The good abbot's torturous Latin is so wonderfully obscure that his Yorkist bias is often overlooked, and his falsifications, such as his account of the Battle of

³⁰ Ralph A. Griffiths, *The Reign of King Henry VI*, London: Benn, 1981 p. 487. cf. Kingsford, *EHL*, p. 166 'Gascoigne was a bitter partisan who indulged freely in scandalous gossip.'

³¹ Gascoigne, pp. 204-205 and 219-221.

Wakefield, have been allowed to go unchallenged. He leaves one with the impression that the Lancastrian army sacked his abbey (it did not) and he imputes responsibility to the queen for the devastation that Yorkist propaganda claimed the army had inflicted on the countryside. Margaret is said to have encouraged plunder south of the Trent.³³ Full coverage of the Lancastrian victory at the Second Battle of St Albans is missing from the *Annales Rerum Anglicarum*.³⁴ The births of the Duke of York's children are recorded but not that of Prince Edward of Lancaster.³⁵ K.B. MacFarlane established that the *Annales* were not by William Worcester, secretary to Sir John Fastolf, a friend of the Pastons, and therefore a contemporary witness. They are 'a miscellaneous collection' put together by Thomas Hearne who ascribed them to Worcester. 'The interesting stretch from November 1459 to May 1463' was composed in 1491.³⁶ Despite their late compilation their bias is Yorkist not Lancastrian. The chronicle which James Gairdner calls *Brief Notes* is a medley of rumours compiled by the monks of Ely. It features the Lancastrian march on London of 1461 and the wild stories circulating after Edward IV's accession of a huge foreign army, to be led by Henry, 'late Kyng of Ingland,

³² John Whethamstede, *Registrum Abbatiae Johannis Whethamstede*, H.T. Riley (ed.), 2 vols, London: Rolls Series, 1872-1873. See Riley's Introduction for the addition of the years 1459-1461. Whethamstede 1, p. xvii.

³³ Whethamstede, 1, p. 394.

³⁴ *Annales Rerum Anglicarum* in *Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Wars of the English in France*, Joseph Stevenson (ed.), 3 vols in 2, London: Rolls Series, 1861-64, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 743-793. References will be to *Annales*.

³⁵ *Annales*, pp. 763-765 and p. 771. The notice of Richard's birth in 1452 is followed immediately by the only entry for 1453, the lapse into mental illness of Henry VI.

³⁶ K.B. MacFarlane, 'William Worcester: a preliminary survey,' in *Studies Presented to Sir Hilary Jenkinson*, J. Conway Davies (ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957, pp. 206-207.

in dede but not in ryth, and sche that was queyn,'that will shortly invade England³⁷ It is all very exciting if somewhat hysterical. Presumably the monks believed it, an indication of just how rumour- ridden England was in the early days of Edward IV.

After the Battle of Tewkesbury where Prince Edward of Lancaster was killed, an account of Edward IV's recovery of the throne was circulated to reassure his Burgundian allies that they had been wise to support the Yorkist cause. *The Historie of the Arrivall of Edward IV, A.D. 1471*³⁸ is balanced, apparently objective, and typical of Edward IV,³⁹ a dispassionate statement of what he had accomplished with the help of Divine Providence.⁴⁰ From it we learn that Queen Margaret's long-anticipated arrival in England was delayed by natural causes. Adverse weather prevented her crossing from France to England. This is perfectly plausible, and may even be true. If the reader wishes to interpret it as a sign of God's special favour to the king he is free to

³⁷ *Three Chronicles/Brief Notes*, pp. 154-155 and p. 158. They will land at Sandwich with a company of English and foreign nobility (including the Duke of Burgundy) to be followed by the kings of France, Denmark, Navarre, Portugal and Sicily (Margaret's father.) each with a large army.

³⁸ *The Historie of the Arrivall of King Edward IV, A.D. 1471*, in *Three Chronicles of the Reign of Edward IV*, Keith Dockray (ed), Gloucester: Sutton, 1988.

³⁹ Charles Ross, 'Rumour, Propaganda and Popular Opinion in the Wars of the Roses,' in Ralph A. Griffiths (ed.), *Patronage, the Crown and the Provinces*, Gloucester: Sutton, 1981, p. 24.

⁴⁰ For analyses of *The Arrivall* see J.A.F. Thomson, 'The Arrival of Edward IV' *Speculum*, 46, (1971), pp. 84-93; Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England 2, c. 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century*, London: Routledge, 1982, Appendix B, pp. 481-489. For a corrective to these see the informative and persuasive article by Livia Visser-Fuchs, 'Edward IV's "Memoir on Paper" to Charles, Duke of Burgundy: the so-called "Short Version of the Arrivall"' in *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 36, (1992), pp 167-227.

do so.⁴¹ The impression created is of Edward the Invincible, the chosen of God whose enemies have been put to rout through divine intervention. A continuator of *The Crowland Chronicle* contradicts *The Arrivall* by recording that Margaret made a direct sea passage and was not delayed by contrary winds. She raised the West Country because the men there were loyal to Lancaster.⁴² As he was writing after the death of Richard III this version may be described as ‘Lancastrian’ (or possibly Tudor.)⁴³ It may also be true.

The French and Burgundian chroniclers are more easily identified than their English counterparts.⁴⁴ Thomas Basin, Bishop of Liseux when Normandy was still English, welcomed its reconquest by Charles VII, but went into exile under Louis XI and wrote a history of the two kings. Basin may have had a fellow feeling for Margaret;⁴⁵ he saw her as a tragic figure, overwhelmed by a malevolent fate. His description of her at the time of her marriage is not

⁴¹ *The Great Chronicle*, p. 214, enlarges on the theme. The queen had been trying to cross the sea since November but was constantly prevented, and people were ‘sayng that It was agayn the wyll of God, that she shuld come any more In England that had cawsid soo much sorw wt yn It beffore tymys, and othir which bare to hyr good wyll that It was doon by soom sorcery or wyccherafft of oon namyd at that dayes Bungay or such othir.’

⁴² *The Crowland Chronicle Continuations: 1459-1486*, Nicholas Pronay and John Cox (eds), London: Richard III and Yorkist History Trust, 1986.

⁴³ Daniel Williams, ‘The Crowland Chronicle, 616-1500,’ in *England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1986 Harlaxton Symposium*, Daniel Williams (ed.), London: Boydell Press, 1987.

⁴⁴ Denys Hay, ‘History and Historians in France and England during the Fifteenth Century,’ *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 35, (November 1962), pp. 111-127, for a comparison of their differences.

⁴⁵ Thomas Basin, *Histoire de Charles VII*, 2 vols, C. Samaran (ed.), Paris: Société d’Editions Les Belles Lettres, 1934, 1944; and *Histoire de Louis XI*, 3 vols, C. Samaran (ed.), Paris: Société d’Editions Les Belles Lettres, 1963-1973.

particularly illuminating as he adapted it from Vergil's *Aeneid*.⁴⁶ Margaret was accused by the influential Philippe de Commynes, who began life in the service of the Duke of Burgundy and ended it as a confidant of Louis XI, of encouraging faction in England, not by her animosity towards the Duke of York, of whom he seems scarcely aware, but because she favoured the Duke of Somerset over the Earl of Warwick. Commynes equates faction caused by royal favouritism with civil war and blames the queen for promoting it.⁴⁷ The accusation stands unchallenged to this day. Basin and Commynes wrote after 1471 so an element of hindsight must be allowed for, but they reflected with reasonable accuracy opinions on the conflict in England which were current in Europe. Mathieu d'Escouchy, the French patriot with a love of pageantry, wrote his *Chronique* in the late 1460s;⁴⁸ his account of Margaret's reception in Rouen in 1445 reads like that of an eye-witness. He collected snippets of information about the queen and demonstrates a positive genius for getting them scrambled. Escouchy alone transforms the rumours of the bastardy of Prince Edward of Lancaster into English rumours that Margaret herself was a bastard, and not the child of René of Anjou, and that this turned the people against her.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Basin 1, *Charles VII*, p. 292. *Filiam specie et forma prestantem que tum matura viro foret et plenis nubiliis annis.*

⁴⁷ Philippe de Commynes, *Memoirs: the Reign of Louis XI 1461-1483*, translated with an introduction by Michael Jones, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972, p. 413. cf. *The Memoirs of Philippe de Commynes*, Samuel Kinser (ed.), trans. Isabelle Cazeaux, 2 vols, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1969-1973.

⁴⁸ Mathieu d'Escouchy, *Chronique*, 3 vols, G. du Fresne de Beaucourt (ed.), Paris: Renouard, 1863-64. Beaucourt believed Escouchy began his work in 1465, Introduction, p. xxxix.

⁴⁹ Escouchy 1, pp. 85-88 and pp. 303-304.

The Burgundian chroniclers reflect the Yorkist-Burgundian alliance and George Chastellain is an important source for Margaret's life.⁵⁰ He was the official historian to Philip of Burgundy and may be the only chronicler who 'knew' Margaret personally. He was at the French court in the early 1440s and at the Burgundian court when she visited it in 1463.⁵¹ Chastellain admired the queen's courage but linked it to her pride. He emphasised her poverty to highlight the generosity of Philip of Burgundy in receiving her and bestowing costly presents on her and her pitifully few servants. The duke *entre toutes autres gens se monstroit seigneurieuse pour homme* whilst Margaret, at the age of thirty three, *se monstra pour femme un des beaux personnages du monde représentant dame*. He tells us that everyone knew she had been an enemy to the Duke of Burgundy, but he does not tell us why.⁵² The portion of 'Monstrelet's Chronicle' relevant to Margaret is by an unknown continuator.⁵³ He repeated Chastellain's charge that Margaret was no friend to Burgundy and from its context it appears that Chastellain was his source.⁵⁴ He claimed Margaret was at the Battle of Wakefield, as was the Earl of Warwick, when she was in Scotland and the earl was in London. Even more

⁵⁰ Graeme Small, *George Chastellain and the Shaping of Valois Burgundy*, London : Boydell Press, 1997.

⁵¹ Georges Chastellain, *Oeuvres*, 8 vols, Kervyn de Lettenhove (ed.) 1863-1866. Reprint Geneva: Slatkine, 8 vols in 4, 1971. Tome 8, p. 95 n. 2 for Chastellain's claim to have known Margaret of Anjou. cf. Small, pp. 13-14.

⁵² Chastellain 4, p. 294 and p. 279: *Tout le monde estoit cognu et sçu qu'elle avoit esté mortelle enemie au duc du temps de sa prospérité*.

⁵³ Monstrelet, *The Chronicles of Enguerrand de Monstrelet*, translated by Thomas Johnes, 2 vols, London: Routledge, 1877. Introduction, p. xxxii.

⁵⁴ Monstrelet 2, p. 290.

preposterous is his story that René of Anjou ceded the County of Provence to Louis XI in order to persuade the latter to ransom Margaret from Edward IV after Tewkesbury.⁵⁵ Jehan de Waurin's chronicle is romantic and unreliable;⁵⁶ its hero is the Earl of Warwick. Waurin served three Dukes of Burgundy as a soldier and a diplomat, but was a novelist at heart. He was happy to enhance a bald narrative to make a good story. He was familiar with the London Chronicles, but his work becomes fuller after 1459 and is derived, or so it is claimed, from his own researches.⁵⁷ He had access to the unofficial propaganda of Warwick the Kingmaker and the official propaganda of Edward IV.⁵⁸ When Margaret opposed the former at the Second Battle of St Albans she was *la royne Marguerite, qui estoit soubtille et mallicieuse*. Surprisingly, it is not Henry, Duke of Somerset who is the queen's *mignon* but James Butler, Earl of Wiltshire, whom *elle amoit grandement*.⁵⁹ But then, Wiltshire was known to be handsome although he tended to run from the battlefield,⁶⁰ so he was obviously a fitting *mignon* for Margaret.

⁵⁵ Monstrelet 2, pp. 271 and 425.

⁵⁶ Jehan de Waurin, *Recueil des croniques de anchieune istores de la Grande Bregtaine, a present nomme Engleterre*, William and Edward L.C.P. Hardy (eds), 5 vols, London: Rolls Series, 1864-1891.

⁵⁷ Gransden, *Historical Writing*, pp. 288-293, where she somewhat naively accepts Waurin at his own valuation.

⁵⁸ P.W. Hammond, *The Battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury*, Gloucester: Sutton, 1990, p. 122.

⁵⁹ Waurin 5, pp. 327-328.

⁶⁰ R.L. Storey, *The End of Lancaster*, London: Barrie & Rockcliffe, 1966. Reprint Gloucester: Sutton, 1986, p. 91: 'Wiltshire was to distinguish himself in the Wars of the Roses by running away from every battle in which he took part.'

The correspondence of those inveterate gossips the Milanese Ambassadors at the courts of France and Burgundy is a rich source for speculation.⁶¹ Their information is second hand and usually garbled but they make delightful reading. They reported scandal and immediately disclaimed any belief in it. Among the rumours they gathered with such evident enjoyment was that after the Battle of Towton Margaret had poisoned King Henry (having first persuaded him to abdicate) and intended to 'unite' with the Duke of Somerset. That the king thought Prince Edward of Lancaster must have been conceived by the Holy Ghost and that the prince was so bloodthirsty, at the age of thirteen, that he talked of 'nothing but cutting off heads or making war.'⁶² Far less exciting is the chance survival of some of Margaret's letters from the early years of her reign that illustrate her concept of 'good ladyship.'⁶³ There are also a number of letters from the young queen to Charles VII and although they shed little light on Anglo-French negotiations they establish that she maintained a regular correspondence with the French king, at least until 1449.⁶⁴

The traditional view of Margaret is based on the Tudor historians, Polydore Vergil, Edward Hall, Raphael Holinshed and John Stowe who credit

⁶¹ *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts existing in the Archives and Collections of Milan*, A.B. Hinds (ed.), vol. 1, London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1912.

⁶² *Milanese Papers*, pp. 58 and 117.

⁶³ *Letters of Margaret of Anjou*, Cecil Monro (ed.), London: Camden Society, 1863.

⁶⁴ *Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Wars of the English in France.*, Joseph Stevenson (ed.), 3 vols in 2, London: Rolls Series, 1861-64, vol. 1, pp. 164 and 183. References will be to Stevenson. Escouchy 3, *Pièces Justificatives*, pp. 150, 156, 162, 170. cf. Bertram Wolffe, *Henry VI*, London: Methuen, 1981, pp. 184-185.

her with far greater political participation than is to be found in the contemporary chronicles. Robert Fabyan's *New Chronicles of England and France* was published in 1516,⁶⁵ but as he is believed to be responsible for *The Great Chronicle* he may more properly belong with the fifteenth century chroniclers.⁶⁶ His narrative from 1440 is derived from the lost *Main City Chronicle*, although he consulted others as well.⁶⁷ As Fabyan alone has a good word to say for the queen one can only regret that he did not elaborate on what may have been first-hand knowledge. He describes her as 'that noble and moost bounteous pryncesse quene Margarete, of whom many and vntrue surmyse was imaged and tolde.'⁶⁸ Here, if anywhere, we have a fitting epitaph for Margaret of Anjou.

Fabyan and Caxton's *The Chronicles of England* were sources for Polydore Vergil, who developed the theme of civil war as the worst evil that can befall a kingdom.⁶⁹ His *Anglica Historia* inaugurated the tradition that Margaret involved herself in politics on her arrival in England to oust the Duke of Gloucester from ruling the realm. He contrasts her with that 'holye creature' Henry VI as 'a woman of sufficient forecast, very desirous of

⁶⁵ May McKisak, *Medieval History in the Tudor Age*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 95.

⁶⁶ *Great Chronicle*, Introduction, pp. lxxv-lxxix. cf. Anne F. Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs, 'The Provenance of the Manuscript,' in M.L. Kekewich and others, *The Politics of Fifteenth-Century England: John Vale's Book*, Gloucester: Sutton, 1995, pp. 73-126. References will be to *John Vale's Book*.

⁶⁷ Kingsford, *EHL*, pp. 103-105.

⁶⁸ Robert Fabyan, *New Chronicles of England and France*, Henry Ellis (ed.), London: Rolls Series, 1811, p. 640.

⁶⁹ Denys Hay, *Polydore Vergil*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952.

renowne, full of policie, counsell, comely behaviour and all manly qualities, in whom appeared great witt, great diligence, great heede and carefulness.’ The sting is in the tail: ‘but she was of the kinde of other women, who commonly are much geven and verie readie to mutabilitie and change.’⁷⁰ Margaret thus combined ‘manly’ attributes with the inconstancy of woman, and England got the worst of both worlds. By far the most influential of the Tudors was Edward Hall.⁷¹ His principal source is Polydore Vergil but the interpretation of events is uniquely his own.⁷² If any single source may be said to have damned Margaret and invested her reputation with its sinister overtones, it is that of Hall. Running like a thread through his account is the theme that from the time of her arrival the queen ruled England and nothing was done without her cognisance.⁷³ Through the prism of Hall’s multi-coloured prose the Wars of the Roses was refracted to Raphael Holinshed⁷⁴ and transformed by Shakespeare. John Stowe had a wide acquaintance with the fifteenth century

⁷⁰ Polydore Vergil, *Three Books of Polydore Vergil’s English History Comprising the Reigns of Henry VI, Edward IV and Richard III*, trans. by Henry Ellis, London: Camden Society, 1844, p. 71.

⁷¹ Edward Hall, *Hall’s Chronicle*, Henry Ellis, (ed.), London, 1809.

⁷² Hanham, p. 146, ‘Hall (whose excessive length is due to his determination never to use one word where two will do) reproduces Vergil’s phrasing very closely at times, but at others freely interpolates his own comments.’

⁷³ The phrase ‘the quene which bore the rule,’ or something similar, follows almost every reference to Margaret, pp. 213; 220; 232; 235; 236, etc., and p. 209: ‘And although she joynd her husbände with hir in name, for a countenance, yet she did all, she saied all, and she bare the whole swynge, as the strong oxe doth whe[n] he is yoked to the plough with a pore silly asse.’

⁷⁴ Raphael Holinshed, *Holinshed’s Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, Henry Ellis (ed.), 6 vols, London, 1808. All references are to vol. 3.

chronicles, he collected and used them meticulously,⁷⁵ but when they failed him Stowe fell back on Hall.⁷⁶ The Tudor tradition is perpetuated not only by Shakespeare but also in the poetry of the sixteenth century, in the works of Michael Drayton⁷⁷ and in *The Mirror for Magistrates*.⁷⁸

The contemporary sources for Margaret of Anjou cannot be given equal value and juxtaposed in an indiscriminate fashion. The Tudor historians are often inaccurate but they embody the traditional account of late Lancastrian England. Out of a welter of gossip and propaganda, the verdict of the victor emerges. Margaret appears as a dominant and implacable figure and it is often forgotten that she wielded power because sections of the nobility were prepared to support her, but only in the name of the king or the prince, never in her own. The motivation of the men surrounding her, her friends as well as her enemies, must be examined if a coherent picture of the queen's part in the Wars of the Roses is to be achieved.

⁷⁵ John Stow, *A Survey of London*, Charles Lethbridge Kingsford (ed.), 2 vols, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1908. See Kingsford's Introduction for a life of Stowe and an account of his collection of manuscripts.

⁷⁶ Stowe, *Annales*, p.385: 'This woman excelled all other, as well in beautie and fauour, as in wit and pollicie, and was of stomachke and courage not inferiour to any: her badge was the daisie flower.' The description is Hall; the daisy flower is Stowe.

⁷⁷ *The Works of Michael Drayton*, J. William Hebel (ed.), 5 vols, Oxford: Blackwell, 1961, vol. 2, pp. 230-246, for Suffolk to Queen Margaret and she to him; vol. 3, pp. 73-124, 'The Miseries of Queene Margaret.'

⁷⁸ *The Mirror for Magistrates*, Lily B. Campbell (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938. Although Margaret is not accorded a 'biography' herself she features in those of Suffolk; Warwick; Henry VI; Somerset; and Gloucester.

Chapter 1: England's Queen, 1445-1450

An Angevin Bride

Margaret of Anjou was the younger daughter of René, Duke of Anjou, titular King of Sicily, Naples and Jerusalem and Isabelle, Duchess of Lorraine. René's sister Marie married Charles VII of France, so Margaret was a niece of the French king. Her lineage is the basis for the traditional view of Margaret as a foreign queen whose family ties made her more sympathetic to France than to England and who looked to the French for support against her English opponents in the Wars of the Roses.

Margaret married Henry VI by proxy at Tours in May 1444, when she was fifteen and he was twenty-two.¹ France and England had been at war since the Treaty of Troyes of 1420 when the then French king, Charles VI, recognised Henry V of England, victor at Agincourt, as heir to the French throne. This disinherited the Dauphin Charles, who rejected the treaty. Henry V's ally was Philip, Duke of Burgundy, the most magnificent of the French princes, a king in all but name. Burgundy returned to his French allegiance in 1435, whilst Henry VI was still a minor, and English possessions in France came under increasing pressure thereafter. By 1444 a truce was essential if England was to stave off further defeat. An English embassy, led by William de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, was sent to France to negotiate peace. He

¹ A. Lecoy de la Marche, *Le Roi René*, 2 vols, Paris, 1875. Reprint: Geneva: Slatkine, 1969, vol. 2, pp. 254-257, '*Procès-Verbal de la Célébration des Fiançailles de Henri VI, Roi d'Angleterre, et de Marguerite d'Anjou.*'

concluded a truce for twenty-two months and the marriage of Margaret of Anjou to Henry VI sealed the agreement.

Who selected Margaret as a bride for the English king: the Duke of Orleans,² Henry VI and the English Council, Cardinal Henry Beaufort or the Earl of Suffolk?. French chroniclers assume that the suggestion came from the English.³ English chronicles, except for the three that name Suffolk, give the impression that the embassy was sent by Henry VI in response to French overtures.⁴ The king and his council favoured a French marriage as it offered a chance to end the war, England needed an heir and Henry VI wanted a French bride.⁵ The feud between Cardinal Beaufort and Humphrey Duke of Gloucester dominated English politics throughout the minority of Henry VI and is the basis for a later tradition that a 'peace party' headed by Beaufort, supported by Suffolk and favoured by the king, was formed to counter Gloucester's influence. That the ageing Cardinal, realising his great nephew was too ineffectual to rule unaided, selected Margaret as the perfect foil for

² Tout, 'Margaret of Anjou' in *DNB*, nominates the Duke of Orleans. He is followed by Charles Lethbridge Kingsford, *Prejudice and Promise in Fifteenth Century England*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925, p. 154. Neither offers a reason or a source for their postulation.

³ Berry Herald, *Les Chroniques du roi Charles VII par Gilles Le Bouvier dit Le Heraut Berry*, Henri Courteault et Leonce Celier (eds.), Société de l'Histoire de France, Paris: Klincksieck, 1979, p. 267. References will be to Berry Herald. Jean Chartier, *Chronique de Charles VII*, A. Vallet de Viriville (ed.), 3 vols, Paris: P. Jannett, 1858, vol. 2, p. 45; Monstrelet, 2, p. 139.

⁴ *Brut, Continuation F*, p. 485; *English Chronicle*, p. 61; *Three Chronicles / Short English*, p. 64.

⁵ Desultory negotiations for a Scottish, Spanish, Imperial or Portuguese match had come to nothing, partly because they took place whilst Henry was a minor, but when he achieved his majority there were no further initiatives for any but a French alliance. For these negotiations see John Ferguson, *English Diplomacy, 1422-1461*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972, pp. 48, 53-54 and 114-15. For Scotland, Ranald Nicholson, *Scotland: the Later Middle Ages*, Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1974, pp 291-92.

Henry VI.⁶ Tudor historians followed the Yorkist chronicle tradition that Suffolk thwarted a marriage between Henry VI and a daughter of the Earl of Armagnac and promoted the Angevin match for his own nefarious purposes⁷ but was opposed by the Duke of Gloucester who favoured Armagnac.⁸ Fabyan elaborated the story: Suffolk's interference in Gloucester's plans led to a feud between them that ended in Gloucester's death and Suffolk's murder.⁹ Polydore Vergil added the assertion that Gloucester urged a repudiation of the truce.¹⁰ In fact Gloucester congratulated Suffolk on the Treaty of Tours in parliament just after Margaret's arrival in England.¹¹ The Armagnac proposal came to nothing because Charles VII intervened militarily. Humphrey of Gloucester could hardly have wished his nephew to pursue the project when it was known that French forces had captured the Armagnac family. The whole

⁶ Agnes Strickland, 'Margaret of Anjou,' in *Lives of the Queens of England*, 8 vols, revised ed., London: Colburn, 1851, pp. 172-174 (with many romantic embellishments.) cf. Mary Ann Hookham, *The Life and Times of Margaret of Anjou, Queen of England and France and of her father René 'the Good,' with Memoirs of the House of Anjou*, 2 vols, London: Tinsley, 1872, vol. 1, p. 232 (equally romantic and less discriminating.) Unfortunately Beaufort had never seen Margaret and was probably unaware of her existence. G.L. Harriss, *Cardinal Beaufort*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988, p. 301, confirms that the Cardinal's last visit to Europe was for the conference at Oye in 1439 when Margaret was only nine years old.

⁷ *Brut, Continuation G*, p. 509-510; *Great Chronicle*, p. 176; *London Chronicle*, p. 155. [All from the same main source.]

⁸ Hall, pp. 203-204. Hall is followed virtually verbatim by Holinshed and Stowe. Holinshed 3, p. 206; Stowe, pp. 383-384. cf. Fabyan, p. 616. James Gairdner in his introduction to *The Paston Letters* states that Margaret's marriage was Suffolk's work and that Henry VI accepted it as the best way to achieve peace. *PL* 1, Gairdner, p. 45 cf. James Gairdner, *The Houses of Lancaster and York*, 8th ed. London: Longman, 1881, p. 141.

⁹ Fabyan, p. 616. 'whiche kyndelyd a newe brand of burnyng enuy atwene the lorde protectour & hym, and toke fyre in suche wyse, that it left nat tyll both parties..... were consumyd and slayne' Hall, p. 203 repeats Fabyan. *The Brut, Continuation G*, p. 512 traces Engalnd's woes to the breaking off of the Armagnac marriage, but it does not mention Duke Humphrey.

¹⁰ Vergil, p. 69.

¹¹ *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, 6 vols, J. Strachey (ed.), London, 1767-1777, vol. 5, pp. 73-74.

illusory fabric is not backed by any contemporary evidence.¹² One fantasy led to another, namely Gloucester's alleged antipathy to Margaret of Anjou. James Ramsay asserted that when proposals for the Angevin marriage were discussed in council Gloucester 'sat there in sullen silence; he had not forgiven the rupture of the Armagnac marriage nor was he prepared to accept Margaret.'¹³ Gloucester's biographer goes further, claiming that the Angevin match was unpopular in England from its inception because it was opposed by Duke Humphrey.¹⁴

Margaret was Charles VII's choice as queen and she married Henry VI on French terms because, although it was never acknowledged at the time or subsequently, England was the suppliant. Charles VII wished to prevent Henry VI from contracting an alliance that might aid English military efforts in France but he was not prepared to offer one of his daughters even though Jeanne de Valois was unbetrothed.¹⁵ The French king would not risk another

¹² Samuel E. Dicks, 'Henry VI and the Daughters of Armagnac,' *Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, vol. 15, number 4, Emporia State Research Papers, 1967. Gerald Harriss believes it was Suffolk, not Gloucester, who initially supported the Armagnac marriage in accordance with Henry VI's wishes. Harriss, *Beaufort*, p. 320, n. 37. cf. *Letters of Margaret of Anjou*, pp. 77-79.

¹³ James Ramsay, *Lancaster and York*, 2 vols, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1892, vol. 2, p. 59.

¹⁴ K.H. Vickers, *Humphrey Duke of Gloucester*, London: Constable, 1907, p. 283. A biography in the best Victorian moralist style. A modern study of Humphrey of Gloucester is badly needed. Ramsay and Vickers quote the Tudor historians and misinterpret Stevenson 1, p. 123. Suffolk was belittling Gloucester in front of the French ambassadors, it had nothing to do with the Armagnac or the Angevin marriage.

¹⁵ Basin 1, *Charles VII*, p. 292, claims there were many daughters from which to choose, in fact Jeanne was the only one of marriageable age. But Basin is essentially correct, there was to be no Valois bride for Henry VI.

son of a Valois princess claiming the Valois throne.¹⁶ Charles VII wanted a French marriage and a limited truce, to enable him to organise his domestic and military arrangements to curb the ambitions of the Duke of Burgundy, and prepare for the final defeat of the English in Normandy.¹⁷ He got what he wanted. It is probable the English, given a choice, would have preferred a daughter of Charles VII.

Bertram Wolffe concluded that as Henry VI authorised his embassy to treat for a marriage the identity of the bride was known.¹⁸ John Watts believes that the English Council anticipated advantages from the Angevin alliance as René of Anjou and his brother Charles of Maine were favourites at court.¹⁹ If this was the case then the English were woefully blind to the character of Charles VII.²⁰ The Angevins would be of no help to Henry VI in any struggle, diplomatic or military, between France and England as their influence was predicated upon their usefulness to Charles VII. It was the Angevins who stood to gain from the truce. Cessation of hostilities with England would free French forces for involvement elsewhere and René hoped to recover the

¹⁶ Edward II's queen, Isabella, had borne Edward III of England who started the Hundred Years War, and in 1422 Charles VII's sister Katherine had produced Henry VI who now claimed to be King of France.

¹⁷ Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 483; Wolffe, *Henry VI*, p. 170.

¹⁸ Wolffe, *Henry VI*, p. 174.

¹⁹ John Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p 222, n. 70: 'there was no reason for the English to assume that the French king was much more in control of affairs - most notably the great princes - than his father had been.' Unfortunately the English had been given several demonstrations that the French King was very much in control of affairs in France, not least the failure of the Armagnac marriage.

²⁰ As was the Milanese Ambassador who laid great stress on René's influence. M.G.A. Vale, *Charles VII*, London: Methuen, 1974. p. 97.

Kingdom of Naples and Sicily from Alphonso V of Aragon with military aid from Charles VII.²¹ J.J. Bagley follows the tradition that Suffolk ‘accepted Margaret’ only after meeting her at Tours, ‘confident that Margaret would make Henry a useful wife and England a spirited queen.’²² But Suffolk did not go to ask for Margaret, he went to accept her, or whichever candidate the French chose to offer.²³

Margaret had been contracted to marry the Count of Nevers, Burgundy’s kinsman, an alliance promoted by Duke Philip as part of his continuing efforts to detach the Angevins from their allegiance to Charles VII.²⁴ According to Chastellain, who was in the service of Pierre de Brezé between 1441 and 1444, the match was broken off by Brezé.²⁵ This life-long servant of the Angevins was in high favour at court and ideally placed to please Charles VII by thwarting Burgundian ambitions. It was typical of his fertile mind to suggest that the best way of avoiding any offer of a Valois bride was to substitute an Angevin princess.

²¹ Vale, *Charles VII*, p. 104.

²² J.J. Bagley, *Margaret of Anjou, Queen of England*, London: Herbert Jenkins, 1948, p 36

²³ This is Basin’s opinion. Basin 1, *Charles VII*, p 292. Escouchy 1, p. 84 says the marriage was *par le consentement de Charles, Roy de France*. His editor, Beaucourt, notes that Margaret’s name was left blank in Escouchy’s MS, and filled in by his first editor, Denys Godefroy. Fabyan quotes Robert Gaguin and says that he too left the name of the bride blank, Fabyan p. 617. This does not prove that Suffolk accepted Margaret only after he reached Tours, as tradition has it, but it does establish the possibility.

²⁴ C.A.J. Armstrong, ‘La Politique Matrimoniale des ducs de Bourgogne de la maison de Valois,’ in *England, France and Burgundy in the Fifteenth Century*, London: Hambledon, 1983, pp. 248-249.

²⁵ Chastellain 3, p. 452-453. cf. Small, *Chastelain*, p. 13.

An Expensive Marriage

It is still generally believed that the English accepted Margaret without an adequate dowry because they wanted to seal the truce and René was too poor to endow his daughter as befitted her new estate.²⁶ This deduction is based partly on tradition²⁷ and partly on René's earlier career. He was captured by Burgundian forces at the Battle of Bulgneville in 1431 and, in return for his freedom, Philip of Burgundy tried to entice him to endow Margaret with the Duchy of Bar and marry her to Burgundy's only son the Count of Charolais (or so René claimed) but the offer was refused.²⁸ Whilst still a captive the deaths of his elder brother Louis, Duke of Anjou, and Queen Joanna II of Naples left René heir to the duchy and the kingdom, but he remained a prisoner until 1437 when he undertook to purchase his release for 400,000 gold crowns.²⁹ It was a staggering sum, but it was never paid.³⁰ René left for Italy without settling his debt, and after his defeat by Alphonso of Aragon in 1442 he returned to Anjou still complaining of the atrocious

²⁶ Bagley, pp. 36-37; Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 490.

²⁷ The fifteenth century chronicles comment adversely on Margaret's lack of dowry but none of them attribute it to René's poverty. Nor does Fabyan. The story appears to have originated with Edward Hall and was repeated by Holinshed. Hall, p. 205 'for kyng Reyner her father, for all his long stile, had to short a purse to sende his doughter honourably to the kyng her spouse.' cf. Holinshed 3, p. 204.

²⁸ Lecoy 1, pp. 116-118. This claim is found only in Lecoy, who bases it on a letter from the Milanese Ambassador, Candido Decembrio, dated October 1435, which he quotes in full in a French translation.

²⁹ Lecoy 1, p. 126; Richard Vaughan, *Philip the Good*, London: Longmans, 1970, p. 118.

³⁰ After Agincourt Henry V set the Duke of Bourbon's ransom at 100,000 crowns and that of Charles of Orleans, the premier peer of France, at 260,000 crowns.

rapacity of the Duke of Burgundy³¹ (which did not prevent him from contracting a marriage for Margaret with Burgundy's kinsman the Count of Nevers.) René was no more impoverished than many other peers of France, notably the Duke of Orleans who failed to pay his ransom to the English. Yet there has never been any suggestion that Orleans was so crippled by debt that he was penurious ever afterwards. Had it been necessary René, or King Charles, would have provided Margaret with a suitable dowry. René offered a token sum of 20,000 francs and the islands of Majorca and Minorca, although the English would have to conquer them as they were in the possession of Alphonso of Aragon. Margaret, as Queen of England, renounced any claim to her father's possessions, a stipulation to be confirmed after the consummation of the marriage.³² Henry V had married Katherine of Valois without dowry at the time of the Treaty of Troyes³³ and Margaret was accepted on the same terms, but with no compensation in territory. No agreement on territorial concessions or the question of sovereignty had been reached as Charles VII refused to recognise English rights over Normandy, but this was ignored in the general feeling of relief that peace had been achieved, albeit temporarily, and Suffolk returned to England amidst general rejoicing.

³¹ G. du Fresne de Beaucourt, *Histoire de Charles VII*, 6 vols, Paris: Librairie de la Société Bibliographique, 1881-1875, vol. 4, p. 116; Escouchy 1, p. 44.

³² Beaucourt 3, pp. 276-77.

³³ J.H. Wylie, *The Reign of Henry the Fifth*, 3 vols, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914-1929, vol. 3, p 198.

A refurbishing of royal palaces was put in hand and aids on the occasion of the king's marriage were solicited.³⁴ An account was opened at the Exchequer to provide for Margaret's entourage, which, apart from the daily wages for a sizeable retinue, included the cost of horses and shipping.³⁵ Estimates allowed a total of three months for the journey to Rouen and back, the pageants in London for Margaret's coronation, and the setting up of a permanent establishment once the household in transit was disbanded.³⁶ The account opened in July 1444 and did not close until October 1445 with a considerable cost overrun³⁷ that did not include the jewels given to the queen for her coronation or gifts to the Angevins who accompanied her.³⁸ Suffolk set off for Rouen anticipating that the new queen would be conveyed to Pontoise

³⁴ *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council*, Harris Nicolas (ed.), vol. 6, London: Record Commission, 1837, pp. 31-32. It was typical of Henry VI's insolvency that the clerk of the works had to petition for payment (one thousand pounds) to reimburse his workmen and to purchase materials. His letter is dated 31 January 1445 n.s. *PPC* 6, pp. 322-324. The soliciting of loans was turned into a propaganda exercise. The writs stated that the king expected great benefits from his marriage and that a permanent peace would result.

