

Richard II abbreviated

Act 2, Scene 1

Insight

Situation: With John of Gaunt near death, his brother, the duke of York, unsuccessfully tries to encourage him to rest quietly. Unrealistically, John of Gaunt hopes that the king will listen to what he has to say. Richard II, their nephew, will soon enter and demean his uncle Gaunt, a moment, we're sure, he'll come to regret.

GAUNT: Will the king come?

YORK: Vex not yourself, nor strive not with your breath, for all in vain comes counsel to his ear.
Gaunt doesn't listen to his brother.

Gaunt to York, No. 1

Though Richard my life's counsel would not hear,
My death's sad tale may yet undeaf his ear.
If the king doth come as my breath doth wane,
I may breathe wholesome counsel he might choose,
For they breathe truth that breathe their words in pain.
The tongue of a dying man who canst lose
Is enforced more, as the last taste of sweets,
The setting sun; music at the close greets
Memory more than things more past. Men's ends
Are marked more than lives before. A scarce word
Is seldom spent in vain, for truth defends
Pained words spoke, when there are no words deferred.
He who has no more to say is fairly
Listened more than he who speaks easily.

YORK: No. It is the report of fashions in proud Italy, whose manners still our tardy-apish nation
limps after in base imitation. 'Tis breath thou lack'st, and that breath wilt thou lose.