Medieval Women and the Wars of the Roses

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Introduction/Background

In the late fifteenth century, the government, politics, and landscape of England was shattered by the dynastic rivalries between the royal houses of York and Lancaster. Both descendants of the same family, the Plantagenets ruled England for over 300 years and "descended from the union of Queen Matilda of England and her second husband Geoffrey of Anjou."[1] The Yorks and Lancasters were cousin families who both believed that they were the heir to the throne of England. The struggle for the throne of England resulted in a bloody civil war, which lasted for over thirty years and ended with the emergence of the Tudor dynasty. The wars saw five different kings on the English throne; Henry VI, Edward IV, Edward V, Richard III, and Henry VII. The wars were named The Wars of the Roses in reference to the two sigils of the royal houses; the white rose of York and the red rose of Lancaster. However, it was originally called "The Cousin's War," to highlight the close relation between the two factions. The wars began in May of 1455 with the Battle of St. Albans. Although this was the first time the conflict had become violent, the tension between the Yorks and the Lancasters had been building for generations prior.

The royal House of Lancaster descended from two cadet branches of the royal House of Plantagenet. The first house of Lancaster was created in 1267 after King Henry III of England created the Earldom of Lancaster, and the second house of Lancaster was descended from Edward III's son, John of Gaunt, who married the heiress of the first house, Blanche of Lancaster.[2] Beginning in the late fourteenth century, internal conflict between the descendants of Edward III over succession and right to the throne consumed the House of Lancaster. Despite this, three Lancastrian kings sat on the throne of England: Henry IV, Henry V and Henry VI. The

[1] Elizabeth Hallam, *Plantagenet Chronicles*, Grove Press, 1986, p 27
[2] "House of Lancaster." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., https://www.britannica.com/topic/house-of-Lancaster.

House of York descended from the male line from the fourth surviving son of Edward III, Edmund of Langley, 1st Duke of York, in 1385. The conflict between the two families originated from the issue of succession and the question of who was best fit to rule.

Furthermore, this project focuses on four of the elite women involved in the conflict; Margaret of Anjou, Elizabeth Woodville, Anne Neville, and Elizabeth of York, the "last medieval Queens of England." These four women lived very different circumstances and came from very different backgrounds, but all bore the elite title of Queen during one of the most unstable period of England's history. A French born princess, Margaret of Anjou was destined for greatness. Her reign as queen initially represented peace and hope but quickly dissolved into war, leaving her the sole leader of the Lancastrian faction. Elizabeth Woodville was a widow of a Lancastrian soldier and a mother of two when she fell in love with Yorkist king Edward IV. Anne Neville was a high born lady to one of the richest families in England, who married the controversial and disputed, Richard III. Finally, Elizabeth of York, the first Tudor queen, helped establish a dynasty that ultimately changed the entirety of England. Theresa Earenfight states in her book on medieval queenship and womanhood, "in a profoundly male-dominated world, the queen's position as sharer in royal dignity, potentially more intimate with the sovereign than any other, made her an anomaly in the political structure."[3] The exploration of the women and their lives allows historians to examine the role of elite women in medieval Europe, as well as their influence and restrictions within the court they lived in. Overall, the purpose of this project is to demonstrate that despite their elite position, these women were still constricted by their gender and the expectations of a medieval woman. The relevancy of this topic explores the topic of

[3]J.L. Laynesmith, *Last Medieval Queens: English Queenship 1445-1503*, Oxford University Press, 2005, p 2

norms within a medieval society, as well as the expectations and role that women bore throughout this time.

Margaret of Anjou

The Hundred Years War raged between France and England for more than a hundred years by the time Henry VI sought out a royal bride in 1444. Henry VI, who inherited the throne at only nine months, was the only child of Henry V and his French wife, Katherine of Valois. Born December 6, 1421, he would never have any memory of his father, who died shortly after on August 31, 1422, during his last military campaign in France. Luckily for Henry, his father's two brothers, John, the Duke of Bedford, and Humphrey, the Duke of Gloucester survived long enough to become senior regent and lord protector, as Henry was too young to rule. Years later, Henry was deemed fit to rule in 1437, the same year he turned sixteen and his mother, Katherine of Valois, died shortly after giving birth. Despite his father's legacy as a warrior king, his son was tremendously different, as it was said that the young King Henry "showed neither inclination nor ability for the role he was called to play."[4] This inability to effectively rule later caused major problems for Margaret, and inevitably put the Yorks on the throne of England.