³⁵ Stevenson I, pp. 443-460. cf. his commentary on it, Preface, p. xxxix. Fifty-six ships were hired for two months at a cost of over a thousand pounds, which seems excessive, but horses and carriages had to be transported as well as personnel. *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, 7 vols, London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1910-191, *CPR 1441-1446*, p. 292. BL, Add. MS 23, 938.

³⁶ Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 315-16. cf. Anne Crawford 'The King's Burden - the Consequences of Royal Marriage in Fifteenth-Century England,' in *Patronage*, Griffiths (ed.), p. 38, where she mis-reads Stevenson. Suffolk did not leave for Rouen until November. Had he gone in July, when the account was opened, the cost over-run would have been far worse.

³⁷ The account closed with a total expenditure of £5,573. 17s. 5d. Just over 300 pounds more than had been collected.

³⁸ *Foedera, Conventiones, Literae. . . .*, Thomas Rymer (ed.), 20 vols, London: J. Tonson, 1704-1735, vol. 11, pp. 82-84. *Issue Rolls of the Exchequer Henry III to Henry VI*, Frederick Devon (ed.), London: Murray, 1837, p. 452. *Benet's Chronicle*, p. 190, makes the disdainful comment that it was as well King Henry sent a large English escort as Margaret's few French servants made but a poor showing.

in accordance with Charles VII's promise.³⁹ And so she was - eventually. In 1445 Margaret left Anjou for Nancy where René was entertaining the royal family and the French nobility⁴⁰ and not until March did she begin her journey to England. Suffolk was kept waiting, with a large and expensive retinue, for three months.⁴¹ Margaret was welcomed to London by the mayor, aldermen and guilds, all splendidly arrayed, and was hailed as the symbol of peace in elaborate, if laboured, verse, a theme taken up by the many (and costly) pageants staged all along her route.⁴² The coronation on 30 May was followed by three days of jousting and feasting.⁴³ It was an enormously expensive propaganda exercise to boost English morale at home and English prestige abroad.

³⁹ *Litterae Cantuarienses: The Letter Book of Christ Church, Canterbury*, J. Brigstocke Sheppard (ed.), vol. 3, London 1889. Reprint New York: Kraus, 1966 pp. 177-182, for a letter from Charles VII to Henry VI. Misdated by the editor to 1443, the date is 29 October 1444.

⁴⁰ Beaucourt 4, p. 91, n.4.

⁴¹ For Margaret's reception in Rouen see *Brut, Continuation F*, p. 488; Escouchy 1, pp. 86-89.

⁴² Gordon Kipling, 'The London Pageants for Margaret of Anjou: a Medieval Script Restored,' *Medieval English Theatre*, 4, (1982), pp. 5-27; Carleton Brown, 'Lydgate's Verses on Queen Margaret's Entry into London,' *Modern Language Review*, 7, (1912), pp. 225-234; Robert Withington, 'Queen Margaret's Entry into London, 1445,' *Modern Philology*, (May 1915), pp. 53-57.

⁴³ *Brut, Continuation F*, pp. 486 and 489; *Brut, Continuation G*, pp. 510-511. [The only one to state that Suffolk had asked parliament for a subsidy to defray the costs.] *English Chronicle*, p. 61; Flenley/Bale, p. 118-120; *Three Chronicles/Short English*, pp. 64-65; *Gregory's Chronicle*, pp. 185-86; *London Chronicle*, pp. 155-156; and *Great Chronicle*, pp. 177-178. cf. Fabyan, pp. 616-618, who repeats the claim that Suffolk asked parliament to cover the costs. But he has doubts about the reputation imputed to the queen, for 'many a wronge & false reporte [was] made of her, which were to longe to rehearse.'

Margaret's Household and Finances

The expense of the Angevin marriage exceeded not only what had been budgeted, but also what the Lancastrian government could afford and it contributed to the financial crisis of 1446-49.⁴⁴ Parliament granted the queen a dowry of 10,000 marks, the sum enjoyed by the Lancastrian queens Joan of Navarre and Katherine of Valois. Much has been made of this, without allowing for the nature of fifteenth century protocol.⁴⁵ Although there were recurrent calls by parliament for Henry VI to curb his household expenses, no one cavilled at the queen's dowry. It was customary and therefore expected; to reduce it would lower English prestige.

Margaret had considerable patronage at her disposal, her dowry made her a rich and influential, woman, in theory at least.⁴⁶ In practice she never disposed of anything like 10,000 marks in the early years of her

⁴⁴ G.L. Harriss, 'Marmaduke Lumley and the Exchequer Crisis of 1446-9,' in *Aspects of Late Medieval Government and Society*, J.G. Rowe (ed.), Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1986, p. 148, where he estimates that the overall costs of bringing Margaret to England amounted to approximately seven thousand pounds, pp. 143-152. Duchy of Lancaster revenues were diverted from the Exchequer, where they had largely funded the Great Wardrobe account. A large sum went towards Margaret's dowry, three thousand pounds per annum in estates and monetary income. But a point of interest is that at the same time an even larger sum, nearly four thousand pounds per annum, was diverted to Henry VI's foundations at Eton and Cambridge. Was it the queen or Henry VI who was really 'the king's (or the country's) burden'?

⁴⁵ Crawford, 'King's Burden,' pp. 44-45.

⁴⁶ Robert Somerville, *The History of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1265-1603*, London: Chancellor and Council of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1953, pp. 208-209. Her dowry was settled on her by Parliament in April 1446. *RP* 5, pp. 118-120. It amounted to 10,000 marks or L6,666. 13s. 4d. It was made up of three thousand pounds from the Duchy of Lancaster, two thousand pounds in land and one thousand in cash. One thousand pounds from the customs at Southampton, L1,008. 15s. 5d from the Duchy of Cornwall, and L1,657. 17s. 11d from the Exchequer.

marriage. In his study of crown lands Bertram Wolffe established that it was not until the parliamentary resumptions of 1450 and 1451 that sufficient land resources became available for the queen to receive an adequate settlement and even then she lost in other ways as first claim on the customs was allocated to the Calais garrison, so she did not receive one thousand pounds from the customs in 1451 and 1452.⁴⁷

Her household was extensive, in addition to personal attendants and domestic servants she maintained her own council and a staff of professionals to administrate her estates and revenues. Experienced officials exerted themselves to protect her interests at the Exchequer, for she was no more successful than others at collecting what was due to her from the over-stretched revenues of the crown.⁴⁸ Margaret took her responsibilities seriously and was more generous and clement than the traditional picture allows. Far from being 'poor and greedy'⁴⁹ she was as liberal as King Henry in her gift giving. A queen was expected to exercise her powers in a positive way, it was

⁴⁷ B.P. Wolffe, *The Royal Demesne in English History*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1971, pp. 56, 107 and 136 n. 40. cf. PRO, Miscellaneous Rolls, E.407/5-9.

⁴⁸ Somerville, p. 399. William Cotton, Margaret's receiver general was the crown's receiver general for Duchy of Lancaster estates. He was MP for Cambridgeshire. He remained in the service of the royal couple until he was killed fighting for King Henry at the First Battle of St Albans in 1455. Josiah Wedgwood, *History of Parliament: Biographies of the Members of the Commons House, 1439-1509*, London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1936, pp. 123-24. Sir Thomas Browne became an Exchequer official in 1447. There is a letter from Margaret to him that the editor of the letters dates to 1447 but is more likely to be 1449. The queen thanks him for looking after her interests, 'in especial, now late, in our assignment in the customs of Southampton.' *Letters of Margaret of Anjou*, p.148. In April 1449 Margaret surrendered tallies at the Exchequer for the sum of L3,657. 17s. 11d in exchange for claims on the Southampton customs. *CPR 1446-1452*, p. 267. In 1448 she had been granted the right to appoint one of the two customs collectors at Southampton. *CPR, 1446-1452*, p. 172. Browne was MP for Kent. In 1460 he was a defender of the Tower against the Yorkist lords, for which he was hanged, drawn and quartered.

⁴⁹ Tout, 'Margaret of Anjou,' in *DNB*.

part of her 'good ladyship.'⁵⁰ There is ample evidence in her surviving letters, which are only a fraction of what she must have written, that Margaret used her influence, albeit not always successfully, on behalf of her servants.⁵¹ The letters provide insights into Margaret's personality and the role of a queen in medieval society. They are not 'officious and interfering,'⁵² but part of her routine correspondence as a dispenser of patronage and protection in the exercise of 'good lordship,' a practice that was universal.⁵³ Margaret's letters show her as willing to espouse the cause of the unfortunate or the destitute, usually at the behest of a relative in her service.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Lois L. Huneycutt, 'Intercession and the High-Medieval Queen,' in *Power of the Weak*, Jennifer Carpenter and Sally-Beth MacLean (eds), Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995, p. 138: 'The queen who had no income of her own and no influence over her husband could have no allies at court and thus little control over her own fate.' cf. Lois L. Huneycutt, 'Medieval Queenship,' *History Today*, 39, (1989), pp. 16-22.

⁵¹ *Letters of Margaret of Anjou*. Of the seventy-four letters from the queen, fifty-one relate to Margaret's intervention on behalf of her tenants or servants, with an additional six concerning marriage. A few others are to be found elsewhere: Historical Manuscripts Commission, 8th Report, pp. 414-15, a letter of May 1449 to Lord Ferrers of Groby that he pay 100 marks to her Leicester tenant William Newby. [Lord Ferrers seems to have given Margaret trouble on another occasion, as she writes to him, *Letters* p. 146, that his bailiff of Stebbings is oppressing her tenants there and will he please put a stop to it.] PRO, S.C. I/44/13, is a letter to John Stafford, Archbishop of Canterbury about an outstanding debt to a York merchant.

⁵² Ramsay 2, p. 141. Bagley, pp. 56-57 agrees with Ramsay and says the letters are of no political importance. This was also Tout's opinion, 'Margaret of Anjou' in *DNB*. cf. Watts, p. 68 n. 289, who finds her terminology 'threatening' at times.

⁵³ Diana Dunn, 'Margaret of Anjou, Queen Consort of Henry VI: a reassessment of her role 1445-1453,' in Rowena Archer (ed.), *Crown, Government and People in the Fifteenth Century*, Gloucester: Sutton, 1995, for an excellent and detailed analysis of the value of these letters. Speaking of Ramsay, Tout and Bagley she says, 'This view fails to appreciate the customary practice of queenship which gave to a queen extensive powers of patronage to dispense as she chose.' p. 117. cf. Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 257-61.

⁵⁴ Dunn, pp. 119-120.

Margaret's 'Household' and 'Jewels' Accounts reinforce the picture gained from her letters.⁵⁵ Neither the king nor the queen seemed to understand that the Lancastrian exchequer could not bear the strain of their largesse. Margaret has been blamed for political decisions that were in fact King Henry's, and it seems safe to infer that just as she accepted her husband's policies so she emulated his generosity.⁵⁶ There is no reason to assume that she was seeking to buy goodwill, she enjoyed being generous and believed, mistakenly, that as queen of England she had the resources to do so. Margaret was not, however, as fiscally irresponsible as the king. Anne Crawford, using the lists of personnel allotted for a queen's household in an ordinance of 1445⁵⁷ arrives at a total of sixty-six *personal servants* and goes on to say that when ordinances for the reduction of the royal household were issued during York's first protectorate, the queen's household was reduced to 120, or almost double what had been set out in the previous ordinance. This is to compare apples with pears as the 1445 ordinance was theoretical (there was no queen in England between 1437 and 1445) and never implemented. A.R. Myers states that the 1454 ordinances were for *officials and servants*, not just servants. In Margaret's account for 1452-1453, 151 persons were paid wages. Anne

⁵⁵ Only one of Margaret's household accounts has survived. A.R. Myers, (ed.), 'The Household of Queen Margaret of Anjou, 1452-1453,' *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 40, (1957-1958), pp. 70-113 and 391-431. A.R. Myers (ed.), 'The Jewels of Queen Margaret of Anjou,' *BJRL*, 42, (1959), pp. 113-131. In addition to the jewels account for 1452-1453, four other jewel accounts for Queen Margaret are extant. Myers, 'Jewels,' p. 113.

⁵⁶ Dunn, pp. 128-29, who also points out that 'it was Henry VI's failure to manage his finances and control expenditure, not an over-indulgent queen, which was the real cause of this weakness of the Lancastrian crown.'

⁵⁷ A.R. Myers, 'Some Household Ordinances of Henry VI,' in *Crown Household and Parliament in the Fifteenth Century*, London: Hambledon, 1985, pp. 231-249. First published *BJRL* 36 and 37 (1954).

Crawford deducts 20 from this figure, for officials who were outside what was technically the household, leaving a total of 131 people. A suggested reduction from 131 to 120 persons for the queen's household, the magnificent number of eleven, hardly indicates that Margaret was vastly exceeding what the Council considered acceptable, nor does it make it 'quite clear that Margaret either would not or could not keep her household down to anywhere near the desired level.'⁵⁸ Margaret, as was customary, also paid a share of the king's household expenses when the two households were combined, as they were for lengthy periods from 1445 to 1454.⁵⁹

After Gloucester's death in 1447, parliament granted his estates to a number of people, among them the queen. Margaret received Gloucester's annuity of 500 marks from the Duchy of Lancaster, bringing her theoretical annual income to 7,000 pounds.⁶⁰ She also received some of his other fees, estates and holdings,⁶¹ and this has been taken as evidence of her eagerness to share in the windfall resulting from his death. But as she was not receiving her full dowry in 1447, the king and parliament may have seen these grants as

⁵⁸ Crawford, p. 49.

⁵⁹ Wolffe, *Royal Demesne*, p. 137, n. 49: 'The accounts of the keeper of the wardrobe for the household show that Queen Margaret's receiver, under her obligation to pay seven pounds a day to the expenses of the king's household, contributed nearly 12,000 pounds in the eight years Michaelmas 1446 to Easter 1454.' Quoting E.101/409/20.

⁶⁰ *RP* 5, p. 133.

⁶¹ *Foedera* 11, p. 155. Of the estates granted in 1447, Margaret still held the Manor of Milton and Marden (Kent), Marlborough with Savernake Forest and Devizes with the forests of Melksham, Pewsham and Chippenham (Wiltshire) at the time of the resumptions in 1450. Wolffe *Royal Demesne* p. 107 n 34. She was also given Humphrey's manor at Greenwich which was not included in the official parliamentary grant.

compensation, although they were in addition to, not in lieu of, her dowry.⁶² The accusation that Margaret was indecently hasty in grabbing all she could ignores customary practice by the crown. When the Duke of Warwick (one of King Henry's few personal friends) died on 12 June 1446, the first grant on his estate was made on 13 June to Henry's foundation of Eton, yet there is no suggestion that the king showed undue greed in disposing of the Beauchamp inheritance. Two days later Queen Margaret was granted the wardship of Warwick's heiress. When John Beaufort, Duke of Somerset died on 27 May 1444 the wardship of his daughter Margaret was granted to Suffolk on 31 May. In both cases grants went to those close to the king but Humphrey's death occurred in suspicious circumstances and the events surrounding it are far better known, causing nineteenth century historians to point accusatory fingers at the queen.⁶³ Another accusation is that of exporting wool free of customs duties. Ramsay claims Margaret 'had obtained unlimited leave to export wool whithersoever she pleased' which he stigmatises as 'jobbery' and inevitably damaging to her reputation.⁶⁴ In 1448 Margaret received the right to export wool in exchange for having surrendered tallies on the Exchequer to the amount of 1500 pounds, until the customs and subsidies 'reach the said sum . . . until she . . . be fully paid.'⁶⁵ Mercantile interests in parliament naturally

⁶² Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 260-261. His succinct analysis emphasises what the queen should have received, and shows how substantial it was. There is less emphasis on what she actually received. He points out that the parliament of 1447 also re-affirmed that Margaret's cash grants should be converted into land whenever suitable properties became available, giving her first call on any such, and as a result she acquired Berkhamsted in 1448.

⁶³ Tout, 'Margaret of Anjou,' in *DNB*; Ramsay 2, p. 77

⁶⁴ Ramsay 2, p. 90; followed by Tout, 'Margaret of Anjou' in *DNB*.

⁶⁵ *CPR 1446-1452*, p. 171. Dated 28 July 1448.

resented this method of allowing the king to redeem obligations that should have been paid by more legitimate means. The Calais staplers campaigned against the practice throughout 1449, and the crown promised to curb these licences, only six exemptions being made. One of them was the queen, who had not, presumably, obtained full repayment.⁶⁶ It was not an unusual method of relieving the chronic indebtedness of the Lancastrian government. In 1458 the Duke of York was allowed to ship 10,000 marks worth of wool free of duty (the value of the queen's whole dowry) in lieu of wages still due to him.⁶⁷

When lands were assigned to Margaret she ensured that they were properly administered. From 1451 returns from the queen's lands began to increase. Receipts from Leicester trebled, and estates in Essex, Hertfordshire and Middlesex became profitable.⁶⁸ Margaret was generous, but not profligate. She understood, as King Henry did not, the importance of not frittering away revenue through inefficient management or thoughtless patronage. In July 1453 the council granted her for life what amounted to complete autonomy over her estates and she was allotted larger quarters for her council's house at Westminster, an indication of the increasing business

⁶⁶ Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 393 and p. 400, n. 94. The others were the Duke of Suffolk, Thomas Browne, Thomas Walsingham, John Penington (all of whom were household men) and the Prior of Bridlington.

⁶⁷ P.A. Johnson, *Duke Richard of York, 1411-1460*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988, p. 184.

⁶⁸ The information on the increase in the queen's revenues is taken from Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 787-88 and p. 836 n. 105 and n. 106, where he quotes PRO, DL 29/212/3261-69 (1445-59); DL 58/1103-7 (1453-59) and PRO, SC6/1093/11-13; DL 9/672/10815, 10818, 10820-22. He acknowledges his indebtedness for these references to J.G. Reid. I have not seen them.

passing through her officials' hands.⁶⁹ In 1457 the council ratified her possession of all lands granted to her by the parliament of 1447 which had agreed to replace the cash assignments of her dowry with land. This arrangement offered a more secure income than the chancy collection of cash appropriations.⁷⁰

The Ceding of Maine and the Loss of Normandy

After Margaret's coronation a French embassy visited England to negotiate peace.⁷¹ The sequence of events is relatively clear; the interpretation is tortuous. Despite the impressive rank of the delegates nothing was accomplished. The sticking point was the English claim to full sovereignty over Normandy and Gascony, which the French flatly refused to consider.⁷² They suggested that Henry VI should visit his 'uncle of France' and continue negotiating on a personal basis. The idea was accepted in principle, but the English had misgivings; they undertook to discuss it further and advise Charles VII of their (and the king's) decision.⁷³ It is obvious from the pressure applied to Henry VI that Charles VII was eager for a personal meeting and towards the end of the year he sent a smaller delegation, with limited aims,

⁶⁹ *CPR 1452-1461*, pp. 114-116; and *Calendar of the Fine Rolls 19, Henry VI, 1452-1461*, London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1940, p. 35.

⁷⁰ *CPR 1452-1461*, pp. 340-341.

⁷¹ Stevenson 1, pp. 87-148 for a journal of the embassy kept by the French.

⁷² Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 492.

⁷³ Stevenson 1, pp. 142-147.

that succeeded where the more broadly based embassy failed.⁷⁴ The price for an extension of the truce was now a promise that a meeting would take place, and two public treaties to this effect were negotiated;⁷⁵ the other part of the mission was not included in either treaty. Charles VII furnished his envoys with letters of procuracy from René of Anjou,⁷⁶ in which René expressed his firm hope that Henry VI would cede Maine to him. In return, René offered a twenty-year truce, with the Angevins - not with France. Maine had not been on the agenda of the first embassy.⁷⁷ The idea originated with the opportunistic René, who now claimed that Margaret's marriage was made in the expectation that it would facilitate the return of Maine, the rightful patrimony of the House of Anjou of which Henry VI was a member by marriage. The importance of close family ties had been a feature of the first embassy because the wily Charles VII wanted Henry VI to see himself as a Valois (as indeed he was) and an Angevin, making it impious to resume war against his own kin. The ambassadors carried a letter to Margaret from

⁷⁴ Samuel E. Dicks, 'The Question of Peace: Anglo-French Diplomacy, 1439-1449,' PhD Thesis in Medieval History, University of Oklahoma, 1966, pp. 157-168.

⁷⁵ *Foedera*, 11, pp 111-115. One extended the truce to April 1447, the other agreed to a meeting between the kings before November 1446.

⁷⁶ Lecoy 2, pp. 259-260, prints the procuracy and René's covering letter in full.

⁷⁷ The claim that Henry VI made a verbal promise in July to surrender Maine by 1 October 1445 is based on an undated document printed in Beaucourt 4, pp. 284-5, n. 1: *Durant la <grande ambassade> une promesse fut faite, < de bouche, > au sire de Précigny < touchant la delivrance dessus dicte dedans le premier jour d'octobre l'an mil CCCC XLV. >* The rest of the note makes it clear that it could apply (if true, which is doubtful) to 1446 but not to 1445. In Escouchy, 3, *Pièces Justicatives*, pp. 193-194, there is a document dating to 1448, when the French were thoroughly exasperated by English procrastination over Maine. It refers to Henry VI having made promises to cede Maine *tant de bouche que par lettres signées*, as indeed he had by 1448, but not in July 1445 at the time of the great embassy. From these sources Bertram Wolffe extrapolates that Henry VI made the promise in 1445, although Henry is not named in the footnote. Wolffe *Henry VI*, pp. 172 and 188. cf. Bagley, p.48, who also refers to Henry VI's promise.

Charles VII, and in her reply the emphasis is on peace and kinship, not on Maine, although she undertook to urge Henry to do as Charles asked.⁷⁸ Her letter demonstrates her political ignorance, she was doing her duty as she saw it to foster friendship between her husband and her family. There can be no question that Margaret used her influence to further French demands for the ceding of Maine, and for a meeting between the kings, on the direct instructions of the King of France. In light of this letter, the tradition that Maine was secretly included in the Angevin marriage settlement was amended to make Margaret the direct, if unwitting, cause of her husband's rash promise to cede it unilaterally by April 1446.⁷⁹ Henry's letter gave as his reasons that he accepted Charles VII's assurance that this was the best way to achieve peace and because the queen had requested it.⁸⁰

Maine was not Normandy nor was it Anjou. It had been partially occupied by the English in 1424 so it was not one of Henry V's conquests. Nor did it have the psychological importance attached to the Duchy of Normandy that Henry V claimed as his rightful inheritance irrespective of the French crown, and which was the symbol of English victories. English sources describe Anjou and Maine as one entity,⁸¹ but the English never

⁷⁸ Stevenson 1, pp. 163-167. Margaret's letter is dated 17 December 1445.

⁷⁹ E.F. Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century*, 'The Oxford History of England,' Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 479; Kingsford, *Prejudice*, p. 162; J.R. Lander, *Government and Community, 1450-1509*, London: Edward Arnold, 1980, pp. 182-83; C.T. Allmand, *Lancastrian Normandy, 1415-1450*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 46; Tout, 'Margaret of Anjou,' in *DNB*.

⁸⁰ Stevenson 2, pp. 639-643. Henry's letter is dated 22 December 1445.

⁸¹ *Brut*, *Continuation G*, pp. 510 and 511; *Great Chronicle*, p. 177; *London Chronicle*, p. 155; Fabyan, p. 616; Hall, 204.

conquered Anjou, it remained in Duke René's hands,⁸² an inconvenient fact the English chose to ignore.⁸³ Maine was part of the Angevin inheritance and by linking it with Anjou the calumny that René had no land to call his own came to be accepted as fact.⁸⁴ Margaret was raised in Anjou by the Duchess Yolande, whose life-long political aim was the expulsion of the English from French soil.⁸⁵ To Margaret it was axiomatic that Maine should return to her family, and she perceived no political pitfalls in encouraging Henry VI to restore it. As her letters show, she was performing the traditional role of a queen, that of peacemaker, the one with which she had been entrusted at the time of her marriage.

If, as some historians claim, Suffolk promised at Tours that Maine would be ceded,⁸⁶ Margaret's role was irrelevant, because the decision had been made. Suffolk might have sacrificed Maine had it been necessary but there is no evidence that this was required of him. Suffolk maintained at the

⁸² E. Carlton Williams, *My Lord of Bedford*, London: Longmans, 1963, p. 127, suggests that John Duke of Bedford took the title Duke of Anjou 'rather as a counterstroke aimed at Queen Yolande . . . than because the territories lay within his grasp.' Yolande of Aragon, Duchess of Anjou, was Margaret's grandmother.

⁸³ The Duke of York referred to Anjou and Maine as one when he demanded justice against the 'traitors' who were responsible for the loss of Normandy. *John Vales Book*, p. 187-188; *PL* 1, Gairdner, p. 107.

⁸⁴ John Lingard, *The History of England from the First Invasion by the Romans to the Accession of William and Mary in 1688*. 10 vols, London: Nimmo & Bain, 1883, vol. 4, p. 78. This popular history is a typical example. cf. *PL* 1, Gairdner, pp. 45-46.

⁸⁵ Jehanne d'Orliac, *Yolande d'Anjou: la reine des quatre royaumes*, Paris: Plon, 1933.

⁸⁶ Harriss, *Beaufort*, pp. 345-346; Ramsay 2, p. 63. John Watts goes further: during the visit of the great French embassy, the majority of the lords were aware of this intention and Henry's letter was an expression of a collective policy, albeit one it was prudent to keep secret. Watts, p. 225 and n. 86.

time and ever afterwards that he gave no undertakings to the French and there is no reason to disbelieve him.⁸⁷ There is every reason to think that Suffolk hoped to negotiate for peace from a position of strength to secure Normandy, for it was on this that his credibility depended.⁸⁸ It is not true that all the sources agree that Suffolk promised to cede Maine before Margaret's marriage.⁸⁹ It is found in only three London chronicles⁹⁰ and in Thomas Gascoigne. With hindsight the French changed their position on the date when the promise was first made and their chroniclers followed suit.⁹¹ From Gascoigne's contradictory account historians have inferred an elaborate explanation for the delay in bringing Margaret to England and for the ceding of Maine. According to Gascoigne Suffolk was forced to make the promise because Charles VII refused to allow Margaret to travel to England unless he received such assurances. It is generally assumed that this agreement was

⁸⁷ Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 487. cf. K.B. MacFarlane, 'The Lancastrian Kings,' in *Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 8: The Close of the Middle Ages, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936, p. 402-403. MacFarlane thinks Henry made his promise over Maine at Margaret's request.

⁸⁸ C.L. Kingsford, 'The Policy and Fall of Suffolk,' in *Prejudice*, pp. 146-176.

⁸⁹ Watts, p. 223 n. 75: 'Most of the chroniclers were convinced that the promise to cede Maine was made as part of the marriage negotiations.' *Three Chronicles/Brief Latin*, p. 166 should not have been included, its reference is to the loss of Maine not to when it was ceded. Nor should Basin, *Charles VII*, 1, p. 59. The chronicler correctly says that Charles VII refused to prolong the truce (in 1448) unless the English lived up to the promise to surrender Maine. The ceding of Maine at Tours occurs in a footnote by Basin's editor, quoting Berry Herald - not the same thing at all.

⁹⁰ *Brut Continuation G*, pp. 510 and 511; *Great Chronicle*, p. 177; *London Chronicle*, p. 155. The other chronicles do not make this claim. *Benet's Chronicle*, p. 190, even says that there were no results from the Tours meeting.

⁹¹ Berry Herald, p. 281; Escouchy 1, p. 128. For a balanced account of the French position see Beaucourt 4, 'L'Occupation du Mans,' pp. 284-307. cf. A. Joubert 'Le Mariage de Henry VI et Marguerite d'Anjou,' *Revue historique et archæologique du Maine*, 13, (1883). A biased article, derived for the most part, and often verbatim, from A. Vallet de Virivelle, *Histoire de Charles VII roi de France et de son époque*, 3 vols, Paris: Renouard, 1862-1865. It recapitulates the traditional French version of events.

reached at Nancy (although neither Gascoigne nor the chronicles say so) because the explanation for the long delay in Margaret's arrival is that Suffolk had to travel to Nancy to fetch her, whereas in fact he awaited Margaret in Rouen.⁹² Gascoigne also claimed that Margaret asked Henry to cede Maine at Suffolk's behest as the earl had promised it to her father in return for René's undertaking to work for peace.⁹³ Tortuous indeed!

Margaret encouraged Henry VI to meet with Charles VII. She would naturally have been delighted to visit her home as queen of England, and a letter to Charles VII in 1446 confirms that she hoped to do so.⁹⁴ She also promised to further whatever peace proposals resulted from the meeting. She did not see the dangers, but the English Council did. John Watts' opinion that the visit had the backing of the lords is difficult to accept as they declared in parliament that the decision was Henry's wish and not their advice.⁹⁵ It is true that they were not protesting against peace, but they *were* protesting against the king's idea of how to achieve it. The thought of their gullible, unworldly king, totally committed to peace, face to face with experienced French diplomats and flattered by his 'uncle of France' must have given them nightmares. If this is what Watts means by 'they did not wish to take

⁹² B.M. Cron, 'The Duke of Suffolk, the Angevin Marriage and the ceding of Maine, 1445,' *Journal of Medieval History*, 20, (1994), pp. 77-99.

⁹³ Gascoigne, pp. 190 and 221.

⁹⁴ Stevenson 1, pp. 183-186.

⁹⁵ Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 252; *RP* 5, p. 102.

responsibility for it⁹⁶ then he is right, and so were they. Margaret's influence did not counter the lords' objections to their sovereign's visit, nor did it result in the ceding of Maine. Le Mans surrendered in March 1448 because French forces laid siege to it and within a year the two countries were once again at war. It took Charles VII less time to conquer Normandy than to recover Maine. In England there was neither the will nor the money to prosecute a war, and both lacks were, ultimately, the fault of Henry VI. Whatever else Henry was prepared to do he would never fight in France. Whether from Christian piety or from a psychological block he was constitutionally incapable of military action and without his personal involvement the loss of France was inevitable.

The question of Maine raises the more far-reaching question of Margaret's influence on Henry VI. There is no doubt that the king looked forward to Margaret's arrival, and was pleased with his bride. How predisposed he was to ask, or to take, her advice, is a different matter. The interpretation of Henry's character is crucial to assessing their political relationship, and is impossible to verify.⁹⁷ I would suggest that Margaret was either very lucky or very shrewd, in that she realised almost at once the best way to handle Henry VI. The king was accustomed to being told what to do, and seems not to have resented it, as it saved him from facing difficult

⁹⁶ Watts, p. 224 and n. 78.

⁹⁷ Ralph Griffiths depicts Henry as a well-meaning man of limited abilities for whom the burden of kingship proved too much. Bertram Wolffe's Henry is weak willed, stubborn and meddling, a liability to the government. To John Watts Henry is a non-entity, a sentient vegetable in whose name the lords strove in vain to rule.

decisions. As Ralph Griffiths points out, Henry was dominated from birth by Cardinal Beaufort or Humphrey of Gloucester and habituated to depending on others.⁹⁸ But Henry objected strongly to those who tried to make him follow a course of action he did not wish to take. His favourite ministers, the dukes of Suffolk and Somerset, were dependent on the crown for the resources to maintain their dukedoms. They advised Henry (told him what to do) but always in the light of his known preferences, of which, it can be argued, they took full advantage. The Duke of Gloucester frequently and forcefully opposed Henry's predilection for peace, and was consequently shunned by his nephew. Richard of York, too, as king's lieutenant, was a tacit, if unintentional, reproach to the king. The military position being what it was, Henry VI should have been gone to France in person. From the start of Henry's personal rule York was not invited to join the English Council and was for many years kept at arm's length from the court.⁹⁹ Margaret alone urged Henry to make peace regardless of the consequences because she did not understand what those consequences would be. She may never have understood how disastrous this policy was, as the odium of Maine's surrender and defeat in Normandy fell on Suffolk and Somerset.¹⁰⁰ We do not know what Margaret thought of the loss of Normandy. She was brought up to believe that the English had no right to it, and it is unlikely that becoming queen of England changed her mind. As Henry VI showed no inclination to

⁹⁸ Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 231.

⁹⁹ Wolffe, *Henry VI*, p. 153.

¹⁰⁰ Ramsay 2, p. 63, indulges in hindsight: 'as for the hapless young queen, it foredoomed her career to absolute failure and singled her out from the first as a mark of national hatred.'

prosecute the war it seems improbable that Margaret would have urged him to more positive action.¹⁰¹ In the first years of her marriage Margaret never exhorted Henry to pursue policies not in accordance with his wishes. She played the traditional role of the queen as dutiful wife, and the question yet to be examined is how far she departed from this role to assume a political stance forced on her by Henry's ineptitude.

Margaret and Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester

The legend of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester is inextricably entwined with Margaret of Anjou. The manner and timing of his death created the image of 'the good duke,' depicting him as a defender of England's honour, one who would never have permitted the ceding of Maine or loss of Normandy. Gloucester favoured prosecuting the war as long as there was a chance that English arms could maintain what his brother had won. But did he continue to hold this belief after 1440 when he made his last public protest at the peace initiatives of Cardinal Beaufort? In 1441 his duchess was convicted of witchcraft and plotting the king's death and from then on Humphrey was a spent force.¹⁰² Suffolk and the majority of the lords saw him as expendable.¹⁰³ The ceding of Maine has cast its long shadow over the

¹⁰¹ Beaucourt 4, pp. 456-57. The queen was still receiving correspondence from Charles VII in the summer of 1449 just before he formally declared war. But so was Henry VI. The letter to Margaret is the usual request that she will support Charles' position, but does not say what that position is. Two letters, both dated 3 June 1449, one to Henry VI the other to Margaret.

¹⁰² Harriss, *Beaufort*, pp. 322-23. cf. Ralph .A. Griffiths, 'The Trial of Eleanor Cobham: an episode in the fall of Duke Humphrey of Gloucester,' *BJRL*, 51, (1968-69), pp. 381-399.

¹⁰³ Watts, p. 230.

political scene and been made the explanation for Gloucester's arrest and death. It has been assumed that he was incapable of assessing political realities, hence the unsubstantiated claim that he opposed the Angevin marriage, the symbol of peace. *The Brut* records that Gloucester welcomed Margaret to London, which should be evidence that he approved of the new queen. Unfortunately it is unsubstantiated, and may be a later addition to enhance the Yorkist image of Humphrey as a loyal subject, who was chivalrously prepared to welcome Margaret despite his former opposition.¹⁰⁴

Parliament met at Bury St Edmunds in 1447. It opened on 10 February, Gloucester arrived on the 18th and on the 23rd he was dead. He had been arrested and confined to his lodging on a vague charge of treason and he died of a stroke or heart attack brought on by shock. His sudden death inevitably resulted in whispers of foul play, although no such accusations were made at the time. Suffolk had intended to accuse the duke of treason and so strip him of his considerable estates,¹⁰⁵ and it is indisputable that Henry VI knew what was to be done, even if the true motivation was kept from him.¹⁰⁶ Gloucester was something of a political liability during Henry's minority but for all his faults he would never have countenanced rebellion. Had he lived the Duke of

¹⁰⁴ *Brut, Continuation G*, p. 510. cf. *Great Chronicle*, p. 178; *London Chronicle*, p. 156. However *Brut, Continuation F* does not record Gloucester's presence, nor do the other chronicles which describe her reception.

¹⁰⁵ In support of this argument, the Duchess of Gloucester, for whom Humphrey had made adequate provision, was refused all rights of inheritance during the last day of the parliament. Wolffe, *Royal Demesne*, pp. 98-99, n. 6 and Griffiths *Henry VI*, p. 540, n. 97.

¹⁰⁶ Whethamstede 1, p 179. Henry's mind was poisoned against the innocent, loyal and popular Duke Humphrey by certain servants of Satan and supporters of iniquity: *Sathanae satellites et iniquitatis complices*.