Known as the "she-wolf of France," Margaret of Anjou was born March 23, 1430, at Pont-à-Mousson in Lorraine, France, making her approximately eight years younger than her future husband. The second daughter of René, King of Naples and of Isabella, Duchess of Lorraine, she belonged to the royal house of Valois-Anjou. Her father was described as "a man with many crowns but no kingdoms," in which he also held the title as King of Jerusalem and Sicily. Her father's titles, along with her connection to French royalty effectively made her a candidate for a Queen consort.[5] Margaret was also the niece of Charles VII of France and the

[4]Sarah Gristwood, *Blood Sisters: The Women Behind the Wars of the Roses*, Harpercollins, 2012, p 8
[5] Gristwood, p 4

cousin of Louis XI of France, through the marriage of Charles VII to her aunt, Marie of Anjou. The negotiations for the marriage between Margaret of Anjou and Henry VI began in early 1444 and the final Treaty of Tours was signed later that year in May, which detailed the peace conditions. The treaty was solidified by the betrothal of Henry VI and Margaret on May 24, 1444. Headed by William de la Pole, 4th Earl of Suffolk, the treaty called for a 23 month truce in exchange for Margaret's hand in marriage, and control of the lands of Maine and Anjou be returned to the French. Many people of England, and many nobles, were not in favor of the marriage due to the fact that Margaret was only of relation to the French king through marriage. Despite the underlying disapproval, Margaret's arrival in England on April 9, 1445, as the Queen consort to-be, represented the long desired peace with France. She was essentially used as a political pawn to bridge the gap between France and England which had claimed so many lives on both sides. Such as, her arrival in London on May 28, 1445 was as lavish as befitting a Queen, a month after the *Cock John* docked in Southampton port.[6] Margaret was known for her beauty and passionate personality. In a letter Raffaello de Negra wrote to Bianca Maria Visconti, Duchess of Milan, more than ten years later in 1458, he penned "the queen is a most handsome woman, though somewhat dark and not as beautiful as your Serenity."[7] He also describes the King and Queen's first interaction, in which "the king dressed himself as a squire, the Duke of Suffolk doing the same, and took her a letter which he said the King of England had written," a trick which Henry VIII would use on Anne of Cleves in 1540.[2] However, Margaret did not even look down at Henry, as she was so fixated on reading the letter he brought. The Duke of Suffolk

[6] Gristwood, p 3
[7] "Milan: 1458." *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts in the Archives and Collections of Milan 1385-1618*. Ed. Allen B Hinds. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1912. 18-19. *British History Online*. Web. 27 February 2019. http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/milan/1385-1618/pp18-19.

later told her who the squire was, and "the queen was vexed at not having known it, because she had kept him on his knees."[2]

Margaret and Henry were married 10 days after on April 23, 1445 at Titchfield Abbey in Hampshire. She was crowned Queen Consort at Westminster on May 30, just over a month later, and two days after her arrival into the city of London. Margaret's lavish arrival into London consisted of eight pageants, or processions, which emphasized peace and hope that she would end the conflict between the French and English. At Southwark, she was greeted by the allegorical actors of Peace and Plenty. Peace began by calling her the "Most Christen Princess, by influence of Grace," which contains references to Genesis 8:17. The figure of Peace spoke directly to the new Queen and said: "So trust your people, with affiance, through your grace and higher benignity, the realms two, England and France, peace shall approach, rest and unite, set aside, all cruelty, which long have troubled the realms, biding your comfort in this adversity, Most Christen Princess, our lady sovereign"[8] Therefore, the figure of peace essentially conveyed to Margaret, as well as the spectators of London that her marriage signified unity and prosperity between the two realms. The underlying tones also could put an immense amount of pressure on a fifteen year old girl, now in a foreign land, one of which she was told to hate her entire life.

As she traveled over the bridge into London, the second pageant continued to elaborate on her significance as a symbol of peace, by using biblical references. Such as, "Unto the Dove that brought the branch of peace, resembling your simpleness, token and sign the Flood should cease;"[9] This specific excerpt from the second procession compares Margaret to that of the dove from the biblical story included in Genesis 8:11. In this story, Noah of Ark releases a dove and the dove returns with an olive branch, which symbolized the return of life and the end of the

[8] Lydgate & Sponsler *"Appendix: Margaret of Anjou's Entry into London, 1445"* 9-16
[9] Lydgate & Sponsler, 25-27

Flood. Therefore, the comparison of Margaret to Noah's dove continued to vividly enforce the idea that she was to be a symbol of peace. The remaining eight pageants, which included themes of agency, virginity, and spirituality, would follow her throughout the days leading up to her coronation, which took place at Westminster.