York would not have dared to claim the throne and Margaret would not have had to champion the House of Lancaster. It is a tribute to the Yorkist legend that Agnes Strickland could claim that Gloucester, to counter the queen's influence, showed 'an alarming inclination' to form a political alliance with the Duke of York.¹⁰⁷ It became an article of Yorkist faith that Humphrey had been murdered, and the charge is included in the 1460 manifesto of the Yorkist lords, expanded to claim that ever since Gloucester's murder there had been a conspiracy to murder York as well.¹⁰⁸ Margaret was not implicated in the 'murder' until the sixteenth century.¹⁰⁹ Polydore Vergil perpetuated the Yorkist image of the 'good duke' and assumed that Gloucester was in control of the government when Margaret came to England. Vergil claims the queen was too proud to tolerate the duke's undermining of her husband's authority and she formed a faction to oust him. But Vergil, followed by Hall and Holinshed, stops short of saying she was part of the conspiracy to murder.¹¹⁰ Historians who accept Margaret's political influence acquit her, albeit reluctantly, of complicity in Gloucester's death.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Strickland, pp. 188-89.

¹⁰⁸ *English Chronicle*, p. 88.

¹⁰⁹ Margaret had given Gloucester a New Year's gift, which may indicate her ignorance of Suffolk's intentions. This seems probable, but such gifts were customary practice, and she would have been expected to give an appropriate one to the king's uncle. PRO E.101/409/17 The gift was a gold cup embellished with amethysts valued at L56. 13s. 4d.

¹¹⁰ Vergil, pp. 71-73; Hall, p. 109; Holinshed, p. 211; Stowe p. 386. All record that Gloucester died, not that he was murdered; and Fabyan p. 619, says 'of whose myrdre dyuerse reports are made, which I passe over.'

¹¹¹ Ramsay 2, p. 77, 'whatever part Margaret may have taken in the proceedings against Gloucester.' Vickers, p. 288, 'Together they [Margaret and Suffolk] scanned the political horizon, and only the one obstacle could they see to the success of their plans, and that obstacle was Duke Humphrey.' Tout in *DNB* acquits her, but insists that she considered Gloucester an enemy.

Margaret and the Duke of Suffolk

William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk dominated the court when Margaret came to England, protecting Henry VI from the irksome demands that the exercise of government imposed.¹¹² Power and patronage were channelled into the hands of Suffolk's affinity within the royal household and, to a lesser extent, in local government. Counciliar government declined and government by the household came into being although it was increasingly resented as favouring the few who could manipulate it. Chastellain describes Suffolk as the real ruler of France and England, holding both kings in the hollow of his hand.¹¹³ Suffolk's tragedy is summed up by the chronicler's hyperbole. Even when he became the most hated man in England Suffolk deluded himself that as long as he retained the king's confidence his position was secure. But dissatisfaction at home was exacerbated by the loss of Normandy and Suffolk was blamed as the architect of accumulating disasters. He was impeached by the Commons in the parliament of February 1450 where it was alleged he had manipulated and deceived the king in order to enrich himself.¹¹⁴ But the most serious allegation was that of treason, of betraying England to France for personal gain. Suffolk's defence, that everything he had done was with King Henry's approval, availed him nothing, for the Commons

¹¹² William de la Pole was Earl of Suffolk until Henry VI created him Marquess in 1445; in 1448 he was raised to a dukedom. For Suffolk see Lawrence James, 'The Career and Political Influence of William de la Pole, first Duke of Suffolk, 1437-1450' B.Litt. Thesis in Modern History, Oxford, 1979.

¹¹³ Chastellain 7, p. 88.

¹¹⁴ *RP* 5, 177-183.

were out for his blood. The king saved him, taking the jurisdiction of the case into his own hands; this was not a popular move but Henry stood by his favourite and Suffolk was banished. He was captured at sea on his way to Calais and beheaded as a traitor by sailors who threw his body on Dover Sands.¹¹⁵

The tradition that Suffolk was Margaret's favourite, that together they ruled England is discredited, although it remains in standard textbooks.¹¹⁶ Suffolk's regime was probably not as black as it has been painted, but, be that as it may, it was Henry VI who endorsed it from first to last.¹¹⁷ It is the Tudor tradition that links Suffolk and Margaret in the rule of the realm. Polydore Vergil records that when Suffolk was impeached Margaret urged Henry to send him to the Tower for safe-keeping. The sentence of banishment was because she hoped that eventually Suffolk would be recalled as she 'could not well spare him out of her sight.'¹¹⁸ According to Edward Hall the queen feared for the duke and for herself so she caused parliament to be moved to Leicester where opposition would be easier to repress.¹¹⁹ Interestingly, Hall

¹¹⁵ Roger Virgoe, 'The Death of William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk,' *BJRL* 47, (1964-65), pp. 489-502. Virgoe notes, p. 492 n. 5, that one of Suffolk's servants on the fatal voyage may have been the queen's avener, Jacques Blondell.

¹¹⁶ Jacob, p. 481, and p. 441, where he refers anachronistically to Suffolk's government as the period in which 'the Lancastrian party was being formed and Suffolk and Queen Margaret of Anjou were in power.'

¹¹⁷ I follow Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 585 and 678. This view is challenged by Watts, p. 251, whose theory does not allow Henry VI to do anything at any time for any reason whatsoever.

¹¹⁸ Vergil, p. 83. That Suffolk was banished at the queen's instigation is repeated by Bagley, p. 64.

¹¹⁹ Hall p. 217. Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 683, notes that Leicester was 'one of the queen's towns' (it formed part of her dowry.)

picked up the false information that Suffolk was acquitted and released, a rumour reported in the *Paston Letters*.¹²⁰

Margaret was a close friend of Suffolk and of his wife Alice Chaucer, the grand-daughter of the poet, but the friendship was as much literary as it was political.¹²¹ Margaret came from the highly sophisticated court of Anjou and her introduction to English life may have been a culture shock.¹²² Henry VI had little interest in literature outside theology, and Humphrey of Gloucester, with whom Margaret might have found common intellectual interests, was not welcome at court. Suffolk was something of a poet¹²³ and his wife was a bibliophile.¹²⁴ Alice was in attendance on the queen in

¹²⁰ Hall, p. 219. *PL* 1, Davis, p. 237: 'the Duke of Suffolk is pardonyd . . . and is ryt3 wel at ese and mery and is in the Kyngs gode grace and in the gode conseyt of all the Lords, as well as ever he was.' It is tempting to read a little extra into this report, namely that had Suffolk been known as a favourite of the queen, Margaret Paston (or her informant) might have added "and the queen's good grace." cf. Stowe, p. 387.

¹²¹ Margaret's interest in books was well known. The Earl of Shrewsbury's wedding gift to her was a magnificently illustrated work, although it must be said that the gift was politically motivated, and books were as valuable as jewels. See Michel-Andre Bossy, 'Arms and the Bride: Christine de Pizan's Military Treatise as a wedding gift to Margaret of Anjou,' in *Christine de Pizan and the Categories of Difference*, Marilyn Desmond (ed.), Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1998.

¹²² Dunn, 'Margaret of Anjou,' pp. 113-114. Margaret did not, however, request Chastellain to compose *Le Temple de Boccace* for her; this was done at the suggestion of Agnes de Bourbon, for the queen's 'consolation.' Small, *Chastelain*, p. 122.

¹²³ Henry Noble MacCracken, 'An English Friend of Charles of Orleans,' *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 26, (1911), pp. 142-180. MacCracken postulates that references to the daisy (or marguerite) in the poem he numbers 19 pointed to Queen Margaret. But the poet is avowedly echoing Chaucer.

¹²⁴ Richard Firth Green, *Poets and Prince Pleasers*, Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1980, p. 96, quotes a charming extract from one of Alice's letters showing concern for her books. She asks a servant at Ewelme 'yef any bookes be in myther [my nether?]closette by grounde, that ye woll pt them in some other place for takyng of harme.' For Alice Chaucer see Carol A. Metcalfe, 'Alice Chaucer, Duchess of Suffolk, c 1404-1475,' BA dissertation in History, University of Keele, 1970.

1446/47,¹²⁵ although she did not form part of Margaret's permanent household. King Henry spent a week at Ewelme, the Suffolks' home in Oxfordshire, in the summer of 1447 (presumably Queen Margaret was with him) and they broke their journey from the West Country in the following year by spending a night at Ewelme.¹²⁶ Margaret was generous to her friends, but especially so to the Suffolks.¹²⁷ Of a semi-political nature was her sale to Suffolk of the valuable wardship of Margaret Beauchamp, heiress to Henry, Duke of Warwick, who died in June 1446.¹²⁸ Suffolk's interest in Margaret Beauchamp was the prospect of marrying her to his son John, whereas Queen Margaret had no such concern, but she was undoubtedly in need of money as the dowry settled on her by parliament had yet to materialise. The few examples of Margaret's intervention in patronage where Suffolk's interests were also concerned may be coincidental, because the royal households shared personnel and some of the appointments were Suffolk's nominees. In August 1446 Henry VI pardoned Sir James Fiennes' son-in-law William Crowmer for allowing prisoners to escape from Canterbury jail. Fiennes was the queen's

¹²⁵ She received two hundred pounds in January, PRO Exchequer, Writs and Warrants for Issue, [E.404/63/14]. Watts, p. 294, n. 144 infers a political connotation. There is another reference, possibly July 1447, PRO Exchequer, Issue rolls, [E.403/767/m 11.]

¹²⁶ Wolffe, *Henry VI*, pp 366-367.

¹²⁷ For her first New Year's Day, 1446, she gave Alice an armet inlaid with a diamond, and Alice's son, the child John, an armet with three diamonds. PRO, Kings Remembrancer; various accounts, [E.101/409/14] On 1 January 1447 she gave William and Alice six silver chargers to the value of L90, [E.101/409/17] and in 1449 Suffolk received a gold cup worth L38.13s. 9d and Alice a brooch valued at L47.12s. 6d. [E.101/410/2]

¹²⁸ The queen was granted two hundred pounds per annum for the upkeep of the child, but she sold the wardship to Suffolk in the following November for an unknown sum. *CPR 1446-1452*, pp. 436 and 450.

chamberlain, and a close associate of Suffolk.¹²⁹ Walter Lyhert, the queen's confessor,¹³⁰ was created bishop of Norwich in 1446 in preference to Henry's VI's candidate John Stanbury,¹³¹ but Lyhert too was associated with Suffolk and it was probably at the minister's urging that the appointment was made. Those who wish to read into these examples a more sinister connotation can argue that it was a combination of Margaret and Suffolk against the king that ensured Lyhert's promotion.

Margaret did not govern the country in collusion with Suffolk, but her first experience of English politics was during Suffolk's regime. She learned to depend, as did Henry VI, on the royal household for advice and support rather than looking to a council of the lords. And she must have been shocked at the savagery of the attack on Suffolk, even if she was aware of his unpopularity. The end of Suffolk's regime also taught her that London was a politically unstable environment, unpredictable and violent, and its populace was not to be trusted. Both lessons would have ramifications in the years to

¹²⁹ James, thesis, p. 118. He quotes Henry's letter to the Chancellor dated 26 August 1446. Crowmer was 'a persoune we have in tendernesse and chierte and is also, as ye knowe, wel toward oure right trusty and welbeloved knight . . . [Fiennes] Chamberlain unto oure mooste Dere & bestbeloved wif the Quene.'

¹³⁰ The source for this is Gascoigne, p. 40, which could do with corroboration, as Lyhert is one of the clerics whom Gascoigne attacked. No one seems quite certain when Lyhert filled the position of queen's confessor, possibly only briefly on the journey to England. For Lyhert see A.B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500*, 3 vols, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959-59, vol. 2, pp. 1187-88.

¹³¹ R.J. Knecht, 'The Episcopate and the Wars of the Roses,' *University of Birmingham Historical Journal*, 6, (1957-58), pp. 108-131, p.110 for Stanbury. Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 371, n. 85 suggests the story of Stanbury's candidature may be of Tudor origin; and p. 348, 'One need not seek for private tensions between the king and the queen in this matter.'

come when necessity thrust political activity and political calculations upon the queen.

It is difficult to gauge Margaret's popularity in these early years as her association with Suffolk influenced later perceptions of her. Public condemnation of Suffolk cannot be doubted,¹³² but its impact on the queen is not easy to assess. Direct criticism of the queen was treason, but the virulent attacks on Suffolk in anonymous letter bills and ballads might have contained some hint had Margaret been identified with Suffolk in public opinion. A few members of her household were indicted in the witch-hunt after Suffolk's death,¹³³ but they were of Suffolk's affinity and attacked because of this rather than because they served the queen.¹³⁴ Finally, the parliament that bayed for Suffolk's blood and forced economic reforms on King Henry did not censure the queen. In the resumptions of 1451 she was exempted by parliament of its own volition. The resumptions petitions were parliament's attempt to punish those believed to have exploited the king and, given the

¹³² He was execrated in ballads circulating at the time. *Historical Poems of the 14th and 15th Centuries*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1959, pp. 187-88. cf. V.J. Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century*, London: Blandford, 1971, pp. 157-169. C.L. Kingsford, *English History in Contemporary Poetry*, London: Historical Association Pamphlet, 1913, pp. 33-36.

¹³³ *A Collection of Political Poems and Songs Relating to English History from the Accession of Edward III to the Reign of Henry VIII*, Thomas Wright (ed.), 2 vols, London: Rolls Series 14, 1859-1861, p. 225-6. 'On Bishop Boothe,' is an attack on William Booth who was Margaret's Chancellor before being created Bishop of Litchfield and Coventry in 1447. The bishop and Suffolk are both castigated but Booth's link to the queen is not mentioned.

¹³⁴ Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 640.

straitened financial circumstances, it could have requested that lands granted to the queen in 1447 be returned to the crown, but it did not.¹³⁵

The queen was of little interest to the Paston family (another indication that she was not politically active) until she visited Norwich in April 1453. Margaret wished to meet Elizabeth Clere, a relation of Edmund Clere, one of her squires. Margaret Paston, Elizabeth's cousin, reported that the queen thought it high time Elizabeth remarried.¹³⁶ Margaret Paston's letter serves to strengthen the later personification of the queen as a born match-maker, but arranging marriages was enjoined by 'good ladyship.' Margaret Paston's letter does not suggest that the queen was unpopular, except, perhaps, that Elizabeth 'durst not dysabey here commandment.' But this may be a touch of sour grapes, it was Elizabeth for whom the queen sent, not Margaret Paston. The latter had to borrow 'a device' from Elizabeth to ornament her person before she felt sufficiently well-dressed to join the company around the queen.

The visit to Norwich was a happy one for Margaret. It was occasioned by a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham to give thanks for her long-awaited pregnancy.¹³⁷ Margaret knew that her first duty was to

¹³⁵ B.P. Wolffe, 'Acts of Resumption in the Lancastrian Parliaments 1399-1456,' *English Historical Review*, 73, (1958), pp. 583-651, p. 605 and n. 1. It should be noted that in the parliament of 1456, which was dominated by Yorkist interests, the Commons did request that the queen's dowry should not be increased, but in none of the resumption petitions of 1450, 1451 or 1456 did they request that it be reduced.

¹³⁶ *PL* 1, Davis, pp. 248-249.

¹³⁷ At the beginning of the year the queen had made a New Year's gift to the shrine of a jewel-studded gold tablet. Myers, 'Jewels,' p. 124. It appears to have been an efficacious offering as Margaret conceived in January.

produce an heir, for this was the supreme requirement of all medieval queen consorts and on it their popularity depended. Margaret was married for eight years before her only child was born and there is no record of any other pregnancy. Her failure was a reproach to her, and, ultimately, it proved fatal to the Lancastrian dynasty. It is to her childlessness, rather than her part (if any) in the loss of Normandy that whatever criticism she experienced should be traced. Her involvement in ceding Maine would not have been known,¹³⁸ although her lack of dowry would have filtered out through court gossip. In 1448 a Canterbury man said she should not be the queen, and if he had the power he would 'helpe to putte her downe' because she had not borne a child and therefore 'we have no prynces in this land.'¹³⁹ Then there is the testimony of an approver in 1447 who alleged that the keeper of Guildford gaol 'wished the king hanged and the queen drowned and added that nothing had gone right since this queen . . . had come to England.'¹⁴⁰ But the contemporary perception of Margaret cannot be deduced from this kind of 'evidence;' such examples are too few to establish that she was an unpopular queen.

¹³⁸ Bagley, p. 64: 'Naturally and justifiably public opinion considered that she had not been a passive factor in the negotiations which led up to the detested surrender of Maine.' This is hindsight. He repeats Escouchy's statement that gossip in England stigmatised Margaret as illegitimate. She *may* have given way to tears in private, but not because of her supposed illegitimacy. Perhaps she was homesick. Escouchy 1, pp. 303-304.

¹³⁹ Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 256, quoting HMC 5, (1876), p. 255.

¹⁴⁰ Wolffe, *Henry VI*, p. 17. The same incident is referred to by Storey, *End of Lancaster*, p. 46, and Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 255. They refer only to the queen, omitting the wish that the king was hanged. It is an example of how what little evidence there is becomes tainted by interpretations of it. Their common source is PRO, KB 9/256/12.

Chapter 2: Domestic Politics, 1450-1455

Jack Cade's Rebellion

In the aftermath of Suffolk's fall Jack Cade's rebellion erupted in June 1450. It was a manifestation of genuine grievances, for which there appears to have been widespread sympathy initially, even in the royal household.¹ But King Henry lost his nerve and retreated to Kenilworth with his magnates. The unnecessary outcome, a battle on London Bridge, was a direct result of the king's refusal to meet with the insurgents.² The battle ended in stalemate³ and three churchmen, armed with a royal pardon issued at the instance of the queen, negotiated with the rebels.⁴ Margaret had not been frightened into retreat but remained at Greenwich.⁵ She may have initiated the pardon, or been advised to do so by the Chancellor, Cardinal Kemp, in the hope of avoiding further bloodshed. The wording makes it clear that the gathering was

¹ I.M.W. Hardy, *Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991. cf. Griffiths, *Henry VI*, 'Cade's Rebellion,' pp. 610-665.

² James Ramsay states emphatically that it was not to be supposed that 'Margaret and the Council' would listen to the rebels. Ironically it was 'the council' who fled north with King Henry. Ramsay 2, p. 128.

³ *Benet's Chronicle*, p. 201; Flenley/Gough, p. 156; *English Chronicle*, p. 67; *Great Chronicle*, p. 185.

⁴ *CPR 1446-1452*, p. 338. 'General pardon to John Mortimer, at the request of the queen, though he and others in great numbers in divers places of the realm and specially in Kent and the places adjacent of their own presumption gathered together against the statutes of the realm to the contempt of the king's estate; and if he or any other wish for letters of pardon, the chancellor shall issue the same severally.'

⁵ The assumption that Margaret accompanied the king to Kenilworth is a natural one, but unlikely. The issue of the pardon from Westminster on the same day as it was required (6 July) must lend credence to Margaret having remained at Greenwich. Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 602 n. 215.

unlawful, and that royal grace was being extended to rebellious subjects; thus far the dignity of the crown was upheld. It is the first recorded instance of Margaret taking independent political action. She may have been fulfilling the queen's traditional role of offering clemency to erring subjects,⁶ but her traditional character is so strongly entrenched that to associate clemency with her is more than even the pragmatic Ralph Griffiths can encompass.⁷ John Payn's complaint of the punishment meted out to him by the queen is well known. Payn, a servant of Sir John Fastolf, wrote to John Paston concerning his part in Cade's rebellion fifteen years after the events he describes so vividly.⁸ He was present, against his will, at the battle on London Bridge and it must have been in the aftermath, when the authorities were trying to restore order, that he was betrayed to the Bishop of Rochester as a rebel supporter, arrested on the queen's orders, and thrown into prison. It is probable that Payn was one of a number of men imprisoned at this time as a disturber of the peace, as it is unlikely that the queen, or the bishop, would have singled him out for special treatment. As King Henry did not return to London until the end of July, the bishop may have invoked the only royal authority immediately available to him, in which case the arrest was in the queen's name rather than by her orders. Whatever Margaret's reaction to the rebellion, she must have

⁶ John Eve, a Franciscan Friar was pardoned his part in Cade's rebellion at the queen's request in 1451. Thus, a year later, Margaret was still doing what she could to protect malcontents. *Foedera*, 11, p. 285. The pardon is dated May 1451.

⁷ Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 640 and 262. At one point he says she 'may have played a modest role in the offer of a general pardon,' and at another, 'one of her most striking interventions in politics . . . [was] the offer of a general pardon to Cade's insurgents . . . she may have urged it in order to reconcile the bulk of the population of the south-east and isolate the committed rebels . . . Her stern treatment of John Payn . . . is the reaction to be expected from a spirited young princess of France encountering rebellion against royal authority.'

⁸ *PL 2*, Davis, pp. 313-315.

been painfully conscious that the king was unable to handle a crisis and that the magnates had failed to assume responsibility. Direction of the government was in no one's hands, it was only a matter of time before a struggle to fill the power vacuum would begin.

Margaret and the Duke of Somerset

Edmund Beaufort, Duke of Somerset had replaced the Duke of York as the king's lieutenant in France, and presided over the defeats in Normandy, returning to London just after Cade's rebellion. He was welcomed by the king and court with open arms.⁹ Henry trusted him, despite (or perhaps because of?) the loss of Normandy, but the king was not alone in seeking a man of sufficient calibre to replace Suffolk.¹⁰ Somerset had every incentive to please the king (and the queen.) Although a magnate by birth, he was not a great landowner such as the Dukes of York and Buckingham or the Percy Earls of Northumberland and the Neville Earls of Salisbury and Warwick. Thomas Basin assumed that as Cardinal Beaufort's closest male relative Edmund inherited the bulk of the Cardinal's fortune, and accused him of avarice in seeking further rewards from the crown.¹¹ But Duke Edmund was not the principal beneficiary, as most of the Cardinal's money went on masses for his

⁹ He became a member of the council in August and Constable of England in September.

¹⁰ Watts, p. 185. 'The household needed protection and the nobility needed inspiration and a pole to gather around. Somerset could, and did, provide all this.' cf. Johnson, *York*, p. 83.

¹¹ Basin, *Charles VII* 2, pp. 66-67. cf. *PL* 1, Gairdner, p.102, n. 3. For Somerset's reputation for avarice see Michael Jones, 'Somerset, York and the Wars of the Roses,' *English Historical Review*, 411 (1989), pp. 285-307, p. 300.

soul and alms for the poor.¹² The Beaufort estates had passed to Edmund's niece Margaret, the only child of his older brother. Edmund got the title but not the livelihood, so he was obliged to look to the king for his material well-being.¹³ Somerset was a forceful and capable administrator, and until the débâcle in Normandy which was not entirely his fault, his reputation as a military commander had been high. He was prepared to conciliate, to work with the lords in council and not to interfere unduly with the royal household. He had the advantage of being related to King Henry and Lancastrian dynastic connections were in short supply. For these reasons Somerset stepped into Suffolk's shoes and the Duke of York was denied the central political position he ardently desired.

York had returned unexpectedly from Ireland in September 1450¹⁴ to find Somerset re-establishing governmental authority. As Bertram Wolffe pointed out, York had either to work with Beaufort or get rid of him.¹⁵ Duke Richard was prepared to serve his king, but not to share the direction of the

¹² Harriss, *Beaufort*, pp. 379-381. cf. K. B. McFarlane 'At the Deathbed of Cardinal Beaufort,' in *England in the Fifteenth Century*, London: Hambledon, 1981. First published in 1948.

¹³ Edmund Beaufort was born c 1406, the younger brother of John, Duke of Somerset who died in 1444. He was Earl, then Marquess, of Dorset until Henry VI created him Duke of Somerset in March 1448 to give him the standing necessary for the king's lieutenant in France. Watts, p. 284, n. 106, notes that Somerset lost his main West Country estates in the resumptions of 1449-1450.

¹⁴ The erroneous tradition that Somerset was recalled to deal with York's unexpected return is based on the *Annales*, p. 769. It is followed by Bagley, p. 69.

¹⁵ Wolffe, *Henry VI*, p. 276.

nation's affairs with Somerset (or anyone else.)¹⁶ Duke Edmund, for his part, could scarcely be expected to encourage the king to look kindly on York, who persisted in denouncing him as a traitor and encouraging public opinion, by every propaganda means possible, to think likewise. York used the unrest in London at the loss of Normandy and the recalcitrant mood of the parliament of November 1450 to put severe pressure on Somerset, who was attacked and forced to take refuge in the Tower.¹⁷ York hoped for a replay of the vilification that had occasioned Suffolk's impeachment but it did not occur, lost the initiative and retired to his estates. He again rallied public support in 1452 in an attempt to oust his rival. Backed by a show of military strength, he confronted King Henry and his council, including Somerset, at Dartford. York branded Somerset a traitor and demanded his arrest.¹⁸ Either King Henry and the council refused to bow to his threats or they agreed to arrest Somerset and then reneged on their promise.¹⁹ Chronicle accounts of the meeting are conflicting, but the upshot was that York retired discomfited and Somerset retained his position.²⁰ Somerset's regime lasted three years. By the summer

¹⁶ Ralph A. Griffiths, 'Duke Richard of York's Intentions in 1450 and the Origins of the Wars of the Roses,' *Journal of Medieval History*, 1, (1975), pp. 187-210, for details of York's political aims at this time.

¹⁷ *Benet's Chronicle* p. 203; *Flenley/Bale* p. 137. Chronicle accounts of the attack on Somerset and his rescue by the Earl of Devon are suspect: 'The chronicler Benet believed York to have been responsible for ensuring Somerset's rescue . . . however away from such a pro-York source, a strong suspicion remains that York himself may have instigated the attack upon this, his declared adversary. Nine days later his tenants would ransack Somerset's chief residence at Corfe Castle in Dorset.' Harvey, *Cade*, p. 158.

¹⁸ *Benet's Chronicle*, p. 207; *Flenley/Rawlinson*, p. 107; *English Chronicle*, p. 70.

¹⁹ *Three Chronicles.Short English*, p. 69; *Great Chronicle*, p. 186 and *London Chronicle*, p. 163 are identically worded. Fabyan, p. 627. Only Fabyan, p. 628 says that Henry broke his promise 'by meynys of the quene, which tha[n] bare ye cure & charge of this la[n]de.'

²⁰ Johnson, *York*, p. 112, for an analysis of the chronicle accounts of Dartford and their interpretation.

of 1453 a number of factors appeared to be working in his favour. The recent parliament had been compliant, the queen was known to be pregnant, and York was in virtual exile. Factional disputes in the west and north were turning ugly, but had not yet reached crisis proportions.²¹ In this context Somerset made an error of judgement that in the long run would prove fatal to his family and to the Lancastrian dynasty: he antagonised Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick.²² Of more immediate consequence was the complete mental and physical breakdown suffered by Henry VI in early August.²³ The king was not dead, but he might as well have been, and it was impossible to know how long his condition would last. If the king died, the outcome of Queen Margaret's pregnancy would be vital, if he lived but did not recover, the circumstances would be without precedent.

On 13 October 1453 Margaret gave birth to Prince Edward, and Somerset was his godfather.²⁴ The surviving records of what must have been a momentous event are curiously low key, as if what happened subsequently affected chronicle accounts of the birth of the Lancastrian heir.²⁵ The

²¹ Ralph .A. Griffiths, 'Local Rivalries and National Politics: the Percies, the Nevilles, and the Duke of Exeter, 1452-55,' *Speculum*, 43, (October 1968), pp. 589- 632, pp. 593-605. cf. Storey, *End of Lancaster*, pp. 84-92 and 124-132.

²² Storey, *End of Lancaster*, p. 135 and Appendix 6 'The Warwick Inheritance,' pp. 231-241.

²³ Storey, *End of Lancaster* p. 136 and 252 n. 13 suggests it was catatonic schizophrenia. Wolffe, *Henry VI*, p. 270 and n. 14 suggests depressive stupor.

²⁴ The other godfather was the Chancellor, Cardinal Kemp, the godmother Anne, Duchess of Buckingham. William Waynflete. Bishop of Winchester, performed the ceremony. The choice of godparents by the queen was political not personal.

²⁵ The prince's birth rates one line in some, but not all, of the chronicles: *Benet's Chronicle*, p. 210; *Brut, Cont. G*, p. 521; *Sherborne Annals* in *EHL*, p. 349; *Great Chronicle*, p. 186, *London Chronicle*, p. 163.

uncertainty surrounding the king's malady threw a pall over the occasion, but Te Deums were sung and the prince was christened with royal pomp and ceremony,²⁶ although he could not be presented to the king after the baptism as custom demanded.²⁷ There is a tradition that gossip circulated as soon as the child was born suggesting he was a bastard or a changeling, but the earliest known reference is in *Benet's Chronicle*.²⁸ *An English Chronicle* does not record Edward's birth, but dates the rumours to 1459. According to the anonymous chronicler the queen was so alarmed that she resorted to buying the favour of the local gentry in her dower lands to provide the military resources necessary to make her son king. And, presumably for additional insurance, the chronicler claims she also tried to persuade King Henry to abdicate.²⁹

²⁶ Only *Bale's Chronicle* records the Te Deum, the christening (which is also in *Benet*) and the names of the godparents. But it adds 'Of whoos birth the people spake strangely.' *Flenley/Bale*, pp. 140-141.

²⁷ Kay Staniland, 'Royal Entry into the World,' in *England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceeding of the 1986 Harlaxton Symposium*, Daniel Williams, (ed.), London: Boydell, 1987, pp. 303-305 for a general description of royal baptismal customs at this period. Devon, *Issues of the Exchequer*, Issue Roll Easter 32 H VI, dated 17 July for the purchase of a christening robe to the value of L554.16s. 8d.

²⁸ *Benet's Chronicle*, p. 216: On 23 February 1456 one John Helton was hanged drawn and quartered for posting bills claiming that Prince Edward was not Queen Margaret's son. There may be corroboration for this in *Whethamstede* 1, p. 247 where he records that a John Holtone was hanged drawn and quartered 'for writing bills touching the person of the king.' Holton may have suggested that Prince Edward was not King Henry's son, although *Whethamstede* does not say so.

²⁹ *English Chronicle*, p. 79. See also pp. 91-92 for a copy of the pro-Yorkist verses pinned up on the gates of Canterbury in 1460 at the time of the return from Calais of Warwick, Salisbury and March, which refer to 'filii scelerati' and 'This preuethe fals wedlock and periury expresse, Fals heryres fostred,' which is obviously political propaganda. cf. *Milanese Papers*, p. 27, dated July 1460 for a rumour that the Duke of York's son will be made king instead of Prince Edward because 'they are beginning already to say that he is not the king's son.'

Fabyan recounts the rumours, which he plainly does not believe. It is an example of how one source can be interpreted in opposite ways.³⁰ John Lingard avers that the king's enemies 'attempted to throw doubts on the legitimacy of the young prince [but] their suspicions were silenced by the concurrent voice of the nation.'³¹ Cora Scofield adduces that 'Margaret of Anjou had made herself so unpopular that ... no sooner was the birth of Prince Edward announced than those who disliked the mother began to whisper that the heir... [was] only a changeling.'³² Both quote Fabyan as their source. Miss Scofield adds, referring to a letter from a Milanese Ambassador written long afterwards, that King Henry had said the prince must be the son of the Holy Ghost.³³ The ambassador picked up a distorted version of the fact that when Henry recovered from his illness he was unable to remember the birth or recognise the child. The Earl of Warwick is said to have been behind these rumours, but the evidence is tenuous. Chastellain's account occurs in his narrative for 1470 when Louis XI was trying to reconcile Queen Margaret to the earl. One of the stumbling blocks was that the queen had been publicly denounced in London, and in her presence, at Warwick's instigation, as [*une*] *femme ahontie de son corps, et que l'enfant qu'elle faisoit accroire ester fils du roy Henry, estoit un enfant de fornication emprué en péché avecques un*

³⁰ Fabyan, p. 617-18. The prince's birth occasioned great rejoicing, but his 'noble mother susteynd not a little dysclaunders obsequye of the common people, sayinge that he was not the naturall sone of kinge Henrye, but chaungyd in the cradell to hyr great dishonour and heynesse, which I ouer passe.' cf. Hall, p. 230, who follows Fabyan.

³¹ Lingard 4, p. 108.

³² Cora Scofield, *The Life and Reign of Edward IV*, 2 vols, London: Frank Cass, 1923, vol. 1, p. 19.

³³ *Milanese Papers*, p. 58.

bas home.³⁴ Accusations of bastardy for political ends were one thing, but even the intrepid Warwick must have stopped short of such an accusation unless he was bent on self-destruction.³⁵

King's Henry's condition necessitated the convening of a Great Council which met in November. Ralph Griffiths' statement that Margaret tried to have York excluded cannot be verified.³⁶ Somerset and Cardinal Kemp may have wished to exclude him in order to avoid confrontation (although this is uncertain) but Margaret was still recovering from childbirth and her intervention is unlikely.³⁷ York, as premier peer of the realm, had to be a party to whatever decisions were taken in the unprecedented constitutional crisis precipitated by the king's illness. York came to London, but his first concern was not for the king; instead he had Somerset accused of treason.³⁸ Duke Richard was not a forgiving man. The lords were not prepared to risk civil strife by supporting Somerset in the face of York's

³⁴ Chastellain 5, p. 464. Chastellain says he recounted the incident in an earlier portion of the *Oeuvres* which is now lost, so it is impossible to know precisely when the earl is supposed to have made the allegation.

³⁵ Agnes Strickland claimed Warwick made it at the time of the birth and elaborates on Chastellain. The earl pronounced it publicly at St Paul's Cross, and not only was Edward a bastard but King Henry 'had never acknowledged him for his son and never would.' Strickland, p. 212.

³⁶ Griffiths 'Local Rivalries' p. 605. He does not repeat the claim in his later biography of Henry VI, Griffiths, *Henry VI*, see p. 719. It appears that the initial summons for the council was not sent to York, but an invitation was despatched on 23 October at the instigation of a number of the lords, including some members of the household. *PPC* 6, p. 163.

³⁷ She presumably observed the customary forty days isolation before her churching restored her to normal court routines, which would have been by, approximately, 28 November. Staniland, p. 307.

³⁸ *PL* 2, Gairdner, pp. 290-292. Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 760, n. 39: This document is not a copy of the Duke of Norfolk's original articles but a response to Somerset's reply to them.

fanatical hatred. He was arrested and sent to the Tower³⁹ where he remained throughout York's protectorate (illegally for he was never brought to trial) until the king's recovery ensured his release early in 1455.

It is difficult to assess Edmund Beaufort objectively. He has been vilified by Yorkist propaganda and it is assumed that since Richard of York opposed Somerset Margaret supported him because of her hostility to York.⁴⁰ The tradition that Somerset was the queen's favourite is based on Jehan de Waurin. Duke Edmund was not in the Tower during Cade's rebellion so his release cannot have been procured by the queen, as Waurin alleges. He was in the Tower briefly when York stirred up the mob against him at the end of 1450, and Waurin's touching story of the *king and queen* visiting the beleaguered duke to assure him of their continuing regard (presumably because King Henry was powerless to oppose the mighty York) has been distorted to suggest that Margaret procured Somerset's release in 1450 and she visited him in the Tower when York had him imprisoned in 1453.⁴¹ Of such stuff are legends woven. The link between Somerset and the queen in the Tudor chronicles stems from the assumption that the queen was in control of

³⁹ *Benet's Chronicle*, pp. 210-211. Stowe, p. 397, has Somerset arrested 'in the Queene's great chamber.'

⁴⁰ Bagley, p. 70

⁴¹ Compare: *assez tost apres la mort dudit capitaine [Cade] que le duc de Sombresset, qui estoit prisonnier en la tour de Londres. . . par le moyen de la royne d'Angleterre eut paix au roy quy le fist chief de son grant conseil*. York's opposition then brings about a second imprisonment (in the winter of 1450) and it was then that *ne laissoient pour tant le roy et la royne de .aller veoir ledit dux de Sombresset et lui faire bonne chiere*. Waurin 5, pp. 264-265. This becomes 'When in 1450 Somerset was thrown into prison, he was released by Margaret's agency, and again made chief of the council. When York procured his second imprisonment, Margaret visited him in the Tower and assured him of her continued favour.' Tout, 'Margaret of Anjou,' in *DNB*

the government and ‘the duke of Somerset and other of the queenes counsayll were hadde in great hateryd for the losynge of Norma[n]dy.’⁴² Polydore Vergil, mindful that Henry VII’s mother was Lady Margaret Beaufort, did his best to rehabilitate the duke; he played down a connection between the queen and Somerset, merely remarking that after Dartford the duke ‘gott greater authoritie, and with Margarete the queene ruled all thinges.’⁴³

Somerset may have joined the queen’s council in 1451; an entry in her household account shows an annuity of L66.13s. 4d to Somerset for his good advice and excellent service dated 18 February 1453, but referring to an earlier patent of 16 November 1451.⁴⁴ This is very slim evidence to suggest that Somerset strengthened his hold on power through the queen’s favour.⁴⁵ It may equally be that Margaret appointed him to her council because, as chief minister, he could further her interests in the administration of her estates and the collection of money due to her. Margaret’s letters do not indicate that she favoured Somerset, and in one instance the queen’s solicitations ran counter to the duke’s interests. Compensation to the English for land lost in Maine was to be paid out of revenues from Normandy under Somerset’s administration. Margaret asked him to ensure that Viscount Beaumont received recompense

⁴² Fabyan, p. 626. cf. Stowe, p. 392.

⁴³ Vergil, p. 90. Edward Hall claimed Somerset ‘ruled the kyng, ordered the realme and might do most with the queene.’ Hall, p. 225.

⁴⁴ Myers, ‘Household,’ p. 418. The same amount was paid to her chief official, Viscount Beaumont. Myers, p. 412.

⁴⁵ Watts, p. 294.

for his losses there as King Henry had instructed. The request was implemented which must have won her good will.⁴⁶ Margaret urged the Abbess of Shaftsbury to exercise her right to appoint to a benefice at Corfe Castle, and to confirm Margaret's chaplain in the post. The Abbess's right was disputed by Somerset, as lord of Corfe, but Margaret was sure the Abbess would make the appointment in favour of Michael Tregory.⁴⁷ The queen's jewels accounts do not record any lavish gifts to Somerset or his duchess such as those she made to the Suffolks,⁴⁸ although it is true that by 1453 the queen had been obliged to cut back on her gift giving. On such evidence as we have, any alliance between Margaret and Somerset seems to have been administrative rather than personal or political.

King Henry recovered his senses in late 1454 and Somerset was released from the Tower. It has been postulated that this was due to Margaret's influence,⁴⁹ but it was not a political move on the queen's part. Henry could not remember anything that happened during his illness⁵⁰ and he would expect to find the court exactly as it had been in July 1453 with

⁴⁶ *Letters of Margaret of Anjou*, p. 119. Jones, 'Somerset, York,' p. 298: 'Indeed only one payment can be traced that provided this compensation: a sum of 3,000 *livres tournois* to John Viscount Beaumont for his barony of Mayenne, and this was on the intercession of . . . Margaret of Anjou.'

⁴⁷ *Letters of Margaret*, pp. 91-92. Margaret says she hopes Tregory will soon be appointed Bishop of Liseux, but that benefice went to none other than the chronicler Thomas Basin. Tregory got the Archbishopric of Dublin in 1449, he was a learned churchman and in favour with Henry VI as well as with the queen. *DNB* 'Tregory' vol. 19, p 1100.

⁴⁸ Myers, 'Jewels,' p. 124. Duchess Eleanor received a New Year's gift in 1453 of a gold salt-cellar garnished with rubies, pearls and sapphires to the value of twenty eight pounds, but nothing as elaborate as Alice Duchess of Suffolk had received.

⁴⁹ Scofield 1, p. 21.

⁵⁰ Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 716.

Somerset in attendance. For this, if for no other reason (such as a feeling of guilt that Somerset had been illegally detained) the Duke of Buckingham and others must have been anxious to restore Somerset's liberty.⁵¹ The assumption that Margaret now threw her support behind Duke Edmund is conjectural, based on the belief that she had bitterly opposed York's protectorate which she saw as a threat to her son's inheritance.⁵² But had she?

Margaret and the Duke of York

The tradition persists that the enmity felt by Margaret for Richard of York, was of long standing and that the Wars of the Roses originated in a dynastic conflict between the queen, as defender of the Lancastrian throne, and Richard as the Yorkist claimant to it. There is no evidence of antagonism between York and Margaret before 1456. Bertram Wolffe dates Margaret's hostility to 1454⁵³ on the basis of a letter to John Paston ascribed to that year by James Gairdner. However Norman Davis, in his edition of the *Paston Letters*, ascribes it to 1458 and he is surely right.⁵⁴ Richard Southwell's

⁵¹ The Duke of Buckingham, the Earl of Wiltshire and Lord Fitzwaurin stood surety for Somerset's appearance to answer any charges against him. The order for his release, dated 5 February 1455, was issued in the king's name with the consent of the council. *Foedera* 11, p. 361. cf. *Benet's Chronicle*, p. 212. *Bale's Chronicle* records that Somerset 'was straungely conveyed out of the Tour' and it was this that caused York to resign as protector. Flenley/*Bale*, p. 141. Gascoigne, p. 203, acidulous as ever, claims Somerset was freed illegally and contrary to the wishes of the council. The account in *An English Chronicle*, p. 178, that Somerset was only released 'be instaunce and mediacione of his friendes' after he had sworn an oath not to meddle with the government or to come near the king can be dismissed for the hostile nonsense it is.

⁵² A.J. Pollard, *The Wars of the Roses*, London: Macmillan, 1988. p. 22.

⁵³ Wolffe, *Henry VI*, p. 276. The queen is not specifically named in the other piece of evidence adduced, the record of the council meeting of 21 November 1454.

⁵⁴ *PL* 3, Gairdner, pp. 3-4. *PL*, 2, Davis, pp. 176-177.

complaint that he had been ‘within this ij yere . . . laboured a-geyns to the Quene,’ as having given ‘gode will and seruice vnto my lord of York’ accords with the queen’s position in 1458 but not in 1454.⁵⁵ York had welcomed Margaret as England’s queen and, although he had little opportunity to develop a friendship with her as he was rarely at court and never on close terms with Henry VI, their relationship appears to have been cordial. York’s daughter, born in 1446, was christened Margaret.⁵⁶ On at least one occasion the queen took up the cudgels on behalf of York’s tenants against those of Suffolk⁵⁷ and in 1450 they apparently made common cause in writing to the Earl of Oxford urging the settlement of a dispute over the town of Sal [Norfolk.]⁵⁸

York’s claim to be acknowledged heir presumptive to the throne until King Henry had a child was raised in the Common in 1451.⁵⁹ It was a tactical error. Henry dissolved parliament and York remained out of favour. It has been suggested that the petitioner was imprisoned because his motion was ‘grossly insulting’ to Queen Margaret, implying that she was barren.⁶⁰ But this is not how the petition reads. Her childlessness was a sorrow and perhaps a

⁵⁵ The Duke of Somerset to whom the letter refers is Edmund Beaufort’s son, Henry. The error is repeated by John Watts, p. 294, n. 145.

⁵⁶ *Annales*, p. 764.

⁵⁷ *Letters of Margaret of Anjou*, p. 145-146. The letter probably dates to 1448. cf. Johnson, *York*, p. 72.

⁵⁸ PL 2, Davis, pp. 56-57.

⁵⁹ *Annales*, p. 770; *RP* 5, p. 137.

⁶⁰ Jones, ‘Somerset, York,’ p. 289, n. 2.

shame to the queen, but the lack of an heir was causing unrest throughout the country as Margaret must have known. She might even have welcomed the designation of an heir presumptive in order to quieten people's fears. It is unreasonable to assume that it was a matter of any great moment to her who would succeed Henry should he die childless, but it was a matter of great moment to York. Humphrey of Gloucester's death did not automatically make Duke Richard heir presumptive, as he was painfully aware. He had a strong claim but he was not the only contender. Henry VI had Lancastrian kin, of whom the most closely allied by blood was Henry Holand, Duke of Exeter.⁶¹ Then there were the Staffords, descended from the youngest of Edward III's sons, the line represented by the curiously enigmatic Duke of Buckingham.⁶² The claim York feared was that of the Beauforts, if claim it can be called. The Beaufort family (the sons and daughter of John of Gaunt by Katherine Swynford) had been legitimated by Richard II but their half-brother, Henry IV, added the stipulation that they could not inherit the crown. Yet what one act of parliament established another could undo and Edmund Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, was King Henry's favourite minister. York complained that Somerset was plotting to accuse him of treason and so deny him and his heirs their rights of inheritance.⁶³ Henry VI, however, never validated a Beaufort

⁶¹ Exeter was the same age as the queen. He was married to York's eldest daughter, Anne, and York had paid a high price to contract this alliance with the Lancastrian Holands. For York and Exeter at this time see T.B. Pugh, 'Richard, Duke of York, and the Rebellion of Henry Holand, Duke of Exeter, in May 1454,' *Historical Research*, 63, No. 152 (October 1990), pp. 248-202. It contains some interesting corrections to the tradition of the early involvement in politics of the young Earl of March, later Edward IV.

⁶² For the Staffords see Carole Rawcliffe, *The Staffords, Earls of Stafford and Dukes of Buckingham*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.

⁶³ Johnson, *York*, p. 108.

claim to the crown and York's fears were probably exaggerated for political propaganda purposes. Nor did the king name an heir presumptive, although he took steps to strengthen his family ties. His Tudor half-brothers were elevated to the peerage as Edmund, Earl of Richmond and Jasper, Earl of Pembroke.⁶⁴ The marriage of John de la Pole, the Duke of Suffolk's son, to Margaret Beaufort was annulled and she married Edmund Tudor in 1453, ironically, the year of Queen Margaret's pregnancy.⁶⁵ The Beaufort claim, had it been legitimated, would have been vested in Margaret Beaufort and her husband Edmund Tudor, not in Edmund Beaufort, and this indeed was what happened: their son became King Henry VII.⁶⁶ Margaret's sense of dynasty was at least as strong as her husband's and she may have been behind these moves.

York remained out of favour with the king but he seems to have considered the queen as a possible intermediary. A letter to Margaret from Cecily, Duchess of York⁶⁷ may have been written shortly before Whitsun (20 May 1453.) Piety was a strong trait in Cecily's character and she writes of 'oure Creatour now redy to send his grace into all Cristen persons,' a reference

⁶⁴ Ralph A. Griffiths, 'The Crown and the Royal Family in Later Medieval England,' in *Kings and Nobles in the Later Middle Ages*, R. A. Griffiths and J. Sherborne (eds), Gloucester: Sutton, 1986, p. 19: '[They] adopted the royal arms differentiated only by a border. . . they were regarded as members of the royal family and therefore entitled to bear the king's arms.'

⁶⁵ It may have been this that alienated Margaret's friend Alice, Duchess of Suffolk, and caused her to look to York for her son's future security. John de la Pole married York's daughter, Elizabeth.

⁶⁶ Ralph A. Griffiths, 'The Sense of Dynasty in the Reign of Henry VI,' in *Patronage, Pedigree and Power in Later Medieval England*, Charles Ross (ed.), Gloucester: Sutton, 1979, for details of the claims of York and Lancaster.

⁶⁷ For Cecily see Joanna Chamberlyne, 'Cecily Neville, Duchess of York, King's Mother: the Roles of an English Medieval Noblewomen, 1415-1495,' MA Thesis in Medieval Studies, University of York, 1994.

to the Pentecostal liturgy.⁶⁸ The letter has been analysed by Carole Rawcliffe but her conclusions require some revision.⁶⁹ Cecily refers to a meeting ‘in youre comyng from that blissid and [] and devout pilgremage of Oure Lady of Walsyngham,’⁷⁰ which Carole Rawcliffe places in 1452, after Dartford, but which must have occurred during Margaret’s visit to Norfolk in April 1453.⁷¹ Cecily excuses herself for not having followed up her original petition, but she has been ill. Carole Rawcliffe supposed that the duchess was referring to her pregnancy and the birth of the future Richard III in October 1452, but Cecily is making play with her physical infirmities; she claims they are aggravated by anxiety about York’s estrangement from the king. Margaret had looked favourably on Cecily’s earlier request that she should speak to the king on York’s behalf, ‘whereunto that i[t pleased you] full benignely to receive my supplicacion’ and she appeals once again for the queen’s intercession to restore York to favour. If Margaret broached the subject she was unsuccessful, but the inference is that Cecily (and presumably her husband) believed the queen to be a friend not an enemy.

⁶⁸ C.A.J. Armstrong, ‘The Piety of Cicely, Duchess of York: A Study in Late Medieval Culture,’ in *England, France and Burgundy*.

⁶⁹ Carole Rawcliffe, ‘Richard Duke of York, the King’s Obeisant Liegeman,’ *Historical Research*, 60, (1987), pp. 232-239.

⁷⁰ Huntington Library, San Marino California, Battle Abbey MS. 937. The transcription from which quotations are taken is by Alison Hanham.

⁷¹ An indication of the date is BL, Egerton Roll 8365. The Hitchin bailiff’s account roll for Mich. 31 Henry VI to Mich. 32 Henry VI. A claim for Thomas Wilughby, treasurer of the lord’s household, staying at Hitchin for one night when the Duchess of York *abmaneat* (came from a visit to?) the Queen of England.

Prince Edward was taken to Windsor over Christmas/New Year where Margaret and the Duke of Buckingham tried in vain to get Henry to respond to the child. The king showed no sign of recovery and it must have been at this time that Margaret decided to seek a regency. Our only record is a newsletter dated 19 January [1454] from John Stodeley, a servant of the Duke of Norfolk, that also retails the failure of the king to recognise Prince Edward.⁷² It is alarmist in tone, warning of the tense atmosphere in London and of the danger posed by the Duke of Somerset to the Duke of Norfolk (even though the former was in the Tower.) By Stodeley's own admission it is a compound of gossip and speculation from a number of sources. Had the newsletter not survived Margaret's bid for a regency would have remained unknown and not have coloured later interpretations of her relationship with the Duke of York, or convinced historians that the queen was eager for political power.

As his tenth item of news, Stodeley reported that the queen had prepared a bill of five articles, in which 'she desireth to have the hole reule of this land.' She wanted to appoint to all key offices, lay and clerical, and be assured of an adequate allowance to maintain the royal household. Stodeley's phrase, 'a bill of five articles,' suggests that Margaret intended to have it presented to parliament. The idea probably originated within the household, now leaderless since Somerset was in prison.⁷³ Margaret would consider it her

⁷² *PL 2*, Gairdner, p. 295-297.

⁷³ Gross pp. 52-54.

duty to become regent, to uphold the authority of the crown,⁷⁴ and as King Henry's surrogate she expected to be empowered with the same rights that he exercised before he became incapacitated.⁷⁵ Stodeley admitted that he did not know the nature of the fifth article; it may have been that if her conditions were met she would accept a council to advise her, for no matter how grandiose a conception Margaret had of kingship, she surely did not believe she could rule alone. Margaret was not necessarily, or even probably, aiming at dictatorial power. An accident of semantics allowed T.F. Tout to claim that 'public feeling was strongly against' Margaret.⁷⁶ A poem circulating in the early years of Edward IV upheld the inheritance of the crown by the rightful descent of the Yorkist line, a piece of propaganda by which Edward set great store.⁷⁷ After rehearsing Henry IV's usurpation, and, illogically, the harm done to England by the murder of Humphrey of Gloucester, it goes on to refer to Henry VI as 'a kyng unwise or innocent.'

⁷⁴ Margaret's mother and grandmother had ruled in their husbands' names, Isabelle whilst Rene was in captivity, and the formidable Yolande whilst her husband and sons were campaigning in Italy. Queen consorts as regents were quite common in Europe. In the Empire the Empress Elizabeth was named to a regency council in 1439; in Portugal, Queen Eleanor became regent with her dead husband's brother in 1438; Mary of Guelders became regent of Scotland on the death of James II in 1460; Queen Maria of Aragon was regent for her husband, Alphonso V, on his frequent absences from the kingdom.

⁷⁵ English historians have perhaps made too much of the 'unprecedented' nature of a regency. R.L. Storey, *End of Lancaster*, p. 139, calls it 'alien as it was to all constitutional precedents,' but there were no precedents. John Watts refers to Margaret's 'famous request for regency powers,' but it was hardly famous at the time. He also describes the queen's proposed powers as 'awesomely wide' but, to Margaret, they were only those the king, whose surrogate she intended to be, exercised as of right. Watts, p. 305 and n. 193. Ralph Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 724, describes the queen as being 'bent on a course of breathtaking novelty.'

⁷⁶ Tout, 'Margaret of Anjou,' in *DNB*.

⁷⁷ Alison Allen, 'Yorkist Propaganda: Pedigree, Prophecy and the "British history" in the Reign of Edward IV,' in *Patronage, Pedigree and Power*, Ross, (ed.).

The next verse reads:

Moreovyr it ys right a gret abusion,
A woman of a land to be a regent,
Quene Margrete I mene, that ever hathe ment
To governe all England with might and poure,
And to destroye the right lyne was here entent,
Wherfore she hathe a fal, to here gret langoure.⁷⁸

The rhyming of 'regent' with 'ment' is unfortunate, but can only be read in its wider context, not as a specific reference to Margaret's intentions in 1454.

There was no precedent for a regency, the lords had refused to allow Humphrey of Gloucester to become regent in 1422 when they decreed that during Henry's minority the authority of the crown rested with the council and could not be delegated.⁷⁹ For this reason alone they would probably have rejected the politically inexperienced queen as regent, especially as there was no way of knowing if the king would recover.

Henry VI's illness gave York the opportunity to undermine Somerset's regime. His first move was to have Somerset imprisoned and then to negotiate the terms on which he would serve the helpless king. The situation in March 1454 would have been farcical had it not been tragic. The king was incapacitated, his chief minister was in the Tower, the queen had been refused the regency and, finally, Chancellor Kemp died. As he was also Archbishop of Canterbury the highest posts in the land were vacant and the crown was dysfunctional. One of the few options left was to confer the office of

⁷⁸ *Political Poems 2*, Wright, (ed.), pp. 267-270. The poem is entitled 'A Political Retrospect,' and Wright dates it to 1462 or 1463. The reference to Queen Margaret is p. 268.

⁷⁹ Watts, p. 115.

Protector on the Duke of York although there was little enthusiasm among the lords to serve on a protectorate council.⁸⁰ But Duke Richard's presence in London with armed retainers made him not only the obvious, but also the only choice if conflict was to be avoided. Prince Edward was created Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester, on 15 March and recognised in parliament as Henry VI's heir apparent. The Duke of York endorsed the act and declared his loyalty to the House of Lancaster. By his unquestioning acceptance of the prince's rights York undermined potential opposition⁸¹ and on 27 March parliament appointed York protector and defender of the realm.⁸² It is a mistake to interpret the choice between a regency and the protectorate as a duel between Margaret and York. The queen did not request the regency to keep York out of government but to uphold the authority of the crown. York demanded the protectorate because he was determined to take his rightful place in the councils of the land.⁸³ York no longer claimed to be the king's heir and Margaret had no need to protect her son's rights, which were not called into question. York's protectorate was confined to the term of the king's incapacity or until the prince achieved his majority. What might have happened had Henry VI not recovered is anybody's guess but Margaret was

⁸⁰ Ralph A. Griffiths, 'The King's Council and the First Protectorate of the Duke of York, 1453-1454,' *English Historical Review*, 99, 1984, pp. 67-82.

⁸¹ This important point is made by John Watts, p. 308.

⁸² *RP* 5, pp. 240-42.

⁸³ Ralph Griffiths, 'The King's Council' pp. 75-77, argues that the queen was 'fiercely hostile' and 'bitterly opposed' to the protectorate. This may be so, but we have no evidence for it. Even her own servants, Lord Scales and Viscount Beaumont (who alone gave as his reason for refusing a place on the council that his first loyalty was to the queen, pp. 76 and 81) did serve on it, as did Lords Studley and Dudley, prominent household men. cf. Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 727-728; Johnson, *York*, p. 136.

not, as yet, fearful of York's dynastic intentions, if indeed he entertained them. Far from wanting to be 'the queen that bare the rule' she may have been content to accept the settlement, for she mounted no opposition to him. Members of the household joined York's council, possibly in their own interests but also, surely, because the queen did not make any violent protests against it.

Henry VI recovered his senses at the end of 1454 and Margaret presented the infant prince to him, at which he marvelled, but expressed himself well pleased. She then told him that Chancellor Kemp was dead.⁸⁴ York's protectorate lapsed automatically and it remained for King Henry to decide whether to York's government or re-instate Somerset. Not surprisingly Henry chose Somerset and the *status quo* restored. At a council meeting in early March, Henry took the Captaincy of Calais from York and returned it to Somerset, whilst the Chancellorship was taken from the Earl of Salisbury and vested in the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Bourchier, as it had been in the two previous archbishops. The Earl of Wiltshire, a favourite of the king, was made Treasurer.⁸⁵ But York could not now be reduced to political nullity as he had been in 1452, for he had the powerful Earl of Salisbury, and Salisbury's son, the bellicose Earl of Warwick, as his allies.

⁸⁴ *PL* 2, Davis, p. 108. The letter is from Margaret's servant Edmund Clere, to John Paston, dated 9 January 1455.

⁸⁵ Henry created James Butler Earl of Wiltshire in 1449 even though he was heir to the Earldom of Ormond. He inherited his father's title and held both from 1452. G.E. Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland . . .*, V. Gibbs and others (eds), 12 vols in 13, London, 1910-59. Vol. 10, pp. 126-29.

It was this group, now cohering as the Yorkist lords, that gathered an army and marched south. The court was not prepared for such an eventuality and, too late, Somerset ordered armed contingents to assemble under the king at St Albans. In the confrontation that followed York demanded that Somerset be arrested. When King Henry (or those around him, notably the Duke of Buckingham) refused, a battle was fought, and among the slain were the Duke of Somerset, York's intended victim, and the Earl of Northumberland, who may have been the Nevilles' principal target. The Yorkist victory at St Albans cannot be dismissed as a skirmish in the streets merely because there were few casualties. The king, a passive spectator, was wounded by an arrow in the neck but his presence in the field made York's exploit treason, however lofty its motivation. York protested his loyalty immediately after the fighting ceased and the king acknowledged it, thereby condoning his actions. As C.A.J. Armstrong says, 'in accepting the protestations of York, Warwick and Salisbury, the king automatically "graunted to be ruled by them."⁸⁶

They returned with the king to London, showing all honour to the man who was virtually their prisoner. York was a fine public propagandist. He became Constable of England, but, significantly, it was the Earl of Warwick who was awarded the far more important post of Captain of Calais. Thomas Bourchier remained Chancellor, and his brother, Viscount Bourchier (who

⁸⁶ C.A.J. Armstrong, 'Politics and the Battle of St Albans, 1445,' *BIHR*, 33, No. 87, (May 1960), is the detailed and definitive study of the events leading up to and following the battle. His quotation is Flenley/*Gough*, p. 58.

may have been with York at St Albans) was named Treasurer.⁸⁷ Writs were issued for a parliament, and when it met in July the spectacle of a king who would pardon overmighty subjects coming in arms against him was repeated. An act was passed to exonerate York and all who fought with him. Henry VI had no one to stiffen his resistance now that Somerset and Cardinal Kemp were dead. The logical choice to replace them was the Duke of Buckingham, but Buckingham had been wounded, and in any case he appears not to have wanted the responsibility of guiding and sustaining the king's government. Although his loyalty is unquestionable, he preferred the role of councillor to that of chief minister. J.R. Lander suggested that the lords 'sold the pass' when they refused a regency and opted for a protectorate in 1454, giving York the impression that he could overbear magnate opposition.⁸⁸ St Albans vindicated his belief, but it was Henry VI who 'sold the pass' in 1455 by not rallying the nobility behind him to resist York to the uttermost. Given a strong lead the lords would have rallied to the king; instead they were given no lead at all, only an abject capitulation. By not checking York and the Nevilles after St Albans, Henry VI paved the way for civil war.

After a public show of reconciliation Henry was allowed to retire to the queen's castle at Hertford. He attended parliament in July but returned to Hertford, where he appears to have remained until February 1456.⁸⁹ He was

⁸⁷ As P.A. Johnson rightly remarks, 'The plums fell to the Nevilles and the Bourchiers.... [who] scooped the pool.' Johnson, *York*, p. 159.

⁸⁸ J.R. Lander, *Conflict and Stability in Fifteenth Century England*, 3rd ed., London: Hutchinson, 1977, p. 81.

⁸⁹ *PL* 3, Gairdner, pp. 32 and 50.

ill in the autumn and unable to open the second session of parliament on 12 November 1455; the Duke of York deputised for him at the request of the lords. J.R. Lander established that whatever the nature of the king's illness Henry did not lapse into complete stupor for a second time,⁹⁰ but after the stress of the preceding months he may well have become withdrawn.⁹¹ It would have been an anxious time for the queen, living in constant fear of a second collapse. Duke Richard took advantage of his opportunity; he pushed through a request from a deputation of the Commons that he be made Protector once again.⁹² The Second Protectorate lasted from November 1455 to February 1456 when the king came in person to parliament and relieved York of his charge.

York's second protectorate ended because he alienated the lords. They endorsed his appointment as king's lieutenant to open parliament but thereafter they were stampeded by York who was in alliance with the Commons. The magnates had not been overly enthusiastic about a protectorate in 1454 when Henry was incapacitated, and there was far less reason for them to favour one when Henry was merely unwell. The lords were not prone to swift or cohesive responses and they were taken by surprise. Their assent to the Second Protectorate was more passive than active, none of

⁹⁰ J.R. Lander, 'Henry VI and the Duke of York's Second Protectorate, 1455-6,' in *Crown and Nobility 1450-1509*, London: E. Arnold, 1976.

⁹¹ The king's biographers, whilst accepting Lander's argument, believe that Henry never fully recovered from his illness of 1453-54. Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 718. Wolffe, *Henry VI*, p. 301.

⁹² Lander, *Crown and Nobility*, p. 84; For a defence of York's position see Johnson, *York*, p. 169.

them wanted to oppose York openly, but the Christmas recess gave them time to re-consider. York had drawn attention to the weakness of the crown, a weakness the lords preferred to gloss over, by stressing his political strength and competence. He could have dealt with the disturbances in the West Country, the ostensible reason for the Commons request, without being made Protector, but never at any time in his career had York served the king except on his own terms. He had now extended his ascendancy at the expense of royal authority, but an encroachment of the crown's prerogatives was not something the lords would condone. Nor would the queen. Margaret agreed with those lords who believed York had overstepped the mark.⁹³ York then supported the Commons in their call for a stringent Act of Resumption, a further undermining of the king's prerogative. The cost of the king's household was a continuing grievance, and steps had been taken to curb it during the First Protectorate when a council ordinance reduced the king's establishment. The queen's household was set at 120 persons and that of the prince at 38.⁹⁴ It made sense at the time, Henry was incapacitated and as the lords in council were representing royal authority, it was not a direct attack on the crown's prerogative, nor was it, as far as we know, opposed by the queen. The Act of Resumption proposed by the Commons in 1455 affected the interests of many of the lords as well as of the household. To resist York's

⁹³ Robert Fabyan assumed that it was the queen who ended the First Protectorate, but his words are directly applicable to the Second, and to her motivation. "The queen..... dystayned sore the rule which the duke of Yorke bare..... and speciallye for that that the sayde duke bare the name of protectour, whiche arguyd that the kynge was insufficient to gouverne the realme, whiche, as she thoughte, was a great dyshonoure to the kynge and to all the realme' Fabyan, p. 631

⁹⁴ *PPC* 6, pp. 220-232. Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 729.

assumption of power, theoretical in the protectorate and practical in curbing royal patronage, that the lords urged Henry to end York's rule.⁹⁵ Presumably on the advice of these same lords, who did not wish to drive York into open opposition once again, it was proposed that he be made chief councillor. York appears to have dissented, he was not removed from the council but, once the business of relinquishing his protectorate was accomplished, he retired to his estates as he had in the past.

Evidence for Margaret's involvement in the termination of York's protectorate rests on the *Paston Letters*.⁹⁶ John Bocking conveyed news of the rumours rife in the capital that the duke was to be relieved of his post in a letter to Sir John Fastolf, dated 9 February [1456.] As York did not relinquish his position until 25 February the move against him must have been known for some weeks. Bocking had been told 'by a grete man' that Henry VI wished to keep York as his chief councillor, but not as Protector. Bocking was sceptical (as we should be for his informant may have been mistaken) although he hoped York would be retained. Then comes the famous sentence on which the edifice that Margaret was a ruthless woman avid for personal power has been built: 'The Quene is a grete and strong labourid woman, for she spareth noo peyne to sue hire thinges to an intent and conclusion to hir power.' Anthony Gross, who falsifies the meaning of the last clause by misquoting it as 'of her power,' surmises that it was the threat to Margaret's household from the Act

⁹⁵ Johnson, *York*, p. 172; *Benet's Chronicle*, p. 216; Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 751, gives a translation of *Benet*.

⁹⁶ *PL* 3, Gairdner, pp. 74-76

of Resumption to which this sentence refers and that her efforts were primarily to protect her interests.⁹⁷ But as her dower was assured to her and she was exempted from the act, she was in a position to reassign patronage to those of her people who were affected. The juxtaposition of the rumours about York and the description of the queen must indicate an association of ideas in Bocking's mind. The precise relevance in this context is obscure, but a deconstruction of the sentence is of interest. A comma following 'conclusion' is indicated, 'to hir power' being a separate phrase meaning 'to the best of her ability' or 'in so far as she could.' 'Strong labourid' is usually read as passionate or vigorous (pro-active in modern jargon) but in contemporary usage persons being supplicated were 'labourid,' a passive not an active tense. It would then translate as: 'The queen is greatly and strongly supplicated by many because she spares no effort to pursue her interests (or the interests of those who sue to her) until she achieves her end, in so far as she is able to effect it.'

I suggest that the lords, having decided to resist York's pretensions and needing the king's authority but knowing Henry would not stand up to the duke, looked to the queen. Margaret recognised the threat to royal authority and it was one she could not ignore, even if Henry could. It was a cause she understood and was prepared to champion. The assumption that she also opposed the appointment of York as chief counsellor is not warranted on the

⁹⁷ Gross, p. 49. He points out that only three of her household were exempted, and then only for the customary fees for their offices.

evidence we have. It is more likely that she did not wish to challenge York provided he was kept under political control. The clash between Margaret and York came later when Henry VI's ineptitude required her to become politically active, to accept the necessity of a role reversal. It is simplistic to say that Margaret opposed York in order to protect her son's inheritance, the dynastic struggle was yet to come but it has clouded the political realities of 1456-1459. At first Margaret chose to champion the crown's authority, which, from her perspective, York was determined to undermine, so that Henry VI should not become a *roi fainéant*. Prince Edward's inheritance would be worth little if control of the realm lay in the hands of the Duke of York and his sons. This appears to have been York's aim. He was not, at this stage, attempting to become King Richard III because, provided he controlled the crown, he need not claim the kingship.⁹⁸ That was a last resort, to which he turned in 1460, and even then he was unable to muster enough support to achieve his aim. The knowledge that at any time Henry VI might lapse into insanity, making a third protectorate inevitable, was a continuing factor in Margaret's political equation. She looked to those lords who endorsed the principal of royal supremacy and who, when the dynastic question finally emerged, declared themselves willing to fight for the Lancastrian throne.

⁹⁸ This is Polydore Vergil's view, and seems the most acceptable when it is remembered that the emotive issues of military conflict, attainder, and dynastic claims still lay in the future. Vergil, p. 97.

Chapter 3: Prelude to the Wars of the Roses, 1456-1459

Margaret and Lancastrian Government

The years 1456-1459 are so poorly documented that Margaret's participation can only be inferential.¹ Too often knowledge of the final outcome is allowed to colour interpretations of the events before the outbreak of war in September 1459. The following reconstruction of Margaret and Lancastrian government is based on the premise that because King Henry was unable to sustain his kingship² unaided, Margaret used her influence to guide his actions, but with the advice of the chief officers of state, and courtier magnates such as Buckingham, as well as household officials. Household government combined with a small advisory council was the form of administration Margaret best understood; it was practised by Suffolk and continued by Somerset.³ But not until 1459, and possibly not until after the battle of Northampton in 1460, with the deaths of Buckingham, Shrewsbury and Beaumont, did Margaret assume the direction of government. Far from being 'rash and despotic,'⁴ her approach was circumspect if circumscribed; her aim was to counter York's bid for political dominance by re-establishing the

¹ Pollard, *Wars of Roses*, p. 23.

² For an analysis of the concept of 'kingship' see G.L. Harriss, 'The King and his Subjects,' in *Fifteenth Century Attitudes*, R. Horrox (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

³ R. Virgoe, 'The Composition of the King's Council, 1437-1461,' *BIHR*, 43, (1970), pp. 134-160.

⁴ Wolffe, *Henry VI*, p. 302.

authority of the crown. She created a power-base in the Duchy of Lancaster heartlands of the north-west Midlands and Wales to resist any attempt York might make for a third protectorate.

In the spring of 1456 she moved with Prince Edward to her dower lands at Tutbury and his inheritance of Chester, whilst York stayed on his estates in the north.⁵ John Bocking put the position succinctly: 'My lord York is at Sendall stille, and waytith on the Quene and she up on hym.'⁶ Henry joined Margaret in August but we do not know when plans for a change of government personnel were concocted or if they were instigated by the queen. Henry's distrust of York may have revived when the duke's tenants in Wales staged an uprising and captured Edmund Tudor.⁷ Even King Henry could not have ignored the imprisonment of his half-brother, and he could reasonably assume that York was behind it.

In September, Lawrence Booth was created Privy Seal. He was a cleric trained in the law and had been Margaret's Chancellor since 1451. He was appointed to the Prince's Council and Margaret ensured his translation to the great Bishopric of Durham. Booth was an able administrator who served Margaret loyally as long as it was expedient, although later he made his peace

⁵ *PL* 3, Gairdner, pp. 86-87. James Gairdner believed that having engineered his dismissal from court Margaret moved to Tutbury to block the duke's ability to march on London. *PL* 1, p.171. How she could achieve this he does not say.

⁶ *PL* 2, Davis, p. 148. John Bocking to John Paston dated to June 1456.

⁷ Wolffe, *Henry VI*, p. 304; Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 780. They were led by Sir William Herbert and Sir Walter Devereux.

with Edward IV.⁸ At Coventry in October 1456 William Waynflete, Bishop of Winchester, replaced Thomas Bouchier as Chancellor and John Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, superseded Henry Bouchier as Treasurer. From the queen's point of view the changes made sense. Henry VI preferred advisors about whom he knew and trusted; the Bouchiers did not meet the criteria, but Waynflete and Shrewsbury did. The queen may have been trying to create a working environment in which Henry felt comfortable and able to participate. If the initiative came from the queen it marks a reversal in the royal relationship. The Bouchiers did not form 'a middle party' in English politics.⁹ Henry VI gave the great seal to Thomas Bouchier in 1455 because it was customarily held by the Archbishop of Canterbury. His brother, Viscount Bouchier, had lost lands in France with the fall of Normandy and he probably shared York's political outlook; he was York's nominee as Treasurer, and York's brother-in-law.¹⁰ William Waynflete had succeeded Cardinal Beaufort as Bishop of Winchester. He was the king's confessor and closely associated with Henry's foundations at Eton and Cambridge. He baptised Prince Edward and was one of the first men to see Henry when the

⁸ A.B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to A.D. 1500*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963, pp. 78-79. cf. R.L. Storey, 'The North of England,' in *Fifteenth Century England 1399-1509*, S.B. Chrimes, C. Ross and R.A. Griffiths (eds), Stroud: Sutton, 1995. First published 1972.

⁹ Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 798: 'Such ideas have little reality in the context of late Lancastrian England.'

¹⁰ They were political opportunists, and York probably seemed the better bet to the viscount. Edward IV created Henry Bouchier Earl of Essex, and the Archbishop had the distinction of crowning Edward IV, Richard III and Henry VII. The Duke of Buckingham, whose loyalty to Lancaster never wavered, was their half-brother. For a not entirely convincing argument that at this time the Bouchiers were loyal to Buckingham rather than to Henry VI or Richard of York see L.S. Woodger, 'Henry Bouchier, Earl of Essex, and His Family,' D.Phil Thesis in Modern History, University of Oxford, 1974, p. 48.

king recovered from his illness. In so far as it is possible to describe anyone who served in government as a-political, the description fits Waynflete; he was a mediator by nature.¹¹ The Earl of Shrewsbury was the son of 'the Great Talbot' one of Henry V's war captains, on whom the last desperate defence of Normandy had rested. Shrewsbury's son did not share York's resentment at the losses in France. He was a man of adequate ability and unswerving loyalty to his king. These changes were not innovative, original, or even provocative, just typical of Henry VI's past approach to government. I would suggest that Margaret advised the king but that she did not force his hand or urge him against his inclinations.