Despite her lavish arrival and her apparent warm welcome, the nobles that frequented Henry's court had distrust for Margaret. Her French background was cleverly used by Henry's advisors to bridge peace between France and England, despite for however long. However, Margaret was still French, and the recent bloodshed between the two countries prevented the English nobles from fully trusting Margaret. The conflict between England and France dates back centuries to the Norman Conquest of 1066. The Normans, a group of French speaking Vikings invaded England under the direction of William the Conqueror and took control of the land and political system.[10] From then on, the two countries spent centuries enthralled in multiple wars, with the aspiration of controlling France. One of these wars was called The Hundred Years War, fought between the Plantagenet of England and the Valois of France. The conflict caused hatred and distrust on both sides. Even King Henry VI himself was once called "the French-woman's son," referring to his mother, Katherine of Valois, the daughter of King Charles VI of France.[11] Along with her French origins, Margaret also had a fiery and passionate personality, one that many English nobles were not fond of. Different from her predecessor, Katherine of Valois, Margaret had an opinion on matters of state, and she voiced them quite loudly. Due to this, the English branded her as "meddlesome," a word which would later be used in negative propaganda against Margaret and Henry in the years to come.[12] Branding a woman as

[10] J.A. Wager, *Encyclopedia of the Hundred Years War,* Greenwood Press, 2006, p 232
[11] Helen Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou: Queenship and Power in Late Medieval England*, The Boydell Press 2003, p 29
[12] Ibid, p 24

meddlesome was an attack on her womanhood itself, as medieval women were taught to be obedient and silent on matters outside of the household.

In order to understand how Margaret must have felt in her marriage and her position, it is critical to understand the political circumstances surrounding England and her husband throughout their reign, as well as the expectations placed upon her. By 1450, England has lost most of what was left of its French holdings, including Normandy, which the English had controlled for most of the Hundred Years War. The morale of the English people drastically declined, and many people grew frustrated with the ineffective King Henry, who was constantly compared to his war-driven, aggressive father. The English people also blamed his French Queen, who they assumed was acting solely in the interest of France. In May of 1450, a rebellion began in the woods and vales of south-west Kent, which spread to London by the second week of June.[13] King Henry VI responded by sending a small force led by Sir Humphrey and William Stafford, to put the rebellion down. However, the king underestimated the force behind the rebellion and as a result, Stafford was killed. When the rebels entered London on July 3, 1450, Jack Cade lost control of his men, who began to loot and pillage the city of London. Due to this, the citizens of London went to extremes to push the rebellion out of London, eventually to a battle on the London Bridge on July 5, 1450. Just 5 days later, on July 10, Jack Cade was proclaimed a traitor, and a price of 1,000 marks was placed on his head.[14] Cade was captured by the Kent sheriff, Alexander Iden, but Cade died of wounds inflicted during the capture on the way to London. Despite already being dead, Cade was beheaded, and his body was dragged through the city of London before being quartered. Although the rebellion was put down in less than two months, it served as negative propaganda by the Yorks against the Lancasters during

[13]Ralph Griffiths, *The Reign of King Henry VI: the exercise of royal authority, 1422-1461,* University of California Press 1981, p 610
[14]Ibid, p 616

the Wars of the Roses. Also, the rebellion was blamed on Margaret, as many nobles accused her of manipulating her "weak" husband for French interests and political gain.

As for the relationship between King Henry and Queen Margaret, there is no evidence to suggest that it was anything but loving. Henry and Margaret spent most of their time together after their marriage, until 1450, when the king was preoccupied with the Jack Cade Rebellion of 1450.[15] Also, Henry often referred to Margaret in many of his letters to her and others, as his "right entirely best-beloved wife."[16] Henry never took any mistresses, which was very uncommon for a young, attractive king. Although it is likely that Henry's disinterest in sexual relationships was a result of mental illness, which began to show in August of 1453 when the king was only 32. It is probable that the king suffered from catatonic schizophrenia, in which he was "inundated with delusions and hallucinations," which would last for months. During these months, to someone suffering from this disorder "is deep into the hallucinations, and the real world no longer exist to them but instead they are reacting to the delusions occurring within."[17] It is highly likely that Henry inherited his mental illness from his maternal grandfather, Charles VI of France, who was famously called "Charles the Mad," and believed he was made of glass. Sadly, mental illness ran in that bloodline as a result of intermarriage between relatives throughout Europe.[18] However, when Henry VI suffered his first mental collapse in 1453, Queen Margaret was seven months into her first and only pregnancy of their marriage. It is important to note that it took Margaret eight years to get pregnant, which was unusual for women, especially those with an elite title, during this time. However, it has been speculated that the couple