Evidence for a 1456 council at Coventry rests on a letter from James Gresham to John Paston and on *Benet's Chronicle*. Gresham wrote from London, so he was repeating rumours from the capital, not writing as an eyewitness. 'It is seid, that my lord of York hath be wyth the Kyng and is departed ageyn in right good conceyt wyth the Kyng, but not in gret conceyt with the Whene.'¹² This is hardly surprising; after the shock of St Albans it is nowhere recorded that King Henry was not in 'right good conceyt' with anyone, confrontation was not his strong point. Nor is it to be expected that Margaret would welcome York, for neither was as yet sure what their future relationship might be. York was summoned to great councils over the next two years, which was his rightful place in government, but he was not

¹¹ For Waynflete see Virginia Davis, 'William Waynflete and the Wars of the Roses,' *Southern History*, 11 (1989), pp. 1-22.

¹² *PL* 2, Davis, p. 164. The letter is dated 16 October.

admitted to the circle of councillors around the king. *Benet's Chronicle*, recording the Coventry council in the 1460s, corroborated that the king and York were on good terms but precedence is given to Warwick's name,¹³ for by that time it was Warwick who had taken centre stage in the conflict between Lancaster and York. Ralph Griffiths is at times less than generous to the queen in his interpretation of the chronicles.¹⁴ Benet alone records that Queen Margaret hated Warwick and York, as, with hindsight, she undoubtedly did in subsequent years. Gresham's letter continues: 'and sum men sey ne hadde my lord of Bukyngham not haue letted it my lord of York had be distressed in his departyng.'¹⁵ The author of *Gough London 10* may be referring to the same incident: 'the yong duke of Somersett was purposed for to affrayed w[ith] the duke of Yorke but the kyng and the lordys made an end therof.'¹⁶ The *Brut*, *The Great Chronicle* and the *London Chronicle* conflate York's protectorates and record that he and Salisbury were dismissed after the Battle of St Albans and then summoned to attend the council at Coventry where a plot to destroy them had been hatched.¹⁷ The queen is not mentioned. The erroneous

¹³ *Benet's Chronicle*, p. 217. *Et misit rex pro Comite Warwici et pro duce Eboraci qui venerunt ad regem et gratissime recepti sunt a rege nam Regina illos valde habuit exosos.*

¹⁴ Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 843, n. 220: 'York, Salisbury and Warwick are said to have been almost trapped there as a result of the queen's hatred for them.' *The Great Chronicle*, p. 189, reads: 'the duke of yorke And the said Erle [Salisbury] with the Erle of warwyk were sent for by prevy seale to Cowentre whe they were alle nere betrappid.'

¹⁵ *PL 2*, Davis, p. 164.

¹⁶ Flenley/*Gough*, p. 159. The meeting is dated 1 December instead of October. *Gough* implies that the young duke of Somerset attacked York at Coventry and then became embroiled with Salisbury's son John in an encounter in London. The confusion arises because the chroniclers did not date council meetings with any accuracy and for propaganda purposes it was important that Somerset be reported as often as possible in connection with hostile attacks on the Yorkist lords.

¹⁷ *Brut Cont. G*, p. 523; *Great Chronicle*, p. 189; *London Chronicle*, p. 167.

chronology is followed by Polydore Vergil and Edward Hall. Vergil says that the new Duke of Somerset and the Duke of Buckingham, determined to undermine York's regime, 'went secretly' to the queen and persuaded her to remove Henry from London. Margaret retreated to Coventry where Henry discharged York and Salisbury.¹⁸ In Hall's account the same magnates tell the queen it is not honourable to allow the protectorate to remain in York's hands and she has them dismissed but determines on their destruction. She took Henry to Coventry because she feared York's popularity with the Londoners. The Yorkists came to Coventry not knowing that the queen encompassed their deaths; but they were warned and made good their escape.¹⁹ Historians have accepted that the Yorkist chronicle stories of plots against York are all true and assumed the queen must have been behind them. It is a dangerous premise on which to base an accurate reconstruction of the late 1450s.

Bertram Wolffe paraphrases Gresham's letter to read that it was the queen who would have 'distressed' York,²⁰ whilst John Watts glosses Gresham's statement that York was in 'good conceyt' with the king, saying it 'should be taken to mean that he enjoyed the sympathy of the peers as a whole,' but the queen attempted to discredit him.²¹ Anthony Gross claims that

¹⁸ Vergil, p. 98.

¹⁹ Hall, p. 236. cf. Stowe, pp. 400-402.

²⁰ Wolffe, *Henry VI*, p. 309.

²¹ Watts, p. 335-336 and n. 316, following Ramsay 2, p. 199. It should be noted that the word 'distressed' carries a meaning of 'attacked,' not of 'arrested.' Grafton (1568): 'At the length the rebels were distressed, taken and executed.' There is obviously a distinction between 'distressed' and 'taken.'

Margaret intended ‘the outright destruction of those who engaged in treasonable activities by accroaching the royal power.’²² There is no contemporary evidence that Margaret intended to destroy York, let alone have him killed in 1456. Such an interpretation is based solely on hindsight (and the Tudor chronicles.)²³ As for the Nevilles, Warwick remained Captain of Calais, and he and Salisbury continued to be called to council meetings, whilst the marriage of John Neville to the heiress Isabel Ingoldsthorpe received royal approval, although the queen insisted on payment for her marriage.²⁴

The Duke of Buckingham’s relationship with the queen is as enigmatic as the man himself. Gresham’s letter reports that the duke ‘takith right straungely’ that his half-brothers, the Bouchiers, had been dismissed and that ‘hys opynyon ys contrary to the Whenes entent and many other also.’²⁵ This may mean no more than he resented the dismissal of the Bouchiers, but it may reflect a wider unease for, if this was done on the queen’s advice, then she was meddling in what should not concern her: politics and government. Here, inevitably is the double standard by which Margaret was judged at the time and has been ever since. What was acceptable in the Duke of York or, had he been prepared to take the responsibility, the Duke of Buckingham, to

²² Gross, p. 47.

²³ Even her biographer is not immune, Bagley, p. 84: ‘Certainly neither her dignity nor her moral code would have deterred her from giving the plotters encouragement.’

²⁴ Michael Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1998, pp. 130-131. cf. Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 774, for Neville attendance at Great Councils.

²⁵ James Gairdner admits that the changes in government personnel were, ‘on their own merits unexceptional,’ and postulates that Buckingham supported the Duke of York ‘from a mere love of English fair play.’ *PL* 1, p. 173.

advise and protect the king, was not acceptable in the queen. This was the view of Thomas Gascoigne. He strongly disapproved of a queen being allowed a say in government and regretted York's dismissal as protector.²⁶ One suspects Gascoigne was a misogynist, but his opinion may owe something to York's propaganda as the duke came to realise that Margaret was an obstacle to his ambitions. Whatever differences of opinion Buckingham and Margaret may have had, it did not prevent her from appointing the duke's heir to the Prince of Wales' Council (until his death in 1458). The Duke and Duchess of Buckingham, with their children, attended the queen at the Coventry pageants for Corpus Christi in 1457, and the Duchess of Buckingham carried the queen's train at the crown wearing ceremony there at Whitsuntide.²⁷ Buckingham and his son accompanied Margaret to London from Berkhamsted for the Loveday of 1458²⁸ and the duke continued to serve the government in opposition to the Duke of York, until he was killed at the Battle of Northampton. After Edmund Tudor's untimely death, the heiress Margaret Beaufort was married to Buckingham's younger son, a sign of King Henry's favour, but one that Margaret could have opposed had she and Buckingham been seriously at odds.

²⁶ Gascoigne, p. 204.

²⁷ *Coventry Leet Book or Mayor's Register*, Mary Dorner Harris, (ed.), 2 parts, London: Early English Text Society, Original Series 134 & 135, 1907-1908, pt. 2, p. 300.

²⁸ *PL* 3, Gairdner, p. 127.

After the council at Coventry Henry travelled to Chester²⁹ to strengthen the crown's presence in Wales. Margaret may have been with him,³⁰ she has been credited with this move on the erroneous assumption that she was in control of the government, and, presumably, because Chester is associated with the Prince of Wales.³¹ The most powerful of the local Welsh gentry was Nicholas ap Gruffydd, who was adept at playing both ends against the middle to his own advantage.³² He and his sons were reconciled to the crown and granted a general pardon, but not at the request or instance of the queen.³³ Too much credit has been given to Margaret in this instance because the pacification of Wales was aimed at curbing York's power and influence there.³⁴

Henry VI made a habit of leaving London in times of crisis, he did so when Suffolk was impeached and during Cade's rebellion. The London chroniclers were sure that the court withdrew to Coventry in 1456 because of rioting in London, but only *Benet's Chronicle* ascribes that withdrawal to the

²⁹ Henry was at Chester from 24-31 October, and at Shrewsbury on 4 November 1456. Wolffe, *Henry VI*, p. 370.

³⁰ We do not know if Margaret was with Henry in 1456 but in the spring of 1457 she accompanied him to Hereford, with his magnates, on a commission of oyer and terminer to bring order to the Marches of Wales. *PL* 3, Gairdner, p. 118. The two occasions may have been conflated.

³¹ Howell T. Evans *Wales and the Wars of the Roses*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915, p. 96, supposed that privy seal writs were issued by the queen, but as Henry was present they must have rested on his authority and that of his advisors.

³² Ralph A. Griffiths, 'Gruffydd ap Nicholas and the Fall of the House of Lancaster,' *Welsh History Review*, 2 (1965), pp. 213-231.

³³ *CPR 1452-1461*, p. 326.

³⁴ Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 780; Johnson, *York*, p. 177.

queen's hatred of London.³⁵ Basing the court on Coventry was probably Margaret's innovation, but she did not carry the king off to the Midlands in order to take control of the government as Gascoigne claimed.³⁶ To restore respect for the crown would necessitate assembling sufficient resources to take action against recalcitrants, be they magnates or city men; in the meanwhile a regime centred on the loyal and secure city of Coventry was a basic requirement. The move can be seen as an error of judgement, for England could not be ruled from Coventry indefinitely, and the separation of executive and administrative arms of government was untenable in the long term but it was perfectly manageable in the short term. We do not know whether Margaret intended this withdrawal to be permanent or only a temporary expedient to establish a secure power base.³⁷ But she made the mistake of underestimating the resentment of wealthy Londoners which damaged economic confidence in the crown.

The king and queen were welcomed to Coventry where elaborate pageants were staged in the queen's honour.³⁸ In February 1457 a Great Council convened at Coventry and King Henry was formally received by the dignitaries of the city. The queen arrived 'sodenly,' the next

³⁵ *Benet's Chronicle*, p. 217.

³⁶ Gascoigne, p. 204.

³⁷ John Gillingham, *The Wars of the Roses*, London: Weidenfeld, 1981, p. 100, reads too much into the situation when he claims Margaret, as a French princess, was following the practice of the French kings in keeping away from their capital.

³⁸ *Coventry Leet Book 2*, pp. 285-287. She received a gift of fifty marks from the city and a gilt cup from the mayor.

day, having sent word that she did not expect a civic reception. At the close of the council in March the mayor and a numerous company escorted King Henry to the city boundary. On her departure two days later, the queen was accorded the same courtesy, contrary to custom, and the sheriffs rode before her with their white rods

like as they before tyme did before the kyng . . . and so they did neuer before the Quene tyll then, for they bere before that tyme alwey their seruantes [sergeants?] mases before the Quene . . . at which doying here Officers groged, seyng the Quene owed to be met yn lyke fourme as the kyng shold. Which yn dede, as ys seide, owe to be so except here displeser wold be eschewed.³⁹

Bertam Wolffe concluded that ‘the mayor and fellowship discovered to their cost that even the special honours which they had expected to reserve only for . . . the king, had now always to be shown to this queen, on pain of her great displeasure.’⁴⁰ But the final clause is hypothetical and the recorder apparently means that the city should retain the distinction between the king and queen provided this does not incur the queen’s displeasure, and leaves it open whether the queen ever expressed her own desire in the matter. When Margaret later came alone to Coventry for the Corpus Christi plays she again sent word that she required no formal reception but at the end of the festival the mayor escorted her from the city, which pleased her.⁴¹ If, in one instance

³⁹ *Coventry Leet Book 2*, p. 298-99.

⁴⁰ Wolffe, *Henry VI*, p. 306. cf. Watts p. 337, n. 312;

⁴¹ *Coventry Leet Book 2*, pp. 297-301.

only, Margaret did insist on a new form of ceremonial escort it was not arrogant self-aggrandisement, but part of her determination to uphold the prestige of the crown. She meant to impress on the magnates and the city fathers that she, as well as the king, could represent the monarchy. Should Henry's health fail again it would be important to have such precedents well established.

The creation of the Prince of Wales' Council in January 1457 enabled Margaret to impose the same financial and administrative controls over Prince Edward's inheritance as she had on her dower lands. For some extraordinary reason this is interpreted as an intention to enhance her personal power. The queen was well aware that the crown's credit had never been lower whilst household debts continued to escalate. She could not hope to prevent Henry VI from dissipating crown patronage, it was a life long habit that no one had been able to control. Margaret did not try. Instead she looked to the principality and palatinate lands of her son for the money the crown so desperately needed. Ever since the resumptions of 1451 Margaret had secured a reasonable return from her dower lands, and now the Prince's patrimony, combined with hers, could make a sound contribution to a limited solvency, with reserves of men and money should the need for them arise. That the Queen controlled the Prince's Council, that warrants were issued in the name of the child prince with the assent of *Clarissime matris nostre Regine*, has been taken as further proof of Margaret's appetite for power.⁴² But to whom

⁴² Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 781 and p. 833, n. 68.

else should the council have been responsible? To the king, who had allowed these lands, like so many others, to return virtually nothing to the crown? The Prince's Council consisted of William Booth, Archbishop of York, and his half-brother Lawrence, Bishop of Durham and Privy Seal, three other bishops including Waynflete, the Chancellor, and six lay magnates: Shrewsbury, the Treasurer, the Earl of Wiltshire, a former treasurer, Humphrey Stafford, heir to the Duke of Buckingham, Viscount Beaumont, as chief steward (as he was of Margaret's lands), Lord Dudley, a long time servant of the king's household, and Lord Stanley, who was responsible for maintaining the crown's presence in Wales.⁴³ Robert Whittingham, a household servant and an experienced financier, was the prince's receiver general, and Giles St Loo, a member of Margaret's household, was his keeper of the great wardrobe.⁴⁴ Household men, yes, known to and trusted by the queen, yes, but also experienced, able officers, who could be relied on not to exploit the revenues entrusted to them. Not for the queen an indiscriminate bestowal of patronage, she employed men for their expertise as well as for their loyalty. As the chief officers of state were represented it is difficult to sustain the argument that the queen was setting up a 'personal' authority independent of the king.⁴⁵ The prince's revenues were to be paid directly to him, not via the exchequer,⁴⁶ a sensible arrangement in view of the Lancastrian government's chronic insolvency, and

⁴³ *Foedera*, 11, pp. 385-6. cf. *Griffiths, Henry VI*, pp. 781-788 for a detailed analysis of the Prince's Council. It is extremely hostile to the queen.

⁴⁴ *Griffiths, Henry VI*, p. 782.

⁴⁵ Watts, p. 337.

⁴⁶ *CPR 1452-1461*, pp. 357-8.

one that would be practised on a larger scale for crown lands under Edward IV.⁴⁷ What is deemed admirable in this king is factional, avaricious and detrimental to good government when practised by Queen Margaret.

Measures were taken to reconcile feuding magnates, which eased tensions in parts of the country, although not between the Percies and the Nevilles in the north. The Earl of Devon, who had looked to York for patronage, was won over, and in 1457 Margaret's niece Marie married the heir to the earldom.⁴⁸ Devon himself died at Abingdon early in 1458 and conflict in the West Country subsided.⁴⁹ The long running and seemingly intractable Talbot/Berkeley feud was alleviated when Shrewsbury's sister married Lord Berkeley.⁵⁰ It now remained to reconcile the victors of St Albans with the heirs of the vanquished so that normal government might be resumed.

⁴⁷ Charles Ross, *Edward IV*, London: Methuen, 1974, pp. 374-75.

⁴⁸ Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 802. For the Earl of Devon see Martin Cherry, 'The Struggle for Power in Mid-Fifteenth-century Devonshire,' in Griffiths, (ed.) *Patronage, Crown and Provinces*. Marie was the natural daughter of Charles of Maine.

⁴⁹ *English Chronicle*, p. 75: 'in the moneth of January, dyed the erle of Deuynshire in the abbey of Abyndoun poysened, as men sayde, and beyng there at that tyme with quene Margarete.' The intended slur on the queen is obvious in this most Yorkist of chronicles. However *The Complete Peerage*, p. 327 gives the date of his death as 3 February. Henry VI was at Abingdon 1-6 January, so Margaret may have been with him, but by 3 February he was at Chertsey. Wolffe, *Henry VI*, p. 371.

⁵⁰ For the background to the feud see A.J. Pollard, *John Talbot and the War in France 1427-1453*, London: Royal Historical Society, 1983, pp. 131-133.

Margaret and the Loveday

Bishop Stubbs' statement that Margaret's domestic policy 'was one of jealous exclusion,'⁵¹ has not been seriously challenged. It is accepted that she favoured the 'Lancastrian lords,' Somerset, Exeter and the Percies, and encouraged their vendetta with York and the Nevilles. The political reality of 1456-1458 was very different. If the authority of the crown was to be upheld it was imperative that the factions be reconciled, to demonstrate publicly that the king could control his magnates and rely on their support to counter threats at home or abroad. The Yorkist lords were integral to such a programme. The root cause of friction was the on-going resentments generated by the battle of St Albans allied to the Neville/Percy feud which York had exploited.⁵² It was not merely the deaths of their fathers at St Albans that motivated the new Duke of Somerset and Earl of Northumberland. By placing the blame for the battle on the dead Somerset, York had impugned the honour of those families who fought with him (and for King Henry.) It was a slur that no member of the nobility would tolerate. By declaring York a loyal subject Henry allowed York to brand Somerset a traitor. The court returned to London in the autumn of 1457 and a Great Council convened at Westminster, apparently with the intention of resolving magnate differences, but nothing was settled and the king 'prorogued' it to meet again in 1458. Royal troops were deployed around the city, a move Ralph Griffiths sees as 'sinister,' a threat to the Yorkists.⁵³

⁵¹ William Stubbs, *A Constitutional History of England*, 3 vols, 5th ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1891-1903, vol. 3, p. 192.

⁵² Hicks, *Warwick*, pp. 128-129.

⁵³ Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 804-805.

Such provocation, however, would have been contrary to the government's intentions; rather the archers were a warning to the Londoners and to partisans on both sides that brawling would not be tolerated. This show of force may have been ordered by the queen, possibly on the advice of Buckingham, who had been discomfited in 1456 when he failed to quell riotous behaviour in the city.⁵⁴

When the lords returned to London in the new year tensions ran high. If negotiation failed resolution by conflict appeared the likely outcome and the protagonists arrived with armed retainers.⁵⁵ The *Gough* chronicle records an attempt by Somerset and his allies to attack York and Salisbury and, separately, Warwick, as they rode to Westminster to attend the discussions.⁵⁶ *An English Chronicle* claims the Lancastrian lords came armed to London with the specific aim of destroying the Yorkists.⁵⁷ No attacks actually took place. Possibly it was mere posturing on the part of the young Somerset.

⁵⁴ *London Chronicle*, pp. 166-67.

⁵⁵ *PL* 2, Davis, p. 531-32. William Worcester to Sir John Fastolf. The letter is dated 1 February.

⁵⁶ *Flenley/Gough* p. 159: Somerset, Exeter, Egremont and Clifford intended to attack York and Salisbury as they travelled by barge to Westminster. *Flenley/Gough* p. 160: Somerset and Northumberland planned to attack Warwick on his way to Westminster but he refused to allow intimidation to prevent him from attending the meeting. *Flenley/Bale*, p. 144, reports another threat to Warwick, probably during the earlier council of November 1457. Somerset, Exeter, Shrewsbury and Lord Roos were involved. But a note of caution should be sounded, Shrewsbury was treasurer and his name may have been included later to discredit the Lancastrian government. The chronicler further reports that although they had over 400 men with them 'they durst not countre w[ith] him for he was . . . the moost corageous and manliest knight lvyng.' This description of Warwick is that of a later era.

⁵⁷ *English Chronicle*, p. 77: Somerset, Northumberland, Egremont and Clifford came 'with a grete power' but York and Salisbury brought only 'theyre householde men in pesyble manner, thynkyng none harme . . . [but] they abouesayde came forto dystroy vtterly' York, Salisbury and Warwick.

Sometime before 14 March Somerset, Exeter, Clifford and Egremont visited King Henry at the queen's castle of Berkhamsted⁵⁸ which may not have been a mark of royal favour but a summons from the king (or the queen) to warn them not to jeopardise the delicate negotiations. Interestingly, although Northumberland and Egremont (his brother) came to London backed by their Percy retainers neither had been called to the council by the king. The summons included virtually all the magnates except the Percies,⁵⁹ which suggests that the objective was to side step the feud in the north and concentrate on reconciling York and the Nevilles with the court. This may indicate that Margaret underestimated the importance of the Neville/Percy feud as a destabilizing factor in political life, a critical error resulting from her tendency to rely on officials whose focus was too narrow and too localised. No one warned the queen that Neville interests were of paramount importance in Neville eyes and would override all other considerations.

The final settlement, imposed by the king on his return to Westminster, but agreed to by both sides, focused on York, Salisbury, Warwick, Somerset, Exeter and Egremont.⁶⁰ The Yorkists had to concede responsibility for the deaths of Somerset and Northumberland, but they had never denied that responsibility, what they had done was to justify it, and that justification stood, although the accord declared the dead men to have been loyal subjects.

⁵⁸ *PL* 2, Davis, pp. 533-534.

⁵⁹ *PPC* 6, pp. 290-92.

⁶⁰ Whethamstede 1, pp. 295-308; Holinshed, pp. 247-249.

Salisbury agreed that the fines imposed on Egremont under the First Protectorate were excessive, but the judgement that Egremont's conduct warranted such punitive fines, was not reversed. If either side broke the arbitration, ruinous bonds would be due under the law. All concerned acknowledged the king's right to rule and recognised the crown's prerogative to settle disputes by personal intervention, but as a reconciliation between Nevilles and Percies it was less than satisfactory. The accord was sealed by a religious ceremony and a procession at St Paul's, the famous 'Loveday' of 25 March.⁶¹ The queen walked with York whose pride in his lineage would have made it unacceptable to him to walk with the Duke, or the widowed Duchess of Somerset; it was a mark of recognition of his rank that coupled York with the queen. Salisbury walked with Somerset, although the quarrel was not between him and the Beauforts; and Warwick walked with Exeter, who played no part at St Albans but had opposed the Nevilles in the north during the First Protectorate and who had recently lost the post of keeper of the seas to Warwick, a loss he was now obliged to accept. This pairing supports the contention that it was a political not a familial settlement, for conspicuous by their absence were the Percies.

Tradition credits King Henry with this pacification, which was undoubtedly to his taste, but what precipitated his action? Chancellor Waynflete may have suggested arbitration in the form of a traditional

⁶¹ *Benet's Chronicle*, p. 221; *Brut, Continuation G* p. 525; *Flenley/Rawlinson*, p. 112; *Great Chronicle*, p. 190; *London Chronicle*, p. 168.

Loveday,⁶² and a determination to resolve the alienation of York was undoubtedly hastened by the presence of French ships in the English Channel; the threat of invasion, probably more imagined than real, was nevertheless a potent force. But it was the queen who espoused reconciliation as a public demonstration of the crown's authority. Henry had to be seen to resolve differences among his magnates, a customary role of the king. Unification at home before tackling military commitments abroad was in the best traditions of Henry V. Margaret accompanied Henry to Westminster and took part in the ceremonial proceedings of the Loveday, the only public commitment she was able to make, but she had been active behind the scenes. Abbot Whethamstede's apparently verbatim copy of Henry's final judgement acknowledges Margaret's part in securing its success.⁶³ This important clause is consistently overlooked by historians who are quite ready to quote Henry VI's letter to Charles VII on the ceding of Maine as 'proof' of Margaret's baneful influence over the king. And a verse in the poem celebrating public delight that peace at home meant a check to foreign aggression reads:

ffraunce and Britayn repente shul thei;
 for the bargayn shul thei abyde ful dere;
 Reiose, Anglond, in concorde & vnite.
 Oure Souveraigne lord kyng, god kepe alwey,
 The Quene, & the Archebisshop of Canterbury,
 And the bisshop of Wynchestre, Chancellor of Anglond,
 And other that han labured to this loue-day.⁶⁴

⁶² Josephine Waters Bennett, 'The Medieval Loveday,' *Speculum* 33, (1958), pp. 351-370.

⁶³ Whethamstede 1, p. 301: *ac etiam, ad magnam instantiam, cordiale desiderium, et preces, nobis facta per nostram carissimam et amantissimam uxorem, Reginam, quae fuit, et est, ita desiderabilis dictarum unitatis, dilectionis, et concordiae, prout sibi est possibile.*

⁶⁴ *Historical Poems*, Robbins (ed.), p. 195.

A letter from John Bocking confirms that the Archbishop of Canterbury (that same Thomas Bouchier whose dismissal as Chancellor Margaret is traditionally said to have demanded) worked tirelessly to achieve a settlement, ‘takith grete peyne up on hym daily.’⁶⁵ He is linked with Waynflete in the poem and the other name is that of the queen. This is significant, and not mere courtesy. One of the few surviving poems favourable to the Lancastrian regime, *The Ship of State*, describes Henry as a ‘noble shyp made of good tree,’ and those who sail and protect her are Lancastrian lords, including Prince Edward, but not the queen, who had no official place in an all-male government.⁶⁶ She could equally well have been omitted from the poem on the Loveday, and that she was not is an indication that her part in the reconciliation was known.

Ironically, it is John Watts, whose commitment to his political theory of noble unity obscures his vision of the participants as people and forces him to cast the queen in the role of evil genius, who supplies the most succinct and accurate summary of Margaret’s intentions. ‘By providing a new arbitration explicitly under the aegis of the king and queen, it asserted the authority of the crown against that of the peers corporately, emphasising that the right to act publicly was the king’s alone and that no one else could usurp it.’⁶⁷ The queen was not aiming at hegemony, as Watts goes on to argue, but to preserve the authority and prerogatives of the crown. Margaret never sought to undermine

⁶⁵ *PL* 3, Gairdner, p. 127. John Bocking to Sir John Fastolf, dated 15 March 1458.

⁶⁶ *Historical Poems*, Robbins (ed.), pp. 191-193

⁶⁷ Watts, p. 344.

her husband's position. The entire focus of her struggle was to uphold it. That the accord failed should not be allowed to obscure the fact that obtaining the assent of all parties to the king's arbitration was a notable achievement. Conflict had been averted, but it remained to be seen whether cooperation would follow.

In October 1458, during a Great Council which York apparently did not attend,⁶⁸ changes were made in government and household personnel. The Earl of Wiltshire⁶⁹ replaced Shrewsbury as Treasurer and Sir Thomas Tuddenham⁷⁰ became treasurer of the household. It is unclear what these changes meant, if indeed they had any marked significance.⁷¹ The Earl of Wiltshire had been treasurer in 1454 and was a favourite of King Henry.⁷² His interests clashed with those of York in Ireland⁷³ and he was one of the 'evil councillors' about the king named by the Yorkist lords in their manifesto of 1460.⁷⁴ Sir Thomas Tuddenham has an 'unsavoury reputation' as one of Suffolk's bully boys, due to the unfavourable light in which he appears in the

⁶⁸ Johnson, *York*, p. 185.

⁶⁹ For James Butler, Earl of Ormond and Wiltshire see *Complete Peerage*, vol. 10, pp 126-128.

⁷⁰ For Tuddenham see Wedgwood, pp. 880-881.

⁷¹ Shrewsbury may have wished to resign his post, he, like all those who served the Lancastrian crown had made substantial loans to the government whilst in office. He did not retire in disgrace but was rewarded for his services. Watts, p. 399 n. 331 quoting E404/71/3/36.

⁷² Waurin depicts him as the queen's favourite, her *mignon*. Waurin 5, p. 328.

⁷³ A.J. Otway-Ruthven, *A History of Medieval Ireland*, London: Benn, 1968, pp. 385-86.

⁷⁴ *English Chronicle*, p. 88.

Paston Letters, but he was no worse than many another henchman of the nobility who used their officials as enforcers in local disputes. The new appointments are seen as ominous, as the moment at which Margaret took over direction of government in order to gain access to funds for the war she was preparing to launch against York and the Nevilles,⁷⁵ but this may be hindsight, there is little hard evidence that she was preparing for conflict in the autumn of 1458. Revenue was now to be paid directly into the household instead of through the exchequer. As with the Prince's Council, Margaret may have been attempting to control government revenue and expenditure, not to fund a war chest, but to bring order into the chaos of royal resources. Her inexperience in handling national finance was against her, but as the experiment was interrupted by the outbreak of war, it is impossible to assess what the long-term outcome would have been. It can be argued that Margaret should have invited York to participate more fully in government at this time, but her determination to maintain the authority of the crown may have meant excluding York because Duke Richard would not accept a position of less than full control of government policy, whilst Margaret would not tolerate a return to the politics of 1455.

⁷⁵ Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 789-90; Storey, *End of Lancaster*, p. 186. Pollard, *Wars of Roses*, p. 24.

Margaret and the Earl of Warwick

The turmoil in England did not go unnoticed abroad. James II of Scotland repudiated the Anglo-Scottish truce in May 1456, and in February of the following year he launched an unsuccessful attack on Berwick. Negotiations thereafter resulted in a prolonged truce. A garbled story by Escouchy has led some commentators to conclude that Margaret obtained a settlement by bribing James with an offer of marriage for two of his sisters to sons of the dead Duke of Somerset,⁷⁶ although the text of the truce does not refer to the project⁷⁷ and it is not in any other source. Such an alliance was not much of a bribe for the Scottish king, as, despite their kinship with King Henry the Beauforts were an impecunious house. Nor does it explain why Margaret offered two Beaufort brothers, except, of course, that there were two Scottish princesses to be accounted for.⁷⁸ According to Escouchy the Duke of York was 'at war' with Scotland, so Margaret's offer of marriage was to gain

⁷⁶ Interpretations of Escouchy vary: Ramsay 2, p. 201, thought that only the young duke of Somerset was to marry the Princess Joanna; Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 812, suggests that the Scottish princesses were to 'marry the duke of Somerset's brothers,' an interesting variation on Escouchy; Tout in *DNB* takes Escouchy literally: 'To combine the Scots with the Lancastrians she urged the marriage of the young Duke of Somerset and his brother to two daughters of the King of Scots;' Annie I, Dunlop, *The Life and Times of James Kennedy, Bishop of St Andrews*, Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1950, p. 172 says 'it was hinted that Queen Margaret bribed James by proposing a double marriage.'

⁷⁷ *Foedera* 11, pp. 389-398.

⁷⁸ Escouchy would have known that the princesses were summoned to return to France after residing at the French court for over ten years, and he deduced an explanation. Stevenson 1, pp. 352-353. The request from James II reached Charles VII by March 1457. cf. Nicholson, *Scotland*, p. 347.

a Scottish alliance against him.⁷⁹ This piece of nonsense disregards the date of the truce; the princesses did not reach Scotland until 1458 (Escouchy thought they were returning to England)⁸⁰ where James had a use for them as pawns in his policy of reconciling Scottish lords with the Scottish crown.⁸¹

The Scots had nuisance value but the situation in the English Channel and at Calais was more serious. Calais was an enclave within Burgundian territory, but the French (with whom England was still technically at war) could launch raids from the west through Guisnes.⁸² The Earl of Warwick became Captain of Calais as a reward for supporting York at the Battle of St Albans, although he did not take up the position until July 1456 because the garrison refused to accept him unless its long overdue wages were paid.⁸³ Warwick appeared to be the ideal appointee; he was able, energetic and ambitious, and lost no time in making his presence felt. Piracy had long been

⁷⁹ Escouchy 2, p. 352: *la Royne d'Engleterre, . . . veant que le duc d'Iorcq avoit fait et faisoit chascun jour de grans troubles et empeschemens ou Royalme d'Engleterre, . . . congnoissant aussy qu'il avoit fait et faisoit guerre au Roy d'Escosse, traicta le mariage des deux filz de Sombresset aux deux filles du Roy d'Escosse, qui pour lors se tenoient à l'ostel du Roy Charles.*

⁸⁰ Escouchy 2, p. 353, *[elles] prindrent leur chemin par Paris, pour retourner en Engleterre.* And Beaucourt's note 1, Joanna married Alexander Gordon, Earl of Huntley, and Annabelle married the Earl of Angus.

⁸¹ Stevenson 1, pp. 354-357. The intended sailing in November 1457 had to be delayed until the following spring because of bad weather.

⁸² In June 1456 there were rumours that Calais might be besieged by land and sea. *PL 3* Gairdner, p. 92. 'The sege shall, as men say, come to Caleys and to Guynes, for moche puple come overe the water of Somme, and grete navies on the see.'

⁸³ Warwick received his first payment as Captain as part of the settlement. Hicks, *Warwick*, pp. 140-41. cf. G.L. Harriss, 'The Struggle for Calais: an Aspect of the Rivalry between Lancaster and York,' *English Historical Review*, 75, (1960), pp. 45-47.

endemic in the English Channel⁸⁴ and Warwick was not averse to encouraging the garrison's participation, as it served the triple purpose of enhancing his popularity with the xenophobic Londoners, with mercantile interests and with the Calais staplers. Charles VII equipped a fleet in May 1457 to deter depredations on his shipping by (mainly English) pirates. Castille and Brittany sent ships to join the French, they too wanted protection for their trade.⁸⁵ While the court was still in the Midlands, the French fleet raided the town of Sandwich on 28 August. French raids on English coastal towns were nothing new,⁸⁶ but this one inflicted considerable damage before it was driven off.⁸⁷ Fears of invasion were never far from English minds and, combined with the outrage to English pride, the event provoked strong indignation and reflected badly on the government. Pierre de Brezé, who had been instrumental in procuring Margaret's marriage to Henry VI and was known as an adherent of the House of Anjou, was a commander in the French fleet. As Brezé championed Margaret's cause after Henry VI lost the throne in 1461, this is enough for historians to interpret Escouchy and Chastellain's accounts of the raid as 'proof' that Margaret invited the French attack in order to help her defeat the 'Yorkists.'⁸⁸ This absurd notion is still the accepted tradition because most historians compress the events of 1456-1459 into a single

⁸⁴ The ambivalence in English attitudes towards piracy is well illustrated by C.L. Kingsford, 'West Country Piracy: the School of English Seamen,' in *Prejudice and Promise*.

⁸⁵ Beaucourt 6, p. 132; Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 846, n. 260.

⁸⁶ There are references to them in the *Paston Letters*. e.g. *PL* 2, Gairdner, p. 135-6, dating to 1450.

⁸⁷ Flenley/*Rawlinson*, p. 110-11; *Benet's Chronicle*, p. 218; *Short English Chronicle*, p. 70-71; *Brut, Continuation G*, pp. 524-25; *English Chronicle*, p. 74.

⁸⁸ *PL* 1, Gairdner, p. 175: 'It was well for her that the truth was not suspected.'

episode and assume that the conflicts of 1459 began with the dismissal of York in 1456.⁸⁹ Neither chronicler says, except by inference, that Margaret invited the raid. Escouchy's version is that Margaret's father and uncle persuaded Charles VII to raise an army in support of the King of Scots against the Duke of York, who was aiming at the English crown.⁹⁰ Chastellain's reads as though his hero, Brezé, had mounted a buccaneering expedition, with the help of like-minded Anglophobes, in retaliation for English piracy, making Brezé the counterpart of the Earl of Warwick, and indeed their characters are remarkably similar.⁹¹ Chastellain assumed that conflict in England was in full swing, that the queen's party, whose only hope lay in French aid, had encouraged Brezé's attack, which was aimed at the 'Yorkists.'⁹² But Beaucourt (Escouchy's editor) questioned whether Brezé's actions had

⁸⁹ Bagley, p. 86, states that 'In May 1457 Charles VII at length answered Margaret's repeated calls for French aid to her cause,' although he does not elucidate what constituted the 'repeated calls' nor when they were made. In his footnote he refers to Brezé's attempt to engage 'the Yorkist fleet,' presumably the ships under Warwick's command at Calais. Stubbs 3, p. 176: 'the queen negotiated with the national enemies and weakened more and more the hold which the king had on his people.' Jacob in *The Oxford History of England* perpetuates the story: 'The queen put herself in the wrong by allowing, if not encouraging, Piers de Brezé . . . to land on the coast of Kent and pillage Sandwich . . . the disgrace of the raid was not forgotten.' cf. Scofield 1, p. 25.

⁹⁰ Escouchy 2, p. 353: *par le moien dudit Roy de Secile son père, et de Charles d'Anjou, comte du Maine son oncle, trouva facion devers lédit Roy Charles qu'il mist sus une grosse armée de gens de guerre, pour aler audit Royalme d'Engleterre, en l'ayde dudit Roy d'Escosse, contre icellui duc d'Iroq, car icellui duc tendoit tousjours à parvenir à la couronne et estre Roy d'Engleterre.* . . . Pierre de Brezé is only one of three captains named in Escouchy's account.

⁹¹ Pierre de Brezé held as much fascination for the French chroniclers as Warwick did for their English counterparts. According to Thomas Basin's first editor, it was Brezé who put the idea of writing his history into the chronicler's head. J.E.J. Quicherat, 'Thomas Basin, sa vie et ses écrits,' *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes*, series 1, book 3, pp. 313-376, p. 334.

⁹² Chastellain 3, p. 350: *ceste emprise. . . se fit à certain propos et en entendement avec aucuns Anglès qui s'en cuidèrent avancier et faire péevaloir leur parti. Car tout l'espoir et le fort qu'attendoit le parti de la royne c'estoient les Franchois.* This might be true in 1461 and thereafter but is hardly tenable in 1457. However, Chastellain's account should be read as a whole: pp. 347-353.

anything to do with Margaret and pointed out that in 1457 she had no need of French help.⁹³ Vallet de Virville made an attempt to amalgamate discrepancies in the sources: Brezé assembled a naval force, including Breton ships, and the attack on Sandwich was made *d'un commun accord, par Jacques, roi d'Ecosse, Charles VII et Marguerite d'Anjou elle-meme, dans un esprit d'hostilité contre le duc d'York, prétendant à la couronne d'Angleterre*.⁹⁴

The raid on Sandwich as the supply port for Calais was a reprisal, enjoyed by the French and resented by the English.⁹⁵ It may have precipitated the Loveday and been the reason for the court's return to London in September,⁹⁶ underlining as it did the urgent need for reconciliation in the light of a possible French invasion.⁹⁷ The government's initial reaction was to appoint Warwick keeper of the seas in place of the Duke of Exeter. This was an entirely sensible move as Warwick was on the spot and far better able to

⁹³ Beaucourt, *Charles VII* 6, p. 144. His caveat is accepted by Ralph Griffiths and Bertram Wolffe, whose statements, one hopes, have laid this particular canard to rest. Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 815; Wolffe, *Henry VI*, p. 314.

⁹⁴ Vallet, *Charles VII*, vol 3, p. 392.

⁹⁵ Berry Herald, pp. 405-411.

⁹⁶ Bertram Wolffe thinks the Sandwich incident cannot have been the reason as Henry was already on his way when the news reached him. Wolffe, *Henry VI*, p. 310. John Watts believes it was the reason. Watts, p. 342.

⁹⁷ Polydore Vergil, pp. 99-100, adduced that turmoil in England encouraged the French to make the raid and that it was the shock of this which reconciled the parties and led to the Loveday. Edward Hall, p. 235, as a patriotic Englishman, belittles the raid and says that compared with the damage inflicted by the English in France in earlier times it was a footling affair. Neither mentions the queen. Vergil's views are shared by R.L. Storey, who considered that the danger of invasion was real. Storey, *End of Lancaster*, p. 184.

counter French offensives than the erratic Exeter.⁹⁸ At this time Warwick was a trusted servant of the Lancastrian regime – its first line of defence.⁹⁹ As Captain of Calais and keeper of the seas Warwick had a broad mandate, to ‘hurt’ the king’s enemies but not to attack allies or neutrals. Unfortunately, Warwick appears to have believed that any non-English vessels were potential enemies.¹⁰⁰ The virtually bankrupt Lancastrian government could not afford a resumption of hostilities with France, or a serious breach of the truce with Burgundy, let alone provoking the enmity of other foreign powers. Their essentially defensive policy was not how Warwick saw his role as Captain of Calais in command of all that was left of England’s military and naval resources. The government’s first line of defence against the French had turned into a first line of attack against the major shipping powers in Europe. Warwick made piracy profitable and popular, attacks on ‘foreigners’ were applauded in England where Warwick’s victories made him a hero. It was a popularity he savoured and exploited.

The government had to take action, and Warwick was summoned to a Great Council in October 1458. It appeared at first that he would not attend,

⁹⁸ The Duke of Exeter was Admiral of England by virtue of heredity only – his father had held the largely honorary title before him. Exeter had no experience of sea-keeping whilst Warwick, also inexperienced before 1456, developed a natural bent for it.

⁹⁹ Hicks, *Warwick*, p. 131.

¹⁰⁰ Hicks, *Warwick*, p. 147: ‘he did not respect the neutrality or safe conduct of Spanish, Hanseatic, Burgundian or Genoese.’ Warwick’s views were, however, shared by English historians. In his account of Warwick’s attack on the Spanish fleet. James Gairdner refers to Spain as ‘the enemy.’ *PL* 1, p. 178. James Ramsay excuses it, ‘in all recent treaties Castile had been reckoned an ally of France. Warwick’s success was doubtless no joy to the Queen.’ Ramsay 2, p. 210. cf. Whethamstede 1, pp. 330-31, the good abbot was delighted and has nothing but extravagant praise for the victor.

until repeated summons from the king induced him to comply;¹⁰¹ but, ever resourceful, Warwick had no intention of facing censure or curtailment of his activities. In the traditional accounts a brawl broke out in Westminster Hall whilst Warwick was in council and an attempt was made on his life as he left the meeting. He escaped by barge and avoided arrest by obtaining the king's permission to leave for Calais. This is, of course, Warwick's version of events. A brief and probably accurate account in *Bale's Chronicle* reads:

the Thursday xvj day of Novembr the King and Quene being at Westminster a man of the kinges hous and a no[th]er of the seid Erle of Warrewyk fell at bate w'yn the paleys and the Erles man hurt the kings man. Wherfor the Erle of Warrewyk shuld have be comyt to the Tour but he wisely purveied a remedy [th]erfor.¹⁰²

An English Chronicle expands it: Warwick was involved in the fight and the household men intended to kill him but he escaped by barge and went over to Calais.¹⁰³ Details are added by *The Brut*: 'al the Kinges houshold meyney gadred thame to-gedre for to have slayn the said Erle bot, bi help of God & of his frendes, he recouered his barge, & escaped thare evyl enterprise.' He then 'gate him A commission, & went ouer the see to Caleys.'¹⁰⁴ The date of this

¹⁰¹ Hicks, *Warwick*, p. 152.

¹⁰² Flenley/*Bale*, p. 146. cf. Flenley/*Rawlinson* p. 113.

¹⁰³ *English Chronicle*, p. 78.

¹⁰⁴ *Brut, Continuation G*, p. 526.

incident changes to Candlemas [1459] in later accounts, which add that ‘for this was great labour made to the kyng to have had the seid Erle areasted; but he Incontynently departed the towne toward Warwyk. And sone after he purchased a comyssion, and went to Caleys.’¹⁰⁵

What appears to have occurred is a fight between one of Warwick’s men and one of the king’s household that got out of hand. Warwick, apprised of the fracas, left Westminster by barge.¹⁰⁶ Whether the affray was at Warwick’s instigation or was fortuitous, it played into his hands. Technically he was responsible if his man started it, and it was an offence for which he could have been arrested, but either he appealed to the king to be allowed to leave for Calais, or, and this is more likely, he just went. The incident gave him a perfect excuse to break with the court – he had attended council as required and the result had been an attempt on his life. Under these circumstances he would not attend again, and, incidentally, he could not be called to account. Warwick used a minor incident, probably of his own making, as a justification for his actions. If Abbot Whethamstede is to be believed he was still harking back to it when he vindicated the Yorkist lords’

¹⁰⁵ *London Chronicle*, p. 169. *Great Chronicle* p. 190.

¹⁰⁶ There is a suggestion in a letter from Friar Brackley to John Paston that Thomas Tuddenham may have been involved: *PL* 2, Davis pp. 212-214. But Brackley was a rumour-monger, and Tuddenham had been at odds with the Paston interests in Norfolk for many years. After the Yorkist lords won the Battle of Northampton and were in possession of the capital in 1460 they issued a manifesto to the authorities in Norfolk (in King Henry’s name) ‘that no man shulde robbe or dispoile Sir Thomas Todenham, Knyght . . . [and others]’ although they hasten to add that this is merely for the keeping of the peace in Norfolk, they do not condone or identify with Sir Thomas and his cohorts. *PL* 3, Gairdner, pp. 221-222. Would Warwick have put his name to the document if he really believed Tuddenham had tried to murder him?

defiance of the king at Ludford in 1459.¹⁰⁷ Fabyan identified those who 'laboured' the king to arrest Warwick as 'the queen and hyr cou[n]ceyll.'¹⁰⁸ Polydore Vergil claimed it was men of the queen's household who attacked Warwick, and this was the cause of the outbreak of the civil war, for Warwick rode to his father and uncle with a tale of attempted assassination and York and Salisbury concluded it was Margaret's fault.¹⁰⁹ They gathered an army together so that Salisbury could remonstrate with the king over her wrongdoing. Margaret thus becomes responsible for the war, and the chronicle tradition supports Vergil.¹¹⁰

There is no evidence that Margaret tried to have Warwick relieved of his captancy.¹¹¹ Although the queen mistrusted York she appears not to have realised until 1459 that he and Warwick might once again make common cause. She may have believed, mistakenly, that she could rely on Warwick's loyalty because he was Captain of Calais. Nor did she attempt to 'starve him

¹⁰⁷ Whethamstede 1, p. 340. This source must be cited with caution. Whethamstede's account is an apologia for the Yorkist lords, and this forms part of a speech which the abbot puts into Warwick's mouth. As justification it is apposite, as evidence it is worthless.

¹⁰⁸ Fabyan, p. 634. cf. Storey, *End of Lancaster*, p. 186: 'the queen blamed Warwick for the incident and demanded his arrest.'

¹⁰⁹ Vergil, pp. 101-102: 'the matter was nothing ells but the fraud and fury of a woman, meaning the queen, who, thinking she might do whatever she listed, sought nor minded any thing so much as by womanish sleight to torment, consume, and utterly destroy all the nobilities of the land.'

¹¹⁰ Fabyan, p. 634; Waurin 5, p 272; Stowe, p. 404. Edward Hall says the king's man attacked Warwick's man, and the queen ordered the arrest and imprisonment of Warwick who would have died in the Tower if he had not escaped to Calais. Hall, p. 239.

¹¹¹ Although the 'fact' that she did remains in the standard accounts. Jacob, p. 515: 'Queen Margaret resolved to remove Warwick from Calais.' cf. Harriss, 'Calais,' p 48: 'the queen at first demanded his resignation and subsequently, in October 1458, contrived an abortive attempt on his life.'

out' by withholding payments to him at the Exchequer.¹¹² Everyone had to await payment at the Exchequer and Warwick was no exception.¹¹³ His piracy was in response to this state of affairs, for no Neville ever went unrewarded for his services, but it must be questioned whether, even if he had been paid, Warwick would have behaved differently, he enjoyed his role as war captain. Warwick's rupture with the court was public property; the earl himself would have seen to that, and it gave rise to rumours that he had refused to surrender his command, thus invoking public sympathy.¹¹⁴ The account in *An English Chronicle* that Warwick refused to give up the captaincy because it had been granted by parliament is a latter addition to his image.¹¹⁵ Had he made such a claim before the outbreak of hostilities in 1459 he would have risked arrest. Afterwards he could claim what he liked. He was relieved of his command in October 1459 three days before the encounter at Ludford when it was known that he had brought troops from Calais to support York.¹¹⁶

The Duke of Burgundy became increasingly worried by English raids on his territories and shipping, for the Calais garrison was not too concerned to differentiate between French and Burgundians, despite the Anglo/Burgundian

¹¹² This unwarranted assertion is made by John Gillingham in his study of the Wars of the Roses. Gillingham, p. 101.

¹¹³ The Duke of Buckingham, Captain of Calais from 1442-1450, was owed 19,395 pounds by 1449, Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 572, and had to wait until Michaelmas 1456 for the final discharge of the crown's debt to him in this capacity. Harriss, 'Struggle for Calais,' p. 50.

¹¹⁴ Stevenson 1, p. 368.

¹¹⁵ *English Chronicle*, p. 79.

¹¹⁶ *Foedera* 11, p 436. Warwick was not ordered to relinquish his captaincy at the council of October/November 1458 as claimed by Margaret's biographer. Bagley, p. 90.

truce. Duke Philip protested to Warwick, and in May 1458 Henry VI commissioned the earl to head an embassy to treat with Burgundian representatives on trade issues and compensation for infringements of the truce.¹¹⁷ In August two low ranking members of the original embassy, John Wenlock the queen's former chamberlain¹¹⁸ and Louis Gallet, a member of the king's household, were authorized by the Lancastrian government to meet first with Burgundian and then with French delegates to negotiate a lasting peace.¹¹⁹ We do not know what their terms of reference were, but during the meetings it was suggested that diplomatic marriages might facilitate a settlement. Charles VII agreed to consider a marriage for his daughter and other princesses if negotiations seemed likely to result in a firm peace.¹²⁰ A copy of the official report of the Anglo/French meeting, together with other information, was allegedly sent to Burgundy by John Wenlock.¹²¹ A (French?) agent at the Burgundian court¹²² compiled a newsletter intended to discredit Wenlock (and the English) by suggesting he was colluding with the

¹¹⁷ *Foedera* 11, pp. 410-411.

¹¹⁸ If Wenlock was Margaret's choice she displayed a touching but misplaced faith in her former servant. It is tempting to speculate that the totally unbelievable report which a Milanese Ambassador prepared for Bianca, Duchess of Milan, dated 24 October 1458, had its origins in information supplied to him by John Wenlock, although it must be said that even Wenlock could not have invented such a farcical account as that concocted by the Milanese Ambassador. *Milanese Papers*, pp. 18-19.

¹¹⁹ Marie-Rose Thielemans, *Bourgogne et Angleterre, 1435-1467*, Brussels: Presses Universitaires de Bruxelles, 1966, p. 372. Beaucourt 6, p. 261. One of the French negotiators was none other than Pierre de Brezé.

¹²⁰ Stevenson 1, pp. 373 and 375-76.

¹²¹ Stevenson 1, pp. 370-377.

¹²² Or more probably Maine Herald who accompanied the English delegation back to England. Although purporting to come from the court of Burgundy the end of the newsletter reads as though it was compiled in England.

Burgundians against the French and claiming that the same offer of marriage had been made to the Burgundians. Prince Edward, the Duke of Somerset and a son of the Duke of York were named as 'eligible' and the three Burgundian brides included Mary, daughter of Burgundy's heir Charles of Charolais.¹²³ Much of the 'newsletter,' dealing with events between October 1458 and sometime after January 1459¹²⁴ has been taken too seriously by historians and should be seen as mischievous in aim.¹²⁵ Such simultaneous proposals to Duke Philip and Charles VII (especially for a marriage with the heir to the throne) would serve only to deepen their suspicions of England and of each other. Possibly the original intent of the embassy, which would have been endorsed by Henry and Margaret, to promote peace, was diverted to York's interests, and became a cover for York's attempt, with Warwick's connivance, to obtain Burgundian support should he decide to impose his will on the government.¹²⁶ Chastellain adds his bit by saying that there were secret negotiations behind the talks in May, but that it was the king of France who feared Burgundy might make common cause with York¹²⁷ According to a not

¹²³ Waurin 5, p. 390 claimed that the ambassadors (unnamed) from England met Duke Philip at Mons but he refused to treat with them for *alyances de marriage* because loyalty to the French king, his sovereign lord, made such negotiations impossible.

¹²⁴ Stevenson 1, pp. 361-369, misdated to November 1458. The misdating is noted in Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 846, n. 270.

¹²⁵ Beaucourt, *Charles VII*, 6, pp. 260-263. Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 816; Wolffe, *Henry VI*, pp. 313-15; Scofield 1, p. 28; Thielemans, p. 372.

¹²⁶ Ramsay 2, p. 210; Storey, *End of Lancaster*, p. 185; Scofield 1, p. 28. J.S. Roskell, in his study of Wenlock, suggested that 'one of the mission's real objects may very well have been to establish relations between York and foreign powers,' and that Wenlock was already committed to York. J.S. Roskell, *Parliament and Politics in Later Medieval England*, 3 vols, London: Hambledon, 1981-83, vol. 2, p 250.

¹²⁷ Chastellain 3, pp. 427-428.

entirely reliable French source, York was also putting out feelers to France.¹²⁸ If York was testing the diplomatic waters to see if an armed *coup* to establish a Third Protectorate would find recognition abroad, he would have had Warwick's enthusiastic support. With York in charge the earl could hope for a more aggressive stance in foreign relations, and in any case York would once again be in the Neville's debt. Warwick's determination to pursue his own policy at Calais was a contributing factor, possibly *the* factor which led to the outbreak of hostilities in England in 1459.

¹²⁸ Beaucourt 6, p. 260, n.4; cf. Scofield 1, p. 28, n 2. The source is a statement made by the Comte de Foix to Louis XI in August 1461, after York was dead and Edward IV was on the throne of England.

Chapter 4: THE WARS OF THE ROSES, 1459-1461

Conflict

The reason why conflict finally erupted in 1459 continues to puzzle historians.¹ The most pressing concern of the government seemed to be the threat of invasion. In March shipping was requisitioned to equip Warwick for defence against the French² and in June Salisbury received payment from the Exchequer to defend the West March against Scotland.³ York was still being summoned to great councils, although he may not have attended, which would occasion suspicion at court. If, as Ralph Griffiths surmises, there was a rumour (and the power of rumour should never be discounted) that Warwick, having broken with the court, was urging York to attempt a *coup d'état*, their indictment before a Great Council in June is readily understood.⁴ But this does not explain why York and the Nevilles continued to be treated as loyal subjects, unless fear of invasion overrode domestic apprehensions. London witnessed an outbreak of rioting in April,⁵ and this, coupled with uncertainty

¹ Storey, *End of Lancaster*, p. 185: 'the immediate reason for the final breakdown is not easy to establish;' Johnson, *York*, p. 186, 'Why the queen should have chosen to challenge the duke and his Neville associates publicly in June is difficult to say;' Watts, p. 332, 'The real mystery is why . . . outright division took three and a half years;' Hicks, *Warwick*, p. 148, 'Why this occurred is not easy to say.'

² *CPR 1452-1461*, p. 494. cf. Hicks, *Warwick*, p. 146.

³ Salisbury was paid 1,578 pounds. Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 813.

⁴ Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 816: 'By this stage, there can be little doubt about the nature of the threat: it would come not from Valois France but from Calais and the Burgundian allies whom the Yorkist lords had acquired, perhaps in league with James II, the arch-intriguer.' I find this difficult to accept. The preparations cited on p. 846, n. 269, seem more likely to have been a counter to an anticipated foreign invasion. Would Richard of York have encouraged foreign invasion *especially* if, as tradition has it, he had his eye on the throne?

⁵ Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 796. In the riots of the previous year the queen's attorney had been killed in an affray.

over York's intentions, probably explains the withdrawal of the court to Coventry in May. Unrest and invasion scares were sufficient to warrant the summons of a Great Council and an investigation of York's loyalty.⁶ The only direct evidence for this council comes from *Benet's Chronicle* although its proceedings can be inferred from the rolls of parliament that record the attainder of the Yorkists in the following November. It has been assumed that York, Warwick, Salisbury and those sympathetic to them ('sympathy' too is an assumption, the lords in question did not support the Yorkist rebellion when it came) were not summoned because they were to be indicted at the instigation of the queen,⁷ who was now prepared to implement her ambition to destroy the 'Yorkists.'⁸ But Benet does not say they were not summoned only that they did not come. Perhaps they and the others Benet names were invited but chose to absent themselves.⁹ Margaret could only have instigated the

⁶ If this was the purpose it would explain Henry VI's writs to summon men from East Anglia to attend him at Leicester in May, 'defensebylly arrayid.' *PL* 3, Gairdner, p. 139. York was expected to come with armed men. Wilkinson has the queen send out the writs, citing Ramsay 2, p. 213 as his source, but Ramsay, of course, is not guilty of such an error. Bertie Wilkinson, *A Constitutional History of England in the Fifteenth Century*, London: Longman, p. 341. cf. Stevenson 2, pt. 2, p. 511, an order to purchase bow-staves and arrows, dated 7 May. It should be noted however that Henry refers to 'thennemies on every side aproching upone us, as welle upone the see as on the lande.' This sounds more like an invasion scare than a threat of insurrection, as the weapons are to be supplied to the 'keper of oure prive wardrobe, within oure Toure of Londone.' Whichever it was, the king expected to *be* attacked *not* to attack.

⁷ *Benet's Chronicle* p. 223. It is unlikely that the queen and prince attended the meeting as Benet claims. Margaret was not allowed membership of the council and the presence of the six-year-old prince was hardly necessary. *Presentibus regina et principe* must refer to their presence in Coventry. cf. Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 817 and Wolffe, *Henry VI*, p. 317 for differing interpretations of *Benet's Chronicle*.

⁸ Pollard, *Wars of the Roses*, p. 64.

⁹ *Benet's Chronicle* lists: The Archbishop of Canterbury [Thomas Bourchier, as Archbishop of Canterbury his omission from a summons would be most unusual]; the Duke of York; the Earls of Salisbury and Warwick; the Bishop of Ely [William Gray, one of the few bishops Henry VI personally disliked, who committed himself to the Yorkist cause in 1460]; the Bishop of Exeter [George Neville, Warwick's brother, who obtained his bishopric whilst

indictment of three leading magnates if those present had reason to suspect their loyalty. We do not know who attended, but for a Great Council it may be presumed that more than a selected few were present. Another possibility, based on an admittedly tendentious interpretation of the parliamentary rolls, is that York and Warwick were not there initially but came later.¹⁰ The attainder of the Yorkists includes an account of a Great Council held at Coventry at which York's misdeeds were rehearsed. King Henry had heretofore forgiven him, but now the Duke of Buckingham, speaking for the lords, begged Henry not to be so lenient in the future. It was enacted that no lord should take the law into his own hands but appeal to the king if he felt himself aggrieved (an echo, possibly, of the Loveday settlement.) York accepted the act, he and Warwick signed it and swore an oath to abide by it.¹¹ Did this council take

under age, against the protests of the Papacy, through Neville influence during York's First Protectorate]; the Earl of Arundel [William Fitzallan, married to a Neville who reluctantly joined Warwick before the second Battle of St Albans, and was apt to avoid council meetings]; Lord Bouchier [Henry, Viscount Bouchier, dismissed as Treasurer in 1456, Buckingham's half brother, York's brother-in-law, probably sympathetic to York.] All of them were 'Yorkists' after the Battle of Northampton in 1460, and known as such to the author of *Benet's Chronicle* but it must be doubted if they would have supported York against Henry VI in 1459.

¹⁰ Hicks, *Warwick*, p. 156.

¹¹ *RP 5*, p. 347. 'the Duc of Bukyngham, on the bihalf of the Lordes Temporell, reherced full notably to make the seid Duc of York to understonde of what demeanyng he had been, and lete hym witte that he had no thyng to lene to, sauf oonly youre Grace, as more playnly is conteyned in an Acte therof made.' Buckingham and all the lords knelt before the king and begged Henry: 'that it shuld not lyke You to shewe the seid Duc of York, nor noon other hereafter grace, if they attempted eftsones to doo the contrary to youre Roiall estate, or iniquityng of youre Realme. . . but to be punysshed after their deserte . . . To which it lyked You then to sey, that ye wuld so doo, the seid Duc of York at the same tyme beyng present. Also it was enacted there, that no Lord shuld attempt by wey of fayt ayenst other, but in that he felde hym greved, he shuld compleyne hym unto youre Highnes, . . . and in noon otherwise . . . The seid Duc of York there swore on the holy Evaungelies, and signed the Acte . . . and semblably the seid Erle of Warrewyk there swore and signed the same Acte.'

place at Coventry in February 1457¹² or in June 1459?¹³ It was a single occurrence, with Buckingham as York's accuser, and a formal agreement was signed by York and Warwick. The latter was not at Coventry in 1457¹⁴ and there was no threat to his captaincy of Calais. But the criteria fit 1459 and offer an explanation of the ensuing conflict. York and Warwick deeply resented their treatment and it hardened their determination to resort to force. It can be argued that York was thus driven into rebellion,¹⁵ but the co-ordinated movements of the Yorkists after the council meeting strongly suggest that their plans had been laid well in advance. There is another possible explanation. Michael Hicks thought that a hint of 'the real root of the break' between the queen and the Yorkists was to be found in a letter from the Earl of Salisbury to the Prior of Arbury which he dates to 7 March 1459.¹⁶ But he has mistaken its purport. The alleged accusations were being made *by* not *against* the Yorkists. 'Ye [the prior] haue herd language of accusations of right hie estates to bee made by my lord of York my son of Warrewic and me

¹² York's biographer assigns it, with some misgivings, to 1457 to tie in with the Herbert/Devereux rising of 1456. Johnson, *York*, p. 176. Bertram Wolffe also dates it to 1457, noting that it was Bishop Stubbs who originally made this connection. Wolffe, *Henry VI*, p. 310.

¹³ Michael Hicks argues for 1459 and I have followed his interpretation (although he overstates his case somewhat) because it seems to fit the circumstances of 1459 better than those of 1457. Hicks, *Warwick*, pp. 156-158.

¹⁴ Warwick's name is not included in the list of those present at Coventry in 1457. *Coventry Leet Book*, pt 2, pp. 296-297.

¹⁵ Ramsay 2, p. 218: 'That York's acts of the autumn involved a clear breach of the Coventry oath, cannot be denied: the question might be raised whether he first attacked Margaret or she him.'

¹⁶ Hicks, *Warwick*, pp. 155-156. C.L. Kingsford, *EHL*, p. 213, dated it to 1455 but this is demonstrably too early (as Hicks points out.) The letter is printed in Jessie H. Flemming (ed.), *England Under the Lancastrians*, London: Longmans, 1921.

in materes that haue nat bee disclosed herebifore to their grete rebuke etc.’¹⁷

There was gossip, ‘language,’ to the effect that the three Yorkist lords were accusing some high ranking persons of discredibly concealing something. Salisbury denied the charge, possibly disingenuously, as he had been seeking the queen’s ‘good grace’ with the prior as intermediary, and wanted her assured that he was her loyal subject. One of the suggestions as to the nature of these unspecified charges put forward by Micharl Hicks is that they related to rumours of Prince Edward’s bastardy. If true, then not only the queen but the lords too had every reason for suspecting York. Moreover it means that he had colluded with Warwick (and Salisbury?), probably after the council meeting at Westminster and its resulting brawl. Margaret had recently written to the council on the subject of ‘rest and unitee’ – an attempt on her part to heal the breach? It must be stressed that this is speculation, the letter is too vague for any certainty, but if this was the case and Margaret suspected the Yorkists of making accusations of this nature their indictment at the Great Council may well have been at her instigation and it would certainly receive her backing. Benet’s version is an over-simplification to make the queen responsible for a collective decision, because by the time he wrote those who were at the council, or their families, had been reconciled to Yorkist rule, whereas Margaret was still a threat to Edward IV’s regime.

For this very reason the chronicle accounts place full responsibility for the outbreak of fighting and misgovernment of the realm squarely on the

¹⁷ BL MS Cott. Vespasian F. xiii, Art. 64.

shoulders of the queen.¹⁸ The legend of King Henry as a good and ‘simple’ man, to whom the Yorkist lords remained loyal, was part of the image-making that justified their rebellion. It was not the king, but those around him who were guilty. An oft-quoted passage in *An English Chronicle* sums it up:

‘In this same tyme the reame of Englande was oute of all good gouernaunce. . . for the kyng was simple and lad by couetous counseylle, and owed moe then he was worthe. . . And suche ymposicionas as were put to the peple, as taxes, tallages and quynzymes, . . . The queen with such as were of her affynyte rewled the reame as her liked, gaderyng ryches innumerable. . . the erle of Wyltshyre treasurer of Engleond for to enryche himself peled the pore peple, and dishertyed ryghtfulle eyres and ded meny wronges.’¹⁹

Bertram Wolffe points out that as parliament was not called in these years no extra taxes could have been levied; he attributes the resentment that people reportedly felt to an increase in household purveyance and the exploitation of hereditary revenues.²⁰ But is it not a deliberate distortion by the chronicler? The chronicle is invaluable for its record of Yorkist movements (and propaganda) but its very selectivity makes it suspect. It ignores York’s armed

¹⁸ It is important to note that it is only in 1459, the year in which conflict broke out, that the chroniclers become unanimous in stressing the queen’s role in government.

¹⁹ *English Chronicle*, p. 79. cf. *John Vale’s Book*, pp. 208-210, ‘Articles of the Earl of Warwick on his way from Calais to Ludlow, 1459.’ *An English Chronicle* may be a later version of Warwick’s manifesto; the charges are similar but the manifesto does not name any individuals.

²⁰ Wolffe, *Henry VI*, p. 308-309.

confrontation with the king at Ludlow whilst carefully reproducing the Yorkist lords' letter of exculpation written from there.²¹

An encounter between Yorkist and Lancastrian forces took place at Blore Heath in September. Salisbury came south to join York, and Warwick was on his way from Calais with a contingent of the royal garrison. Lords Audley and Dudley, with men from Cheshire, Shropshire and Staffordshire, barred Salisbury's route and there was a bloody encounter in which Salisbury, with a numerically inferior force, came off victorious.²² Lord Audley and many of the Cheshire men was killed.²³ A piece of carefully crafted propaganda is that these men were 'the queen's gallants,' whom she had courted by holding 'open house' among them and issuing a livery badge of the swan to identify them with her cause of maintaining her son's right to the throne.²⁴ The swan was a Lancastrian badge associated with Humphrey of Gloucester.²⁵ York's propaganda had allied the 'good duke' with his aims in 1456, Margaret was now reclaiming him for Lancaster. The swan was issued

²¹ *English Chronicle*, pp. 81-83.

²² For a detailed account of the men who marched with Salisbury see A.J. Pollard, *North-Eastern England During the Wars of the Roses*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990, pp. 270-272.

²³ The best account of Blore Heath is in Anthony Goodman, *The Wars of the Roses*, London: Routledge, 1981. Reprint New York: Barnes and Noble, 1996, pp. 27-28.

²⁴ *English Chronicle*, pp. 79-80. cf. Stowe, who quotes this passage. *Benet's Chronicle* p. 224 and *Gregory's Chronicle* p. 204 refer to the 'queen's gallants.'

²⁵ The swan was an emblem of the Bohns, Gloucester's maternal family, and he is identified by it in a contemporary poem dated to 1449:

The Rote is ded [John, Duke of Bedford, Humphrey's brother]
the Swanne is goone [Humphrey of Gloucester] *Political Poems 2*, Wright (ed.), p. 221.
cf. J.R. Planche, 'On the Badges of the House of Lancaster,' *British Archaeological Association Journal*, 6, (1851), pp. 374-393.

as an insignia for commanders of Lancastrian troops, not specifically for those of the Prince of Wales.²⁶

The chronicles blame the queen for Blore Heath and she was indeed responsible, as the attainder of Lord Stanley in the parliamentary rolls confirms. He was charged with failing to answer the king's summons to join Henry at Nottingham; the king subsequently ordered the Prince of Wales (who was with the queen at Eccleshall) to call out his tenants, Lord Stanley among them, but he failed to arrive. The day after the battle he excused his absence, saying he had been called to Nottingham by the king. It may be a polite fiction that Henry ordered the prince to call out his tenants, for although he should have given the order, it was probably the queen who acted in the prince's name. Margaret intended the encounter at Blore Heath to be a pre-emptive strike to prevent a repetition of the conjunction of York and Neville forces that had led to victory at St Albans. She also summoned Lord Audley because he was in the best position to deploy quickly and cut Salisbury's route.²⁷ The chronicles read as if this was an unprovoked attack.²⁸ Salisbury, on his way to join York rode with armed retainers because he feared 'the

²⁶ The only surviving example was found at Dunstable, which must mean it was worn at the Second Battle of St Albans. Yet *Gregory's Chronicle*, p. 212, records that those who wore the prince's livery that day displayed the traditional ostrich feathers. The swan was a Lancastrian badge and not the livery of badge of Margaret of Anjou as claimed in Charles Ross, *The Wars of the Roses*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1976, p. 37. cf Holinshed p. 251 who says Margaret devised a cognisance of the white swan.

²⁷ Griffiths *Henry VI*, p. 786. cf. Whethamstede 1, p. 338.

²⁸ Edward Hall goes further: the queen had ordered that Salisbury be brought to her, alive or dead. Hall, p. 240.

malyses of his enemyes and specially the queen.²⁹ York and Salisbury intended to tell the 'simple' king of 'the mischief of this land for the default of good rule,³⁰ that the queen's government excluded great nobles from the king's council (which was not true but symbolic of York's position.) They were to be 'destroyed vtterly,' as was proved by the attempt to kill Salisbury at Blore Heath. When the king summoned his nobles against the Yorkists they came in great numbers because 'euery lord in England at this tyme durst not disobey the queen for she reuled pesibly and al that was done about the king which was a good and simple man.'³¹ Yet neither the Duke of York nor any of his adherents had been arrested and the king continued to offer them pardons before, during and after their revolt, even though, if the chronicles are to be believed, Margaret dictated all his actions.

After Blore Heath, King Henry and his forces advanced to York's town of Ludlow. Did the king take the field at the urging of the queen, on the advice of his magnates, or a combination of the two? T.B. Pugh suggested that the Duke of Buckingham's support made it possible for Margaret to challenge York,³² but the crown appears to have commanded widespread

²⁹ *English Chronicle*, p. 80.

³⁰ *Flenley/Bale*, p. 148

³¹ *Brut Continuation G*, pp. 526-527. cf. *London Chronicle* p. 164; *Great Chronicle*, p. 191. But it is Edward Hall's invective that turned Margaret into Medusa. Many men answered Henry's call because they loved him, but many more came because they feared the queen, 'whose countenance was so fearfull, and whose looke was so terrible, that to al men, against whom she toke a small displeasure, her frounyng was their vndoing, & her indignacion, was their death.' Hall, p. 241.

³² T.B. Pugh, 'The Magnates, Knights and Gentry,' in Chrimes, *Fifteenth Century England*, p. 106.

loyalty among the lords. Certainly there was no enthusiasm to replace the existing government with one headed by the Duke of York. As so often happens, the chronicles are silent on evidence of Lancastrian loyalties. There is no record of who joined Henry at Ludlow.³³ The rebels continued to protest their 'loyalty' but their hope of bringing the king to terms by a show of force failed. He offered them a pardon if they submitted but without a victory York could not form a government in the king's name; so a pardon was no use. The opposing armies faced each other at Ludford Bridge on 12 October where the Calais garrison under Andrew Trollope refused to fight against the king and changed sides. The Yorkist lords fled during the night, abandoning their army to its fate. Those left behind submitted and were pardoned. York went to Ireland, his son, Edward of March, and the Neville earls to Calais. The first phase of the conflict was over.

The Parliament at Coventry

The parliament that convened at Coventry in November was exceptionally well attended. Sixty-six peers were present in a show of solidarity that the Yorkists later impugned as 'the parliament of devils' when

³³ Colin Richmond, 'The Nobility and the Wars of the Roses 1459-1461,' *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 21, (1977). pp. 71-86, p. 71. The lords who were probably present may have included the Dukes of Buckingham and Exeter, the Earls of Arundel, Devon, Northumberland, Shrewsbury and Wiltshire, Viscount Beaumont, Lords Clifford, Dacre, de la Warre, Egremont (Thomas Percy, Northumberland's brother), Fitzhugh, Neville (of the senior Westmorland branch), Richmond-Grey, Scrope of Masham, Welles, Willoughby. Of these only the Earl of Arundel later fought for Warwick at St Albans [This may account for his inclusion in the list of those 'indicted' by the queen in 1459 compiled by the author of *Benet's Chronicle* in the 1460s.]

they captured King Henry and began to rule in his name.³⁴ The tradition persists that it was Margaret's moment of triumph, that 'her burning desire to humble the Yorkist lords and ultimately treat them as rebels and traitors was about to be fulfilled.'³⁵ But the Yorkist lords *were* rebels and traitors. They had refused the king's offer of a pardon and by fleeing the country they had demonstrated their determination to pursue the fight, thus inviting retaliatory action. What was the alternative? Was the king to restore them to favour on their own terms and oust those lords who remained loyal? Had a king of Henry V's stature attainted them (as he condemned York's father to death for treason) no recriminations would have been heard.

The indictment of the Yorkists is set out in the rolls of parliament.³⁶ An anonymous tract, the *Somnium Vigilantis*,³⁷ recapitulates the Yorkists' arguments and then refutes them to demonstrate their spuriousness. Margaret Kekewich suggests that the *Somnium*, which she describes as 'unprecedented for its vicious clarity and directness,' may have been produced by one of the queen's advisors 'to convince Henry and his associates of the necessity of

³⁴ J.S. Roskell, 'The Problem of the Attendance of the Lords in Medieval Parliaments,' *BIHR*, 29, 1956, pp. 153-203, p. 195, who records that of 97 persons summoned, 66 attended and remarks: 'Ironically enough, this last proper parliament of the Lancastrians . . . was possibly the best attended of any parliament summoned by a member of that dynasty.'

³⁵ Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 822-823.

³⁶ *RP* 5, pp. 349-350. For a Yorkist version of their condemnation without trial and the retribution visited on them and their followers, see *English Chronicle*, p. 83. *Annales*, p. 771 lists those indicted.

³⁷ J.G. Gilson, 'A Defence of the Proscription of the Yorkists in 1459,' *English Historical Review*, 26, (1911), pp. 512-525.

attainting the Yorkists.³⁸ This is the traditional view, that the merciful king had misgivings about what was being done in his name.³⁹ But Henry had no such doubts; he assented to the attainder with the proviso that he retained his right to pardon, a different concept, and a clever one. Only those demonstrably guilty were to be punished and even they could be pardoned if they sought the king's grace, for mercy and justice were both royal prerogatives.⁴⁰

Nevertheless it is reasonable to accept that the *Somnium* was written at the behest of Queen Margaret⁴¹ as it served a wider purpose than to convince the king and his associates (which associates?) of the need for the attainders. It stressed two important points: a concept of monarchy that reflected the queen's struggle to maintain the authority of the crown, and the necessity to

³⁸ Margaret Kekewich, 'The Attainder of the Yorkists in 1459: Two Contemporary Accounts,' *BIHR*, 55, (1982) pp. 25-34, p. 34 and p. 28. Her analysis of Whethamstede's version of this parliament (the second 'contemporary' account) re-enforces my contention that Whethamstede was the most subtle of all Edward IV's propagandists. She describes it accurately, p. 33, as a 'strange mixture of fact and imagination,' a technique in which Whethamstede specialised. Whethamstede 1, pp. 345-356. The abbot's description of the parliamentary proceedings bears little resemblance to the rolls of parliament. In his stylised debate between Justice and Mercy he contends that the Yorkists were contrite and ready to submit to the king – a patently false assertion, contradicted by his account of Warwick's speech at Ludford in which the earl claims that King Henry's word is not to be trusted. Unfortunately Margaret Kekewich adduces an untenable reason for Whethamstede's (presumed) antipathy to the queen, p. 34: 'As a former friend of Humphrey duke of Gloucester he would hardly view with any warmth the faction of the queen and the others who destroyed him.' A balanced view of Queen Margaret is still far from established.

³⁹ Ramsay 2, p. 218; Scofield 1, p. 39.

⁴⁰ Lord Stanley, who failed to answer the Prince of Wales' summons before Blore Heath, was attainted, and it might be supposed that the malicious queen would ensure his condemnation. But Henry pardoned him, a politic move to re-establish his loyalty and support for the regime in Wales. Cecily, Duchess of York, came to Coventry in early December, *PL* 3, Gairdner, p. 196. [One cannot help wondering if the queen and the duchess met.] She was granted 1,000 marks a year from York's estates 'for her and her infants who have not offended against the king.' *CPR 1452-1461*, p. 542. The act of attainder included a provision to safeguard the jointures of the wives of the attainted. *RP* 5, p. 350. The Countess of Salisbury was the exception, she was attainted along with her husband, but as Alice Montagu she was an heiress in her own right. cf. *Gregory's Chronicle*, p. 205.

⁴¹ The authorship is disputed but either candidate, Lawrence Booth, the Privy Seal or Sir John Fortescue, the chief justice, could have written it for the queen. Kekewich, p. 30 for Booth; Gross, p. 58 for Fortescue.

proscribe overmighty subjects whose disruption of government on numerous occasions had culminated in sedition and rebellion which it was the duty of every loyal subject to resist, morally and materially. The Yorkists claimed the 'realm was out of all good governance,' but that did not make it true, nor did it give them the right to appoint themselves custodians of the realm in defiance of the king.

And as for the peremcion of thaim the whiche as ye say was mysruled, God knoweth and rayson wytenessith also t[h]ogh hit had ben so, hit was not thaire parte to take apon ham such a thinge. Who made hem judges?⁴²

It was the Yorkists, not the Lancastrians, who would go on to establish that might makes right. It is dangerous to infer that the queen had pre-determined to attaint the Yorkists merely because the writs summoning parliament were sent out on 9 October, three days before Ludford Bridge. She could not have known that the Yorkists would flee. Had they stood their ground (as at St Albans) or accepted the king's pardon, legal provision would have to be made for the aftermath. If civil war ensued, as was all too likely, the government would have to appeal to parliament for money whether or not the Yorkists were attainted. Attainder was the legal process by which a more ancient prerogative of the crown, the right to disinherit traitors who had come in arms against the king, could be exercised.⁴³ The 'rash and despotic' queen was preparing to work within the law, whatever the outcome. Anthony Gross

⁴² Gilson, p. 520.

⁴³ Bellamy, p. 204. '[Attainder] was also intended to set down the degree of forfeiture the government intended to exact,' which is precisely what the rolls of parliament record.

argues that acquiring the vast holdings of the Yorkists was the main incentive for their attainder, and it may have been in the queen's mind, for such assets, properly administered, could rectify or at least allay, the government's insolvency.⁴⁴ But Margaret's first consideration must surely have been to render the rebel lords powerless by stripping them of their resources. She was not exacting vengeance - she was seeking security. If there were whispers that York might claim to rule in Henry's stead then she had cause to take extreme measures. A rival claimant to the throne was far more dangerous than a rebel against the king's authority. The form of the oath of allegiance sworn individually by every peer present suggests that the regime was aware of the challenge from York, for the oath specifically acknowledged that Henry was king by right of just inheritance and that Edward, Prince of Wales and no other was his heir.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Gross, pp. 60-61. See Johnson, *York*, pp. 192-194, for what was actually done with the forfeited estates.

⁴⁵ *RP 5*, pp. 351-352. Immediately following the oath the rolls record the resumption by the crown (with Margaret's agreement) of her manor of Havering at Bower. In exchange she was granted the manor of Cosham in Wiltshire and twenty pounds annually on the London customs on cloth. An elaborate arrangement ensured she neither lost nor gained thereby, if her new grants exceeded the revenues of the old then she had to pay the balance to the king, if they fell short then she was to be reimbursed from the customs. Margaret was being very careful not to lose any part of her dower but at the same time to ensure that she did not exceed it, mindful of the petition of parliament in 1456 that her total dower should not be increased. This parliament also confirmed all grants to Prince Edward and gave him full control of his inheritance (although the king retained the right to appoint to bishoprics and major offices.) The prince was to have his own establishment, separate from that of the king who was no longer responsible for his maintenance. *RP 5*, pp. 356-363.

Lancaster, York and Warwick

The Lancastrians ‘triumphed’ but it was a Pyrrhic victory, for the Yorkists were still at large and no one could doubt that they would return and claim the moral high ground of having been unfairly tried and condemned in their absence. Margaret and her advisors appear to have underestimated the resources still available to them even without a base in England, but they had to prepare for invasion on two fronts, from Calais and from Ireland through Wales, with insufficient funds available to resist either.

Margaret made two major errors. The first was to underestimate the Earl of Warwick, the second to underestimate the importance of London. The third was yet to come. York alone she might have countered, as she had in the past, but not Warwick, who was a law unto himself and amenable to no discipline but his own. Margaret never courted popularity, Warwick never ceased to do so.⁴⁶ The queen’s experience and authority were insufficient to sustain the strains placed on them. She was becoming the mainstay of a king who was intellectually frail and whose military prowess was non-existent, from whom no personal leadership could be expected. It was a weakness the Yorkists recognised and exploited. Margaret had no one of the calibre of Warwick to whom she could turn. The Lancastrian lords were loyal but

⁴⁶ Johnson, *York*, p. 195: ‘the duke [of York] might have the blood of kings in his veins, but it was Warwick who knew the way to his potential subjects hearts.’

ineffectual. The Duke of Somerset made valiant efforts to recover Calais⁴⁷ but he was ill equipped and supplied whilst Warwick was able to continue his profitable piracy and to coerce or cajole the Calais staplers into supplying him with funds.⁴⁸ A muster of ships and men at Sandwich under Lord Rivers to join Somerset proved not only disastrous but embarrassing.⁴⁹ In January 1460 Warwick's men raided the town and returned to Calais in triumph. Rivers and his son were captured and humiliated by the Yorkists.⁵⁰ Two naval expeditions, one under the Duke of Exeter (now re-instated as Admiral of England) were commissioned in response to the raid but money to maintain them was lacking⁵¹ and so was skill. Exeter put to sea and sighted Warwick's

⁴⁷ Henry, Duke of Somerset, had been appointed Captain of Calais in October when Warwick was relieved of his command, an appointment reaffirmed in January 1460. *Foedera* 11, pp. 436 and 439. He was still young and inexperienced so presumably the appointment went to him by default because there was no one else of sufficient standing, or willingness, to assume it. That he received it through the queen's favour is inferential, there is no evidence either way.

⁴⁸ The claim that the parliament at Coventry banned all trade with Calais is not to be found on the parliamentary rolls. It appears to have originated with Fabyan, p. 636. But see W.I. Haward, 'The Financial Transactions between the Lancastrian Government and the Merchants of the Staple from 1449-1461,' in *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century*, Eileen Power & M.M. Postan (eds), London; Routledge, 1933, pp. 316-317 and n. 75. Possibly the government attempted to cut communications with Calais once it was known Warwick had held it successfully against Somerset and this was interpreted as a 'trade ban.' In May the government ordered that merchandise from London, Southampton and Sandwich (a singularly ill advised choice of ports) was to be shipped 'in the king's name or otherwise for the king's benefit' (i.e. profit.) This may also be interpreted as a 'trade ban.' In either case it was not, politically or economically, a wise move. *CPR 1452-1461*, p. 600.

⁴⁹ Stevenson 2, pt. 2, p. 512.

⁵⁰ *PL* 3, Gairdner, pp. 203 and 204. William Worcester reports that 'the Lord Ryvers, Sir Antonye, hys son, and othys' were taken to Calais. He goes on 'But my Lady Duchesse ys stille ayen receved yn Kent.' Gairdner (and others, notably Cora Scofield) have assumed this to be a reference to Cecily, Duchess of York, but it is more likely to be Rivers' wife, Jacquetta, Duchess of Bedford and means she was not taken to Calais. In the following letter William Paston reports the humiliation of Rivers and his son but not of the duchess. All the chronicles record the incident but only *Gregory's Chronicle*, p. 206 says the duchess was taken to Calais. He then reports that Cecily, Duchess of York was kept in close confinement until after the Battle of Northampton which makes it doubtful that the reference in the *Paston Letters* is to Cecily.

⁵¹ Stevenson 2, pt. 2, pp. 512-517.

fleet as he returned from Ireland where he had been meeting with the Duke of York. But the royal squadron failed to engage; Warwick reached Calais and Exeter returned to base, having wasted what few resources there were, and leaving the Channel open to the Yorkists.⁵² Finance was the government's major problem but lack of a co-ordinated effort against invasion was almost as serious. The Duke of Buckingham as Constable of Dover and Warden of the Cinque Ports should have made himself responsible for this but as always in a crisis, he proved sadly ineffectual. Commissions of array to resist the Yorkists, issued periodically throughout the uneasy months that followed the parliament at Coventry, availed little since they lacked direction and were an irritant and an expense to men whose lives were disrupted in mid-winter without direction or apparent purpose.⁵³ Commissions of *oyer and terminer* to root out suspected Yorkist sympathisers have been adduced as examples of Lancastrian tyranny,⁵⁴ but they were customary practice and appear to have been more inept than tyrannous. The Lancastrian efforts were lacklustre because they were leaderless.

⁵² Whethamstede 1, p. 369 and *Annales* p. 772, say that Warwick put Exeter to flight. *An English Chronicle* p. 85, depicts Exeter as somewhat cowardly, he 'durst nat sette oponne the erle,' but Warwick was a true and loyal knight who would not attack Exeter 'because he was amyral, and of the kynges bloode.' *Brut, Continuation G*, p. 529 claims Exeter dared not attack Warwick because his crews favoured Warwick's cause. This may be partly true in that Exeter's men were unpaid and probably pressed, but whether they favoured Warwick's *cause* as against his *success* is another matter. cf. *London Chronicle*, p. 171 and *Great Chronicle*, p. 192.

⁵³ I.M.W. Harvey, 'Was there Popular Politics,' in *The MacFarlane Legacy*, R.H. Britnell and A.J. Pollard (eds), Stroud: Sutton, 1995, p. 169, notes the damage done to the image of monarchy by both sides by the mustering of uncommitted men through shire levies.

⁵⁴ Scofield 1, pp. 65-66.

Was it at this time that Margaret wrote to Pierre de Brezé, who had attacked Sandwich in 1457, asking for his help? The idea that Margaret had been in touch with Brezé ever since York's victory at St Albans, to enlist French interest in her cause, is a firmly established tradition for which Chastellain is supposedly the source.⁵⁵ Writing of 1462, he gave the reasons for Louis XI's choice of Brezé to lead an expedition on behalf of the exiled queen: Brezé best understood *the English* and had always interested himself in the affairs of the king and queen *because he was devoted to Margaret's father, Rene of Anjou.*⁵⁶ This is quite true. Brezé went to considerable trouble to gain news of the Battle of Northampton in 1460 and of the queen's whereabouts afterwards and he forwarded the news to Charles VII.⁵⁷ But this does not mean that Margaret had been in touch with Brezé on political matters since 1455. A letter from Brezé to Charles VII dated 24 February informed the king that Margaret was anxious to know what Charles VII meant to do for her.⁵⁸ In the meanwhile she requested Brezé to intercept Warwick's ships in the channel, but Brezé said he would wait for instructions from Charles VII on what to say to the messengers Margaret planned to send to him. This appears to fit the circumstances of February 1460 just after Warwick's raid on

⁵⁵ Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 846, n. 262, following Beaucourt who takes liberties with Chastellain's text in claiming that Margaret held Brezé in great affection. Beaucourt 6, p. 139.

⁵⁶ Chastellain 4, p. 228: *c'estoit celuy seul du royaume qui plus avoit manié et conduit les affaires de la royne et de son mary, de tout long temps, pour et en faveur du roy Regnier, son père, qui estoit son oncle [Louis XI's uncle] et lequel aimoit de léal ardent amour, comme son naturel seigneur, le duc d'Anjou.*

⁵⁷ Pierre Bernus, 'Le Role Politique de Pierre de Brezé,' *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes*, 69, (1908), pp. 303-339, pp. 335-336.

⁵⁸ Thomas Basin, *Histoire des règnes de Charles VII et de Louis XI*, J.E.J. Quicherat (ed.), 4 vols, Paris, 1855-1859, vol 4, pp. 358-360. It is dated to 1460 by Quicherat.

Sandwich.⁵⁹ It is more likely, however, that Margaret's communication dates to 1461, immediately after the Lancastrian victory at St Albans.⁶⁰ Warwick did not flee to Calais but Margaret, not knowing where he was, may have thought he would make for his safe haven, as he had in 1459. In his letter Brezé says the English have no fleet of their own, which was not true of 1460. It would have been dangerous to Lancastrian interests for a French fleet to cruise the channel when an English squadron was watching for Warwick, as a most unfortunate encounter might have occurred. Margaret had appealed directly to Charles VII for refuge after the defeat at Northampton⁶¹ but once she had demonstrated at St Albans that the Lancastrians were still a force to be reckoned with, she naturally hoped that help from France might be forthcoming. There is no evidence that she solicited French help before Northampton when she was not driven by necessity; but in 1461 York had been proclaimed the rightful heir of England by Henry VI, who was in Yorkist hands, and Margaret had to call on any ally she could find. It was in 1461, on instructions from Charles VII, that Brezé raised a fleet to help the queen. Brezé professed to be so taken aback by the queen's communication, *les segrettes choses qu'elle m'a mandé*, that he urged the utmost discretion. If the nobles who supported her were to find out they would turn against her and put

⁵⁹ Bernus, 'Pierre de Brezé,' p. 334, argues for this date as given by Quicherat.

⁶⁰ Scofield 1, p. 161, dates the letter to 1461 but reads sinister connotations into it, suggesting that Margaret was planning to 'sell' Calais to Charles VII. Margaret offered Calais as security for a loan from Louis XI in 1462, but in 1461 she was not yet in exile, and had no need to make the offer. Once again the queen is the victim of hindsight.

⁶¹ Beaucourt 6, p. 296.

her to death.⁶² Allowances must be made for Brezé's hyperbole. He was an arch intriguer continually warning that all his negotiations must be kept secret because of their vast importance.⁶³ Brezé had spent his life fighting the English and he was well aware of the antagonism between the two countries. He naturally assumed that appeals for French help, no matter how justified, would horrify the English, although it is a typical exaggeration for him to suggest that Margaret might face death should they become known.

Warwick was not idle on the diplomatic front. England's trading truce with Burgundy expired in November 1459 and Henry VI appointed delegates to negotiate its renewal. In Calais Warwick treated in his own right with envoys sent by the Duke of Burgundy.⁶⁴ He also made contact with the ambitious papal legate Francesco Coppini. An endorsement of the Yorkists by the pope was even more valuable propaganda than recognition by Burgundy. Coppini kept Pope Pius II informed of the situation in England as seen through

⁶² A further 'proof' to English historians that Margaret was engaged in treasonable activities. Tout, 'Margaret of Anjou,' in *DNB*; Bagley, pp. 116-117, who dates the Brezé letter to 1461.

⁶³ In 1447 when Brezé was intriguing with the Duke of Burgundy he had 'go-betweens' sworn to secrecy and an elaborate list of royal names (including that of the young queen of England) all encoded to ensure his secrets were kept. See Escouchy 3, pp. 318-320 for the list; Margaret appears as 'Jannionine.' cf. Vale, *Charles VII*, pp. 106-112.

⁶⁴ Mlle Thielemans claims that at the same time as Warwick was negotiating with Burgundy's envoys Margaret wrote personal letters to Duke Philip and his son in an attempt to prevent a Yorkist/Burgundian entente by offering trading concessions, but she was unsuccessful. I find it difficult to accept that Margaret would have written personally to Burgundy at this time. Possibly the letters, both apparently dated 6 November, were in Henry VI's name, *de la part du roi*, as the government was trying to renegotiate the trade treaty, and Mlle. Thielemans assumed they came from Margaret because she accepted the tradition that Margaret was directing English policy. But I have not been able to obtain a copy of the document(s) quoted and may be in error: *Archives départementales du Nord*, Lille, R.G.F., B2040, f. 165, v. Thielemans, p. 375.

Warwick's eyes.⁶⁵ In his *Commentaries* Pius recorded what he claimed were Warwick's own words and they set out Warwick's true opinions, contradicting the Yorkist manifestos so assiduously disseminated in England.⁶⁶ The Pope was already biased against Margaret as he supported Alphonso of Aragon's claim to the Kingdom of Sicily against that of Rene of Anjou, and he had no difficulty in believing that 'the King of England [was] more timorous than a woman, utterly devoid of wit or spirit, who left everything in his wife's hands.'⁶⁷

Lord Fauconberg (Salisbury's brother) sailed into Sandwich in June 1460 and took the town.⁶⁸ Two days later Warwick, Salisbury and March landed with their forces and advanced on London via Canterbury. If Margaret had moved the court to Westminster immediately after parliament was prorogued in December 1459 she might have averted disaster. Her reasons for remaining in the Midlands are understandable but proved ill advised. Coventry was her power base whereas London's populace was prone to

⁶⁵ Constance Head, *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae*, 'Pope Pius II and the Wars of the Roses,' Rome: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1970. This is the best study of the role of Francesco Coppini in Yorkist politics, but cf. Scofield 1, Chapter 3, *passim*.

⁶⁶ Head, p. 152. 'Our king is a dolt and a fool who is ruled instead of ruling. The royal power is in the hands of his wife and those who defile the King's chamber. Because I could not endure these things and desired another form of government I was banished from the King's presence . . . Many feel as I do, the chief among them the Duke of York, who would now be on the throne if there were any regard for justice. . . we shall drive out our foes from the King's side and ourselves govern the kingdom. The King will retain only the bare name of sovereign.'

⁶⁷ Head, p. 145.

⁶⁸ The government knew they was coming but the king remained at Coventry. It was from there that a proclamation, dated 11 June, citing the statute (of treasons, 1352) of Edward III, warned that any man who aided the Yorkists or their adherents (who are listed) would likewise be branded as traitors. *Foedera* 11, pp. 454-455.

violence and Warwick's reputation stood high among them thanks to his piratical exploits. But although the court was not popular in London, the city was not 'Yorkist.'⁶⁹ Its unenfranchised majority rioted whenever opportunity offered; and it was this element that Margaret had distrusted since Cade's rebellion. More important were the 'citizens,' the enfranchised men of the merchant community and the guilds. The government depended on them for loans but continual encroachment of their privileges, which began before Margaret came to England, made them wary of the king's intentions and possibly of his good will. However the city, corporately and individually, continued to make loans, as did merchants of the Calais staple, many of whom were Londoners.⁷⁰ Such an important source of credit should have been nursed with care.⁷¹ Margaret failed to see the symbolic importance of the presence of the king in his capital; his absence, as well as his insolvency, undermined confidence in the crown. Nor did she understand that by alienating the citizens the government risked putting the economic resources of London at Warwick's disposal. The Common Council prepared to defend London against the Yorkist earls but they also sent a delegation to meet Warwick. 'Whatever the outcome of the rebellion they could plead they had held the city

⁶⁹ Caroline M. Barron, 'London and the Crown 1451-1461,' in *The Crown and Local Communities in England and France in the Fifteenth Century*, J.R.L. Highfield and R. Jeffs (eds), Gloucester: Sutton, 1981. Her balanced and objective study forms the basis for what follows. She makes the important point that London at this period was not an homogeneous body.

⁷⁰ For the period 1448-1460 corporate loans were sought on 21 occasions, seven were refused but 14 were granted. In addition 83 individuals made loans to the crown, as did merchants of the Calais Staple. Barron, 'London,' p. 93.

⁷¹ After Ludford the Common Council gave the king L666. 13s 4d for his expenses in connection with the rebellion and on 8 November made further loans for the relief of Calais. Barron, 'London,' p. 96.

for the victor,⁷² but it was the absence of the king that made such a plea possible.⁷³ Warwick, Salisbury and March entered London on 2 July without a fight and the capital became Yorkist.⁷⁴

A manifesto was sent into Kent in advance of the Yorkists' landing. Its theme was 'the realm is out of all good governance' and it named three evil councillors: Shrewsbury, Wiltshire and Beaumont. It is a brilliant piece of propaganda, to be admired but not necessarily believed.⁷⁵ According to the chronicler, Kentishmen were eagerly awaiting Warwick (and of course Edward of March the future Edward IV); they rose as one man and rallied to the earls.⁷⁶ The three men sent to hold Canterbury for the king went over to

⁷² Barron, 'London,' p. 96.

⁷³ Charles Ross believed that if Margaret had re-established herself in London after her victory at the Second Battle of St Albans in 1461 'the course of the civil war might have been radically different.' Ross, *Wars of the Roses*, p. 52. This is even more true of 1460 – had Henry and Margaret been in London when Warwick arrived, the Battle of Northampton would not have been lost because it would not have been fought.

⁷⁴ Barron, 'London,' Table 2, pp. 103-104, for the schedule of loans made to the Yorkists between July 1460 and April 1461, the sums were far greater than any loans made to Henry VI over a comparable period. As Caroline Barron concluded, they were vital to Edward IV's eventual triumph. Barron, 'London,' p. 97.

⁷⁵ It survives in *An English Chronicle*, pp. 86-94, as does a ballad with decidedly religious overtones praising God for sending saviours in the shape of the Yorkist earls. cf. Whethamstede 1, 370-372. It should be noted how closely the abbot's account matches that of *An English Chronicle*.

⁷⁶ *Annales* 772, records that Warwick picked up support on his way through Kent to London. cf. *Three Chronicles/Short English*, pp. 73-74. He had men from Kent, Middlesex and Essex in his ranks at Northampton; *Three Chronicles/Brief Latin*, p. 169. *Gregory's Chronicle* p. 206, records that a number of newsletters were sent before the Yorkists lords returned, 'unto many placys of Inglonde,' and their promises of reform 'causyd them moche the more to be lovyde of the comyns of Kente and of London.' Also that the Kentishmen sent word before Warwick's arrival that they would support him, for most people regretted that he and the other lords had been attainted.

the Yorkists which is hardly surprising as their task was hopeless.⁷⁷ Only the royal army with King Henry at its head would have served in this crisis but the king had moved no closer to London than Northampton. How far was the reception of 1460 a response to Warwick's charisma, a reflection of his personal popularity and how far did it reflect a universal desire for a Yorkist regime?⁷⁸ Yorkist propaganda tips the balance in favour of the latter and the chronicle testimony is accepted by default.

The Lancastrians, despite months of preparation, were slow to mobilize; Warwick was not. He was in London on 2 July and on 10 July his army reached Northampton. If the Lancastrians thought he would not face the royal banner in the field they mistook their man. Warwick was made of sterner stuff than Richard of York. Warwick's public stance made it necessary for him to seek an audience with the king. *An English Chronicle* has a dramatic account of Warwick's attempts to obtain it with Buckingham blocking his every move,⁷⁹ which is reminiscent of the Duke of York's

⁷⁷ It pays to back the winning side. John Fogge, John Scott and Robert Horne were household officials, hardly of the calibre to overawe Warwick. The first two were well rewarded by Edward IV as soon as he became king. Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 26. and n. 2.

⁷⁸ Harvey, *Cade*, pp. 183-185: Despite popular support 'it would be misleading to characterize the rebels of the South-East as Yorkist.' Also, in 1471 when Warwick was supporting the Lancastrian cause the men of Kent were prepared to turn out against Edward IV. Perhaps it is time to drop the 'Yorkist' label and investigate how far the Wars of the Roses had their roots in Warwick's popularity and his exploitation of it.

⁷⁹ *English Chronicle*, p. 96-97. Buckingham's words are reported: 'the erle of Warrewyk shalle nat come to the kynges presence, and yef he come he shalle dye.' cf. Waurin 5, pp. 296-229, and Whethamstede 1, pp. 372-373 where the negotiators are all churchmen. The Lancastrian lords sent a contumacious reply, but Whethamstede, whose account is second hand at best, was far too canny to name Buckingham. Whether these sources demonstrate a 'patent willingness to negotiate,' on the part of the Yorkists, as John Watts claims, is a moot point. He also notes the similarity to pre-St Albans, and once again the Yorkist victory was 'marked by handsome submissions to Henry VI.' Watts, pp. 356-357. Handsome indeed, as their only alternative was to kill the king.

position before St Albans. When battle was joined Warwick had motivation and military talent in his ranks. The king's army was on the defensive awaiting reinforcements, and Lord Grey of Ruthvin defected to Warwick. As at St Albans those singled out as Yorkist enemies died on the field: Buckingham, Shrewsbury, Beaumont and Egremont.⁸⁰ A familiar pattern followed the battle. Warwick obtained the king's consent to what had been done and Henry was carried a captive to London where he was received by Archbishop Bourchier and the Papal Legate Coppini. This endorsement of Warwick by Holy Mother Church undoubtedly added to the confusion of an already confused but over-pious king. A procession of thanksgiving to St Paul's followed and writs for a parliament were issued. Shades of St Albans. The government had become Yorkist.

Margaret was not at Northampton,⁸¹ although when the Tudor chronicles were composed the image of the warrior queen was too well established for her to be omitted. Vergil claims she was confident of victory, 'she with hawtie heart gathereth an armie. . . an huge hoste.' Edward Hall has Somerset (who was still in Guisnes) as well as Buckingham present at the battle, 'where the Quene encouraged her frendes, and promised great rewardes to her helpers.' It was Margaret who gave the order to engage.⁸² Ralph

⁸⁰ For Northampton see R.I. Jack, 'A Quincentenary: The Battle of Northampton, July 11, 1460,' *Northampton Past and Present*, 3, (1960), pp. 21-25; and Goodman, pp. 37-39.

⁸¹ *Gregory's Chronicle*, p. 209. Note that neither Fabian nor any of the fifteenth century chronicles record Margaret's presence.

⁸² Vergil 106; Hall, 244.

Griffiths believes that the Yorkists saw her as ‘the true font of political power’⁸³ and more of a threat than Henry’s ministers because they could not accuse her openly (or dispose of her as they did other opponents, by killing her in battle.) Margaret had influence but how much power and authority did she wield? Most of the lords who attended the Coventry parliament did not reach Northampton in time. The chronicles claim that only a year earlier, before Ludlow, the lords had rallied to Henry because no man dared disobey the queen, but where was her authority before Northampton? It was not the queen, whose only authority rested on that of a vacuous king, but the Yorkist lords whom the nobility feared. To attain them when they were far away was one thing; to face them in battle when they were determined to re-establish themselves was another. To oppose Warwick and York (even though the duke was not present) was too dangerous. The chronicles attribute the royal defeat to the desertion of Lord Grey of Ruthvin, but the real cause was the lack of will to fight. At the first sign of trouble the government disintegrated and the queen was powerless to prevent it.⁸⁴

When news of the defeat reached the queen (probably at Eccleshall) she escaped into Wales with Prince Edward.⁸⁵ It is to this period that the famous ‘robber story’ must be assigned and not to 1463 when Margaret left

⁸³ Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 856.

⁸⁴ Chancellor Waynflete resigned on 7 July (four days before the battle.) *CCR* 1454-1461, p. 459. Lawrence Booth also resigned the Privy Seal and received a general pardon on the same day. *Foedera* 11, pp. 456-457. *Benet's Chronicle* p. 226 claims they fled the battle field, but probably they did not take part. The same may be true of the Treasurer, the Earl of Wiltshire, who appears to have decamped to Flanders. *English Chron*, p. 90; *Flenley/Bale* 152, *Benet's Chronicle*, p. 226.

Scotland for the Burgundian court. The acceptance of the later date by most historians is based on Chastellain, but a consideration of the circumstances, stripped of their romantic embellishments, should correct this. After Northampton the queen presumably had some possessions, including jewellery, worth stealing; in 1463 she was in exile in Scotland and had launched a series of unsuccessful but costly campaigns against Edward IV. Veneration for Chastellain has been allowed to override other accounts which, in this instance, are more reliable. Three English sources date the incident to 1460. The queen was making for Wales but she was intercepted at Malpas by one of her servants who robbed her and made her fear for her life and that of the prince. Eventually she reached Harlech with only four escorts, riding pillion behind a young man named Jon Combe.⁸⁶ In the *Annales* she was captured by John Cleger, a servant of Lord Stanley, and robbed by her servants before she managed to escape.⁸⁷ Chastellain's version of Margaret's story is so sensational as to defy belief.⁸⁸ She was robbed by a band of brigands who threatened her with death and from whom she begged mercy on her knees. When they fell to fighting over the spoils she turned to a squire who was providentially to hand and he galloped into the forest with the queen and the prince riding before and behind him. There she was accosted by another

⁸⁵ *PL 2*, Davis, pp. 216-217.

⁸⁶ *Gregory Chronicle* p. 209. *An English Chronicle*, p. 99. is brief: she fled with an escort of eight people and was robbed of 10,000 marks. cf. Stowe, p. 409.

⁸⁷ *Annales* p. 773. If this account is correct then it is the second time that Lord Stanley, who failed her at Blore Heath, betrayed the queen.

⁸⁸ Chastellain dates the story to 1463 because that is when Margaret is reported to have recounted it to Agnes de Bourbon who repeated it to Chastellain. If the queen's version was anywhere near as heart-rending as the chronicler's she must have been a remarkable raconteur.

robber to whom she made an impassioned plea to save the son of his king. The robber complied and the queen was saved.⁸⁹ Unless one postulates that she was robbed twice in similar circumstances, then *Gregory's Chronicle* must be preferred, but it is Chastellain's account that has beguiled historians.⁹⁰ The significance of such tales lies not in their accuracy but in their symbolism. Margaret's involvement in the fall of the Lancastrian dynasty passed into legend. In the English tradition, epitomised by Edward Hall, Margaret is demonized as part of the Yorkist justification for usurping the throne; the Tudors stressed the horrors of civil war for which a 'manly' woman was responsible and from which Henry VII rescued the country. To the French the Angevin princess became a tragic heroine, a victim of fate, who bore the brunt of the misfortunes of the Lancastrian house, doomed because it too was founded on usurpation.⁹¹ Both traditions deal, albeit uneasily, with the 'sin' of usurpation, a crime against God and man that merited divine retribution. Margaret's image hovers uneasily between that of a revengeful woman and that of an innocent victim, a dichotomy that has never been satisfactorily resolved, but has merely served to distort a coherent concept of the queen.

⁸⁹ Chastellain 4, pp. 330-307. For a melodramatic translation see Strickland, pp. 258-262. The continuator of Monstrelet repeats Chastellain, but in the English translation by Johnes 'Angleterre' unaccountably become 'Hainault.' It is very improbable that Margaret was in Hainault at any period of her life. Monstrelet 2, p. 290. cf. Waurin 5, pp. 434-435, who gets all the details wrong.

⁹⁰ Tout, 'Margaret of Anjou' in *DNB* waxes indignant because James Ramsay accepts 1460 as the correct date. Nevertheless Ramsay cannot resist conflating Chastellain with *Gregory's Chronicle* and throwing the *Annales* in for good measure. Ramsay 2, p. 236 and n. 1. cf. Pierre Bernus, 'Louis XI et Pierre de Brezé,' *Revue de l'Anjou*, 63, (1911), pp. 355-371. Bernus says he cannot understand Ramsay's dating, p. 276, n. 1.

⁹¹ Henry VI's grandfather, Henry IV, had usurped the throne of his cousin Richard II. But Richard II was childless so, unlike Henry VI, he had no direct heir.

The Loss of the Throne

The regime set up in London to await the arrival of the Duke of York was dominated by the Earl of Warwick; but its only authority was vested in the captive King Henry.⁹² York did not reach London until 10 October, three months after Northampton. He stunned everyone by claiming to be the rightful Plantagenet king of England and demanded that Henry abdicate. Henry refused. The assembled lords, comparatively few in number but nevertheless constituting the upper house of parliament, were placed in the unenviable position of having to decide the issue. Tradition has it that York took Warwick, Salisbury and even Edward of March by surprise, that they knew nothing of York's intention and were opposed to it.⁹³ This convenient ignorance has been rightly questioned by Ralph Griffiths,⁹⁴ it is impossible to believe that York and Warwick did not discuss the dynastic question in Dublin and reach agreement on it. York's claim put Warwick in an untenable position, for the basis of his pleas for public support was loyalty to the king.⁹⁵ This was why Warwick did not kill Henry at Northampton; it would have branded him a regicide; he simply could not claim that a king who never took

⁹² Hicks, *Warwick*, p. 184.

⁹³ The tradition is based on Waurin 5, pp. 314-315. But Warwick is the hero of the Burgundian chronicle, and it is to be expected that Waurin would repeat Warwick's version, which makes this source a tainted one.

⁹⁴ Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 855-857. cf. Johnson, *York*, 211-212.

⁹⁵ Apart from the Yorkist manifestos and the assurances Warwick gave when he negotiated with the prelates and merchants in London, a ballad was circulated for popular consumption, 'The Battle of Northampton,' in which the same claims are made. Such intentionally widespread publicity for Warwick's stance would be difficult to repudiate and impossible to justify. *Historical Poems*, Robbins (ed.), pp. 215-217.

part in a battle had been killed in fair fight. The alternative suggestion is that Warwick knew of York's intention but when he realised no one would support it he backed off.⁹⁶ Why, then, was the scene not set for York to effect his claim? Could it be that the Dublin strategy called for York to become Protector, with full powers, but that the Yorkist claim to the throne by right of just inheritance, a claim very difficult to refute and one which Henry VI himself accepted tacitly, was to be vested in Edward of March?⁹⁷ Richard of York's error of judgement kept the Lancastrian cause alive. Had he been content with a protectorate his endorsement by parliament was assured. It is true that Margaret would never have agreed to such a settlement, but her position would have been considerably weaker. With time and careful management there was every chance of persuading the majority of the lords to prefer the charismatic Edward of March, a young but experienced magnate, over the child Edward of Lancaster. They might have been persuaded to countenance a claim of just inheritance but not to depose an anointed king. The Act of Accord, passed by parliament at the end of October, and accepted by King Henry, was a compromise. Henry VI remained king but Edward of Lancaster was disinherited and York and his sons became Henry's heirs.

⁹⁶ Michael K. Jones, 'Edward IV, the Earl of Warwick and the Yorkist Claim to the Throne,' *BIHR*, 70, (1997), pp. 343-351, sets out the case for the change of dynasty having been agreed in Dublin. Edward IV was deeply grateful to Warwick for something the earl had done on that Irish visit and Michael Jones postulates that it was Warwick who persuaded York to claim the throne.

⁹⁷ Rumours to this effect were circulating in Bruges not long after Northampton, *Milanese Papers* p. 27: 'It is also thought that they will make a son of the Duke of York king and that they will pass over the king's son, as they are beginning already to say he is not the king's son.' And in Pius II's record of what Warwick is supposed to have said, the earl claimed York should have been king, but he does not say that his intention is to make York king. The evidence is tenuous, but it is there. Head, *Pius II*, p. 152.

Henry VI was now as much a liability to Margaret as he was to York but possession of his person was vital to them both. Their struggle became dynastic and military, a fight for the crown. Margaret was forced to shift her emphasis from upholding the royal prerogative in the person of the king to upholding it in Henry's name through the medium of the boy prince. Only so could she hope to recover his inheritance. The romantically minded perceive this as fierce maternity, the natural instinct of a woman to defend her young. And perhaps it was. But Margaret was a dynast, and her devotion may have been as much to her son's cause as to her son. She had to convince her followers, and the country, that her son was the natural and legal protector of his father.⁹⁸ York had established a protectorate; Margaret would take it over, if she could, with the Prince of Wales as the symbol of royal authority. In practical terms it would be difficult, for the prince was still a child, but he was the nominal head of the semi-autonomous Prince's Council and it was on this base that Margaret hoped to build.

The Lancastrian lords, who had not been present in parliament, repudiated the Act of Accord and intensified their efforts to assemble an army. Jasper Tudor recruited in Wales, the Duke of Somerset returned from Calais to join a confederation of northern lords at Hull, and the Duke of Exeter and the Earl of Devon brought troops from the West Country.⁹⁹ The co-ordinator of this effort appears to have been the queen, who was in Wales. She was

⁹⁸ In support of this argument see the letter to Coventry after the Lancastrian withdrawal to the north but before the Battle of Towton. *Coventry Leet Book*, pt. 2, p. 313-314.

⁹⁹ *Gregory's Chronicle*, p. 210. cf. Goodman, p. 42; Pollard, *North Eastern England*, p. 84.

receiving reliable information of Yorkist activities, for when the Accord became known, in November 1460, she wrote to the Common Council in London repudiating York's claim to the throne and thanking the Londoners for rejecting it. She reassured them that the army which would shortly come to rescue the king posed no danger to them or their property.¹⁰⁰ Margaret travelled to Scotland in December and was received at Lincluden by the Queen Regent, Mary of Guelders.¹⁰¹ Margaret was not seeking Scottish military aid but a defensive alliance to ensure peace along the Anglo-Scottish border while the northern lords marched south, for they would have been extremely uneasy at leaving the border unsecured in their absence. The queens also discussed the possibility of a marriage between Prince Edward and one of Mary's daughters.¹⁰² Margaret did not promise to surrender Berwick in return for Scottish help, a tradition for which there is no contemporary evidence, but which has been accepted by historians as an example of Margaret's inability to understand English antipathy to Scotland.¹⁰³ Berwick was ceded after the Battle of Towton when Margaret

¹⁰⁰ *John Vale's Book*, pp. 142-144, where the copy of the queen's letter is incorrectly dated to February 1461. The next letter, from the prince, is inconsistently but correctly dated to 1460. It stresses his right of inheritance and states that he is coming to rescue his father. The date of February 1461 was originally ascribed to the queen's letter by Mary Anne Wood who published a modernised version of it in 1846. M.A.E. Wood, *Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies of Great Britain*, vol. 1, London: Colburn 1846, pp. 95-97. Mrs Wood's notes accompanying this letter supply some interesting details about the queen.

¹⁰¹ James II had been killed in August 1460 whilst laying siege to Roxburgh. Mary of Guelders was Regent of Scotland for the child James III, a position denied to Queen Margaret of England in 1454. For the expenses of Margaret's visit, *Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, vols 6-9, Edinburgh, 1844-1886, vol. 7 p. 8.

¹⁰² Nicholson, *Scotland*, p. 400.

¹⁰³ Ramsay 2, p. 243; Tout, 'Margaret of Anjou' in *DNB*; Bagley 111, Wolffe, *Henry VI*, p. 362 and n. 60; Scofield 1, p. 134. A letter from the Lancastrian lords to Charles VII, printed by Quicherat in his edition of Basin, is cited as 'proof,' but it does not mention either Berwick or Scottish troops. Basin 4, Quicherat (ed.), pp. 357-358.

and Henry fled to Scotland for sanctuary.¹⁰⁴ It may have been at Margaret's instigation as it was the best bargaining counter the Lancastrians had in their bid for Scottish support, but she did not make it unilaterally. The interval of only three months makes it easy to ignore the crucial difference between Margaret's circumstances, and therefore her motivation, before Wakefield, when she had a large army, and after Towton, when it had been decimated.

Richard of York's decision to march north against the gathering Lancastrian army was the last in a long line of his miscalculations and it cost him his life. He left London in December accompanied by only a token force, believing himself to be protected by the Act of Accord which declared that resistance to him as the king's heir constituted treason, just as it did to the king. He expected the Lancastrian lords, and possibly the queen, to obey the law and submit to his jurisdiction, which demonstrates just how out of touch he had become during his sojourn in Ireland.¹⁰⁵ He was not concerned primarily with them as rebels but as recalcitrant lords who were unlawfully withholding property belonging to him and to the Nevilles.¹⁰⁶ Somerset

¹⁰⁴ Waurin 5, pp. 354-355, supposedly supplied the other piece of 'evidence.' He dated the ceding of Berwick (which he thought was in Wales) to April 1461, but in the same sentence he mentioned Lincluden, allowing historians to conflate the two. The ceding of Berwick is confirmed as 25 April 1461 by the rolls of parliament, *RP* 5, p. 478. Annie I. Dunlop, *The Life and Times of James Kennedy, Bishop of St Andrews*, Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, p. 216, established that there is no record of a 'Treaty of Lincluden' in any Scottish source. cf. John Hardyng, *The Chronicle of John Hardyng*, Henry Ellis (ed.), 1812, p. 406.

¹⁰⁵ According to *Brut Continuation G*, p. 530, York went north 'for to bring in the Quene, & subdew such as wold nat obey . . . such thinges as was concluded in the parlement.' cf. Fabyan, p. 637. Vergil, p. 108, records that York went north specifically to capture the queen. *Gregory's Chronicle*, p. 209, says that after Northampton the Yorkists tried to entice Margaret to London by sending 'conterfete tokyns' purporting to come from the king, but her servants 'bade hyr bewared of the tokyns, that she gave noo credens there too.'

¹⁰⁶ *CPR 1452-1461*, pp. 649, 652-653.

engaged him in battle at Wakefield on the last day of the year.¹⁰⁷ York and his younger son, and Warwick's brother, Thomas, were among the slain. Salisbury was captured and executed shortly afterwards. Margaret was in Scotland when she heard the news. The usually staid Polydore Vergil perpetuated the legend of the warrior queen in his account of the battle. Not only was Margaret at Wakefield but, according to Vergil, she led her troops into battle and sustained them in the fight. She did so again at St Albans against Warwick 'with no lesse courage then she had done before in Yorkshire.'¹⁰⁸ So enduring is the image of Margaret as a martial figure that even a competent military historian failed to question it. When Lt Colonel Burne reconstructed the Second Battle of St Albans he credited Margaret with the winning tactics on the grounds that they were so unusual they must have been devised by a woman.¹⁰⁹ Edward Hall's graphic account, immortalised by Shakespeare, established the enduring tradition of Margaret's presence at Wakefield. It has everything that the dramatist could have desired. Clifford, having killed York's son in revenge for his father's death, cut off York's head, crowned it with a paper crown and presented it to the queen who was 'lying not farre from the felde.' Margaret (a woman of strong stomach obviously) then ordered that Salisbury too must be beheaded and their heads displayed

¹⁰⁷ As it was a Lancastrian victory no contemporary account survives. The best modern analysis of Wakefield is Dockray and Knowles, 'The Battle of Wakefield.'

¹⁰⁸ Vergil, pp. 108-109. 'Surely this Margarete, wife unto the king, warred much more happily by her owne conduct and authoritie then by the kinges.'

¹⁰⁹ Alfred H. Burne, *Battlefields of England*, London: Methuen, 1950, p. 85. He further suggested that Margaret aspired to emulate Joan of Arc. After all, they were both French women.

above the city gates at York.¹¹⁰ It is classic drama, a woman exulting in the death and humiliation of her enemies. But it was Richard of York's death not Margaret's presence at Wakefield that turned a minor encounter into an epic. The death in battle of the 'rightful' heir to England might be seen as the judgement of God. Yorkist propaganda demanded a gloss, so the explanation evolved that York was not killed in fair fight and behind this travesty of justice lurked the menacing figure of the queen. York's death appeared to herald a Lancastrian resurgence but in the long run it served the Yorkist cause as it cleared the way for his son to usurp the throne.

Margaret hurried from Scotland to join her victorious lords and the Lancastrian army moved south even though it was mid-winter. In her ranks Margaret had Somerset, Exeter, Northumberland, Devon, the Westmorland Nevilles, Lords Clifford, Roos, Dacre and Fitzhugh.¹¹¹ What she did not have were contingents of Welsh, Scots or French.¹¹² The devastation the Lancastrian army is reported to have wreaked on a defenceless land as it marched from York to London is one of the best-known stories of the Wars of the Roses. It is largely apocryphal.¹¹³ Historians who accept the story are hard put to explain it in any terms other than the queen's vengeance. The

¹¹⁰ Hall, p. 250-251. The 'paper crown' first occurs in the *Annales*, p. 775.

¹¹¹ *Annales*, p. 774.

¹¹² The only source for this claim is *Three Chronicles/Brief Notes*, p. 154-155. It is also the only source to list the towns through which the Lancastrian army is supposed to have passed. The list is repeated by Stowe, p. 107. An alternative route via Northampton is equally possible, especially as Warwick is supposed not to have known where they were until they arrived at St Albans. *Milanese Papers*, p. 48.

¹¹³ B.M. Cron, 'Margaret of Anjou and the Lancastrian March on London, 1461,' *The Ricardian*, 11, Vol 147, (December 1999), pp. 590-615.

accepted version is that Margaret gave her army licence to plunder all lands south of the Trent.¹¹⁴ Why the queen, who was trying to recover the throne and establish her son's right to it, would chose to antagonise the very people she most needed to conciliate, is not explained. It is much easier to assume that Margaret knew no better. The queen was not as politically astute as she needed to be, perhaps, but was she really so insensitive? The explanation is untenable unless Margaret was essentially stupid, one of the few accusations that have not been levelled against her by historians. The ravages allegedly committed by the Lancastrians are documented, albeit vaguely, in the chronicles written after the event and under a Yorkist king.¹¹⁵ The logical explanation, that this is the version of the victors, a propaganda exercise created for political expediency to serve a specific purpose, has been ignored because the traditional picture is much easier to accept: Margaret was French, Margaret was 'manly,' Margaret was maternal, *ergo* Margaret was capable of any atrocity.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Christine Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 148; J.R. Lander, *The Wars of the Roses*, rev. ed., Stroud: Sutton, 1990, p. 85; Goodman, pp. 47-48; Pollard, *Wars of the Roses*, pp. 87-88; Ross, *Wars of the Roses*, p. 51.

¹¹⁵ *Three Chronicles*, pp. 76; 15; 172; *English Chronicle*, p. 107; Flenley/Bale, p. 152; *Benet's Chronicle*, p. 229; Whethamstede 1, pp 388-390. *Ingulph's Chronicle of the Abbey of Crowland with the Continuations of Peter of Blois*, H.T. Riley (trans), London: Bohn, 1854, pp. 422-425. cf. *RP* 5, pp. 476 and 462, for an even more outrageous version than those found in the chronicles.

¹¹⁶ A few voices have been raised to question how much damage was actually done. Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 30 n. 1; Lander, *Wars of the Roses*, p. 85, n. 1. Only R.H. Britnell has had the temerity, and the insight, to call the whole in question: R.H. Britnell, 'The Economic Context,' in *The Wars of the Roses*, A.J. Pollard (ed.) London: Macmillan, 1995, p.46.

The defeat at Wakefield fell on London like a thunderclap. The officious (and frightened) papal legate Coppini wrote exhorting Margaret to make her peace with the Yorkists in a style more calculated to affront than to reconcile the queen.¹¹⁷ Warwick was more practical. He reacted swiftly to regain the initiative and discredit the Lancastrians. His superb propaganda played on the fears of people in the south that the northern hordes would ravage their land unless there was a total commitment to resist them,¹¹⁸ and orders were issued to suppress any support for the Lancastrians.¹¹⁹ The armies met on 17 February 1461 outside St Albans; Warwick was defeated and fled the field.¹²⁰ *An English Chronicle* attributed the defeat, as at Wakefield, to an act of treachery.¹²¹ Margaret's reputation is further damaged by accounts of the aftermath of the battle. Henry VI was taken to St Albans, but of course he took no part in the fighting. When it was over he was reunited with his wife and son. Margaret then ordered the execution of two prisoners, Lord Bonville and Sir Thomas Kyriell, and she may have associated Prince Edward with

¹¹⁷ *Milanese Papers*, pp. 39-41.

¹¹⁸ *PL* 1, Davis, p. 198; *PL* 2, Davis, p. 213. Pollard, *North Eastern England*, p. 26 n 1.

¹¹⁹ *CPR 1452-1461*, pp. 655-659. cf. Goodman, p. 45, for the suggestion that the Lancastrians had more sympathizers in some counties than might be inferred from the chronicle accounts.

¹²⁰ The most objective and detailed contemporary account is *Gregory's Chronicle*, pp. 211-214. Abbot Whethamstede's version is given more credence than it deserves because he was 'there.' He is very careful not to mention the Earl of Warwick. Whethamstede 1, pp. 390-393. cf. Goodman, pp. 45-48.

¹²¹ *English Chronicle*, p. 108. cf. Waurin 5, pp. 327 and 329: A captain in Warwick's ranks had also been at Wakefield. He was captured and bought his freedom from Margaret by promising her to desert Warwick's army and betray his dispositions.

their condemnation.¹²² If she did it was part of her strategy to enhance the prince's standing, for to sit in judgement on 'traitors' was a responsibility of kingship. She sentenced to death two men who had been in the king's service throughout their lives and prospered by it. She could have executed two far more important prisoners, Warwick's brother John Neville, Lord Montagu, and Lord Berners, a Bouchier, brother to the Archbishop of Canterbury. But Margaret did not punish men for loyalty to their families; Montagu and Berners were not traitors to Lancaster in the way that Bonville and Kyriell were. The execution of two men hardly warrants John Watts' censorious verdict: 'the queen's treatment of those she had captured at St Albans did not inspire confidence in the possibility of a negotiated peace.'¹²³ Where is the evidence that Warwick or Edward of March contemplated a negotiated peace with the queen?

After St Albans London was undefended except by its citizens. They feared an attack, possibly a sack of the city, because this is what Warwick's

¹²² Chronicle accounts vary. *Gregory's Chronicle*, p. 212, says Bonville was executed, whilst Kyriell was slain. *An English Chronicle*, p. 108 is the most detailed, and the most hostile. They were executed on the queen's orders, the prince sat in judgement on them, and they were betrayed by Henry VI who had promised them they would be safe if they did not desert him during the battle. Waurin 5, pp. 329-330, knows nothing of Bonville but in his dramatic account the queen demands of the prince what death the insolent Kyriell shall die and the prince condemns him. cf. *Brut Continuation G*, p. 532 and *Continuation K*, p. 602; *Three Chronicles*, pp. 76, 155 and 172; *Great Chronicle*, p. 195; *London Chronicle* p. 174, and. K.B. MacFarlane, 'The Wars of the Roses,' in *England in the Fifteenth Century*, p. 244.

¹²³ *John Vale's Book*, p. 37.

propaganda told them to expect.¹²⁴ But it was not Margaret's intention;¹²⁵ her army approached no closer to the city than Dunstable. She wanted to recover it peacefully, but to her London was unpredictable, too dangerous to risk entering with her feeble husband and the child prince. She failed to grasp her opportunity, although, even if she had occupied London she might not have been able to hold it.¹²⁶ Circumstances had changed since the Battle of Northampton; Warwick and Edward of March would no longer turn aside from the capital because the king was in residence and if they captured the royal family it would spell the end of the Lancastrian dynasty. Margaret, rightly or wrongly, chose to retreat. She was probably influenced by the northern lords; they had kept their men in the field for over a month and must have been anxious to return to their supply base before fighting the Yorkists yet again.¹²⁷ The Lancastrian army did not sack the Abbey of St Albans before withdrawing, although they undoubtedly pillaged its environs.¹²⁸ Whethamstede accused Margaret of having removed one of the abbey's treasures before her army went north.¹²⁹ Most of the chronicles content

¹²⁴ *Annales*, 776; *Brut Continuation G*, p. 531; *English Chronicle*, p. 109; *Great Chronicle*, p. 194; *Milanese Papers*, p. 49.

¹²⁵ Even those who credit Margaret with withdrawing from the city do so for the wrong reasons. Lander, *Wars of the Roses*, p. 89: 'Margaret, to her eternal credit, threw away her chances of success and retreated northwards rather than risk the sack of London.'

¹²⁶ *Annales*, p. 776, and *Gregory's Chronicle*, p. 215, were in no doubt that Margaret's failure to take London doomed her cause.

¹²⁷ Watts, p. 361, n. 423.

¹²⁸ The obscurity of Whethamstede's prose makes it very difficult to establish that this did not happen, although he does not actually say it did. Whethamstede 1, pp. 394-396.

¹²⁹ Whethamstede 1, p. 396 and Whethamstede 2, Riley, Introduction, p. xviii. And she probably did. The Lancastrian war chest must have been empty by that time and King Henry had been generous to the abbey in the past.

themselves with the laconic statement that the queen withdrew, but *An English Chronicle*, hostile to the last, reports that the Lancastrian army plundered its way north as remorselessly as it had on its southward march.¹³⁰ One can only wonder which route it took.

Margaret did not anticipate Edward's next move. He had himself declared King Edward IV by a carefully stage-managed acclamation of the people in the capital she had abandoned.¹³¹ The rapidity with which it was accomplished is in striking contrast to the lack of preparation shown for his father's claim only three months earlier. But he would still have to fight a decisive battle, for the majority of the lords and many of the knights of the shires remained loyal to Lancaster. Henry, Margaret and Prince Edward were at York when, on Palm Sunday, 26 March 1461, the bloodiest battle of the civil war was fought at Towton. Edward IV, despite inferior numbers, won his decisive victory. Usurper he may have been but he was the best general of his day.¹³² The king, queen and prince, with those lords who had survived, fled to

¹³⁰ *English Chronicle*, p. 109.

¹³¹ I am inclined to believe that the acclamation was genuine. Few Londoners would have failed to rally to a young man who looked and acted like a king, a compelling contrast to the little they had seen of Henry VI. But the occasion was carefully stage managed none the less. Neither Warwick nor Edward would leave something so important to chance. cf. Armstrong, 'The Inauguration Ceremonies of the Yorkist Kings and their Title to the Throne,' in *England France and Burgundy*.

¹³² He was also quite ruthless. Compare the execution of Bonville and Kyriell after St Albans with the execution of ten men, including Owen Tudor, ordered by Edward IV after the Battle of Mortimers Cross. After Towton the Earl of Devon and the Earl of Wiltshire were executed along with forty two knights. *Gregory's Chronicle*, p. 217; Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 37; Scofield 1, p 166

Scotland for sanctuary.¹³³ The Lancastrian dynasty was intact but it was now in exile and although Edward IV would not sit secure on his throne for another ten years because of Margaret's struggle to unseat him, her cause was lost at Towton. She had no base left in England, and without one, her efforts, no matter how gallant, were futile.

¹³³ *PL* 3, Gairdner, p. 267. The news was conveyed by William Paston to John Paston on 4 April. A letter of 18 April supplemented this: they had fled to somewhere in Yorkshire where the Percy followers of Northumberland (who had been killed) rallied to defend them, thus giving them the chance to escape. *PL* 3, Gairdner, p. 269. cf. *Milanese Papers*, p. 68.

Chapter 5: Epilogue, 1461-1482

Exile and Return

Margaret lived for another twenty years after the defeat at Towton. At first she sought to recover the north of England by capturing the great castle strongholds of Alnwick, Bamborough and Dunstanborough with sporadic and ineffectual help from the Scots and French. The death of Charles VII in July 1461 occurred just as she had sent envoys to enlist his aid.¹ Burgundian diplomacy and French indifference made it a hopeless proposition.² Her father and brother were entangled in efforts to recover the throne of Naples and had little interest in the Lancastrian inheritance.³ In England enthusiasm for her cause was at a low ebb as everyone was waiting to see what Edward IV would

¹ *PL* 2, Davis, pp. 252-253.

² For Burgundian diplomacy see Thielemans, pp. 382-410. Joseph Calmette & G. Périnelle, *Louis XI et l'Angleterre*, Paris, 1930, pp. 18-21 for Margaret's agreement with Louis XI in June 1462 to mortgage Calais in return for French aid, and pp. 283-284, *Quittance de 20000 lt. donnée par Marguerite d'Anjou à Louis XI*; p. 293 for a letter from Margaret to Louis dated July 1463 from Edinburgh, accrediting two envoys. Bernus, 'Louis XI et Pierre de Brezé,' p. 369, prints a letter from Margaret to Brezé dated 1 September 1462 from Harfleur, in which she refers to Brezé as *tres amé cousin* and sends Prince Edward's greetings to him. Brezé had been commissioned by Louis XI to command the small contingent of troops and the flotilla to transport them to Scotland that the king had 'given' to Margaret in return for the pledge of Calais.

³ This was the position, but seen in hindsight. At the time Margaret was not the only one who believed that she would receive assistance from France. A letter from a Milanese Ambassador dated 2 June reported that 'the force of 20,000 Frenchmen has left Normandy and gone to England. It is said that the Count of Maine paid for 5,000 of these. . . it is thought to assemble the people of Wales, who are said to love the queen.' *Milanese Papers*, p. 93. Edward IV believed it too, or pretended to. In a letter to Alderman Thomas Cooke dated 1462 he dwells on the dangers of invasion, claiming that Margaret encouraged it by inciting Henry VI. 'The malicious counceyle and excitation of Margaret his wife,' and 'the malicious and subtill suggestion and enticyng of the sayde malicious woman Margaret his wife.' There is no doubt that Margaret was the villain of the piece, or that Edward feared her rather than Henry VI. *Original Letters Illustrative of English History*, Henry Ellis (ed.), 2nd series, vol. 1, London, Rolls Series, 1827, pp. 126-131. cf. *Crowland*, Riley (ed.), p. 439; *Three Chronicles/Brief Notes*, p. 158.

do.⁴ Margaret left Scotland in 1463 and went into exile with Prince Edward, leaving Henry VI behind. Despite the tradition of the warrior queen who personally conducted the Scottish campaigns, Margaret was in France in 1464 at the time of the Battle of Hexham in which Henry, Duke of Somerset was captured and beheaded.⁵ Henry VI was captured in 1465 and imprisoned in the Tower.⁶

Margaret formed a small and poverty stricken court in exile at Koer⁷ in the Duchy of Bar, where she had been born, and which Rene intended to leave her in his will.⁸ During these years she relied heavily on Sir John Fortescue, the former chief justice, who became her chamberlain. Margaret was sufficiently mindful of the importance of the laws and customs of England to have her son trained by the foremost jurist of his age. It was Fortescue, not one of the 'Lancastrian lords' who became the prince's tutor.⁹

⁴ The history of this period belongs, of course, to the reign of Edward IV. The most detailed study is by Cora Scofield.

⁵ An excellent analysis of the sources for the northern campaigns of 1462-1464 may be found in *Archaeologia*, vol. 47. Charles Spencer Perceval, 'On Certain Inaccuracies in the Ordinary Accounts of the Early Years of the Reign of Edward IV,' (February, 1881). Mr. Perceval also covers Margaret of Anjou and the Robber Story. Although he appears to have been unacquainted with the works of Chastellain, his study is by far the most cogent and worthwhile.

⁶ The primary source for Henry VI in Scotland and the northern campaigns in general is *A Chronicle of the First Thirteen Years of the Reign of Edward IV* by John Warkworth, J.O. Halliwell (ed.), London: Camden Society, 1839. The editor's notes to the chronicle are particularly valuable.

⁷ C.J.M. McGovern, 'Lancastrian Diplomacy and Queen Margaret's Court in Exile 1461-1471,' BA dissertation in History, University of Keele, 1973. cf. Gross, pp. 75-81.

⁸ Lecoy 1, p. 394.

⁹ Gross, p. 81, who points out that Fortescue took care to stress the Prince's martial accomplishments. 'The *De Laudibus [Legum Angliae]* offered the English an heir to the throne who would both fight the battles of his people and judge their causes righteously.'

A serious disagreement between Edward IV and the Earl of Warwick in 1469 led to an amazing turn of fortune's wheel. Warwick, accompanied by Edward IV's brother, George, Duke of Clarence,¹⁰ took refuge at the French court. So formidable was Warwick's reputation that when he offered to restore the Lancastrian dynasty no one doubted his ability to do so. Louis XI was behind the scheme, but at a price, as always. It was agreed between them that as soon as Warwick made good his undertaking he would ally England with France against Burgundy.¹¹ It was the spur that ensured Burgundy would embrace the Yorkist cause. Margaret came under exceptionally heavy pressure from the French king and from René of Anjou to agree to a compact that was not only distasteful to her but dangerous.¹² Warwick would restore her husband so that her son could inherit a throne dominated by a man she detested and distrusted more than anyone else. It was a far worse position than the one she had struggled so hard to maintain against Richard of York to prevent him from usurping the crown's authority. York, at least, had been a Plantagenet prince. But what choice had she? Edward IV had been on the throne for nine years, and the few intrigues she had tried to mount against him

For a detailed study of Fortescue's writings on the succession question, see Paul E. Gill, 'Politics and Propaganda in Fifteenth Century England: The Polemical Writings of Sir John Fortescue,' *Speculum*, 46, (1971), pp. 333-347.

¹⁰ A man who would betray his own brother cannot have recommended himself highly to the dynastic queen. For Clarence see Michael Hicks, *False, Fleeting, Perjur'd Clarence*, rev. ed., Gloucester: Sutton, 1992.

¹¹ A.R. Myers, 'The Outbreak of War Between England and Burgundy in February 1471,' *BIHR*, 23 (1960), pp. 114-115.

¹² Hicks, *Warwick*, pp. 292-294; *John Vale's Book*, pp. 215-218. *Milanese Papers*, p. 139.

came to nothing.¹³ He had enticed many former Lancastrians, including, briefly, Henry, Duke of Somerset, to reconcile themselves with Yorkist rule.¹⁴ Warwick was her only option and in the summer of 1470 she reluctantly agreed to a bargain that would make him king's lieutenant in England, the protector in all but name. Warwick and Clarence sailed for England without Prince Edward. This was Margaret's third fatal error. Her distrust of Warwick was so great that although she accepted the marriage of his daughter with her son she did not allow the prince to accompany Warwick. Philippe de Commines got it the wrong way round when he said Warwick acted precipitately in fighting the Battle of Barnet because he feared the queen; it was Margaret who feared Warwick.¹⁵ And the remaining Lancastrian lords shared her scepticism. It was hardly a propitious beginning for the restoration of a monarch whose people had largely forgotten him. Had Prince Edward been in England when Edward IV fled to Burgundy he would have been the visible figurehead of the revived Lancastrian cause. He was seventeen, the same age that Edward IV had been when he formed an integral part of the Yorkist recovery. Instead the populace was expected to rally to the pathetic Henry VI who was taken out of the Tower and put on public display. The Readeption of Henry VI lasted from October 1470 to early April 1471 when Edward IV returned from Flanders and won the Battle of Barnet. Warwick

¹³ Anne F. Sutton, 'Sir Thomas Cook and his "troubles": an Investigation,' *Guildhall Studies in London History*, 3, No. 2, (April 1978), pp. 85-108.

¹⁴ Michael Hicks, 'Edward IV, the Duke of Somerset and Lancastrian Loyalty in the North,' *Northern History*, 22, (1984), pp. 23-37. cf. Michael K. Jones, 'Edward IV and the Beaufort Family: Conciliation in Early Yorkist Politics,' *The Ricardian*, 6, No. 83 (December 1983), pp. 258-265.

¹⁵ Commines, Jones (trans.), p. 196.

was killed and the Lancastrian cause died with him. If one accepts that luck or chance is as crucial a factor in history as the motivation of men or the pressure of social and economic conditions, then ill luck played a decisive role in Margaret's life. She landed in England on the day of Warwick's defeat, April 14, Easter Sunday, having delayed her departure from France until it was too late. Was it bad weather (ill luck) or Margaret's procrastination? It seems extraordinary that she was unable to make the crossing, when Edward IV and others did so, unless she chose to delay. Did she really want the Lancastrian house restored on the terms Warwick offered? Would it not be preferable to keep her son in France, an ever-present threat to the Yorkist dynasty rather than risking him in the hands of men who might betray him? We can never know.

The men who, despite so many losses and disappointments, rallied to her cause staked everything on one last throw.¹⁶ But it was Edward IV who won the Battle of Tewkesbury in which Prince Edward of Lancaster was killed.¹⁷ Margaret was captured after the battle, brought to London and sent to

¹⁶ Casualties at Tewkesbury were high – as they always were at any battle directed by Edward IV. The two remaining Somerset brothers, Edmund and John lost their lives. John was killed and Edmund taken from sanctuary and beheaded. According to Vergil, p. 151, it was Edmund, Henry's brother, and the third Duke to hold the title during Margaret's reign, who insisted on fighting without waiting for Jasper Tudor to bring re-inforcements from Wales.

¹⁷ The best study of the sources for the battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury is Hammond, *Barnet and Tewkesbury*.

the Tower where Henry VI was put to death.¹⁸ The Lancastrian dynasty was at an end. Margaret remained a captive until 1475; she was consigned to the care of Edward's sister the Duchess of Suffolk at Wallingford, where, presumably, she met again the friend of her early years, Alice, the dowager duchess, who had espoused the Yorkist cause.¹⁹ The queen was ransomed by Louis XI and the price of returning to France, to die in obscurity although probably not actual poverty, was that she renounce to him all her claims to the Angevin/Lorraine inheritance.²⁰ Margaret of Anjou died, no one is sure quite where, in 1482.²¹ She was fifty-two years old.

¹⁸ Warkworth, p. 19; and p. 21 for Henry's death. If the chronicler is correct, that Henry was killed on the night of Edward's return to London, 21 May 1471, then Margaret may have entered the Tower on the same day, as she returned to the capital in Edward's train. cf. *Arrivall*, p. 31 and 38; *Three Chronicles/Brief Latin*, 184-185.

¹⁹ *PL* 1, Davis, p. 466.

²⁰ Lecoy 2, pp. 356-358. The document is dated 7 March 1476.

²¹ Lecoy 2, pp. 395-397 for Margaret's will, dated 2 August 1482. She made Louis XI her heir and sole executor, but she had little to leave.

CONCLUSION

Margaret of Anjou came to England anticipating that she would fulfil the traditional role of a medieval queen. She brought no tangible assets and this weighed heavily against her in subsequent judgements on her marriage, when an honourable peace with France did not eventuate. It was her misfortune that she failed in her first duty, that of providing heirs for the Lancastrian dynasty. The resulting 'fight for the throne' has overshadowed later interpretations of the queen in fact and in legend.

The traditional function of a queen was as peacemaker, that of a king to maintain law and order and dispense even, open-handed justice. Henry VI assumed the queen's function by his very passivity, forcing Margaret to take on the traditional role of the king. The question is not who should have ruled the country, Margaret or the Duke of York, but who should rule the country, the king or an overmighty subject. York could have elected to serve the crown loyally and not stir up dissension under the guise of demands for 'good government.' The queen and the nobles who supported her could have avoided conflict by not opposing the duke, thereby sacrificing the defence of the royal prerogative. This was Henry VI's responsibility, which he abdicated, although he would not abdicate the throne. The same struggle to maintain the power of the crown occupied Charles VII and Louis XI in France; and, when Margaret failed and the Lancastrian dynasty fell, it was continued by Edward IV and completed by Henry VII in England. Each of them had advantages denied to the queen. They were anointed kings who could coerce their nobility with all

the resources of the realm, provided they were strong enough. Margaret was a foreign queen consort and the odds were stacked against her from the start. She had been denied the regency, she could not become a member of the king's council, she was confined to customary practice and constrained to act in the name of her husband or her son. She made a number of errors, mainly through inexperience, but it must be doubted if she ever wished for personal political dominance. Her defence of her son's rights was thrust upon her by default. Margaret should be viewed in terms of personalities and patronage not of abstract theories of government. She never fully comprehended the mechanisms of national government, political or economic, but she understood the importance to government of the crown's authority. She rallied support for the Lancastrian dynasty and upheld a legal constitutional position, the right of the king to rule as well as to reign.

It was Henry's incapacity, coupled with York's self-aggrandisement and the power of the Nevilles that led to civil war. Margaret did not promote faction in England: it existed long before she arrived. But it is still accepted that her intervention from 1456 was disastrous.²² Margaret's ill-fated compact with the Earl of Warwick, her brief return to England and the defeat at Tewkesbury served to re-enforce Yorkist propaganda and establish beyond doubt the justice of Edward IV's cause and *ipso facto* the evils of the crown being dominated by a woman. Historians have accepted the double standard

²² Lingard 4, p. 116; Ramsay 2, p. 198; Stubbs 3, pp. 171-72; Storey, *End of Lancaster*, p. 177; Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 797-798; Wolfe, *Henry VI*, p. 302; Watts, p. 326; Ross, *Wars of the Roses*, pp. 35-36; Pollard, *Wars of the Rose,s* p. 23; Carpenter, *Wars of the Roses*, pp. 141-42.

and viewed the sources through a form of split vision. Whatever is seen as combative and menacing is attributed to the queen, whatever is peaceable or conciliatory is attributed to Henry VI, yet at the same time he is said to have been a puppet in Margaret's hands. One cannot have it both ways. Abbot Whethamstede's Register establishes that Margaret promoted a general pacification, resulting in the Loveday of 1458, but one searches in vain for a reference to this passage in standard histories, whilst his claim that Margaret licensed sack and pillage south of the Trent is consistently quoted. It is time for a thorough re-examination of Margaret of Anjou's role in Lancastrian government from an objective non-judgemental stance, not prejudiced by the eventual outcome.

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