[15]Ibid, p 257
[16] Cecil Monro, ed. *Letters of Queen Margaret of Anjou and Bishop Beckington and Others,* Camden Society, vol 86 (London, 1863)
[17] "Catatonic Schizophrenia: The Inside of The Brain." *Depression Alliance*, 7 May 2018, depressionalliance.org/catatonic-schizophrenia/
[18] Amelia Soth, "The French King Who Believed He Was Made of Glass," *JSTOR Daily,* 2018

refrained from conjugal visits until Margaret was older, due to the known health risks of childbirth and pregnancy.[19] While childbirth and pregnancy were dangerous for all medieval women, "when a royal woman gave birth, it was not just a personal matter, it was a matter of national importance," and "a royal birth was never as important as when a royal dynasty hung in the balance."[20] Despite any underlying speculation, "the day of Saint Edward, on the thirteenth day the queen had a prince at Westminster, wherefore the bells rang in every church and Te Deum solemn song."[21] The previous account indicates that Edward, Prince of Wales, was born October 13, 1453, and that he was christened at Westminster.

Although, despite the relief and joy that accompanied Edward's birth, the same source also states that there was "strange talk" of the birth. The infant's father was indisposed at the time of his birth, as his mental collapse had happened 3 months earlier. While the birth eliminated the question of succession, it raised the question of regency. Similar to her predecessor and mother-in law, Margaret was looked at with considerable suspicion and was barred from assuming regency. A council of "all senior lords and churchmen in the realm" were summoned to meet, which initially excluded Richard, Duke of York.[22] However, the Duke was later invited, which Helen Maurer attests was at the intervention of the Duke's wife, Cecily of York. When the Duke of York arrived at Westminster on November 12, Queen Margaret was still in recovery from the birth, which lasted into January of 1454. It was then in January of 1454 that Margaret first attempted to gain power as regent with her publication of "a bill of five articles." The first article of the bill demanded that Margaret be given "whole rule of this land." The second stated that along with whole rule, she should be granted "the right to appoint all the

[19] Maurer, p 42
[20] Medieval Lives: Birth, Marriage and Death, 2013, BBC Scotland
[21] Ralph Flenley, ed. *"Six Town Chronicles of England,"* Oxford Press 1911, p 140-141
[22] Dan Jones, *The Wars of the Roses: The Fall of the Plantagenets and the Rise of the Tudors*, Penguin Group, 2014, p 134

great officers of state."[23] The third article stated that "she may give all the bishoprics of this land," and the fourth demanded a "sufficient livelihood for her, her son and the king." [18] Her attempts were blocked by the English lords, the first blatant rejection of even the notion of a female ruler. The rejection of Margaret says more for the resistance to a female regent, and less for the support of the Duke of York. The Duke of York, who would secure his place as Protector of the Realm, as well as Chief Councilor in late March of that year, would later challenge the Lancastrian regime completely for the throne.[24] Prior to the Duke obtaining the title, Margaret's son, only five months old, was named Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester on March 15, 1454, thus implying the Lancastrian line of succession was still very much intact. [18] Despite this, the Duke of York exercised power to the fullest extent of his title. His appointment of his cousin, Richard Neville, Earl of Salisbury, the new chancellor was a bold move, considering the ongoing and violent feud between Neville and Percy families.[25] The Duke also appointed himself captain of Calais and lieutenant of Ireland. After his assumption of protector, the Duke of York imprisoned his long time rival, Edmund Beaufort, the Duke of Somerset, in the Tower of London.

The rivalry between the two dukes dates back to Beaufort's appointment as commander in France in 1448, essentially replacing the Duke of York. This notable militaristic position left the Duke of Somerset open to criticism from York supporters, who contested that Somerset was not up to the job. The York supporters were proved right, as Somerset was not able to repel French attacks, which eventually lead to the loss of all northern French lands by 1450. The relationship between the Duke of Somerset and Margaret of Anjou has been a topic of

[23] Keith Dockray, *Henry VI, Margaret of Anjou and the Wars of the Roses,* CPI Group 2016, p 77
[24] Ibid, p 71
[25] *Richard Neville, earl of Salisbury was the father Richard Neville, earl of Warwick, the man nicknamed the "Kingmaker," not the Kingmaker himself.

controversy since their time. Somerset was one of Margaret's most important allie when it came to her status and the protection of the Lancastrian dynasty. There was even suggestion that the Duke of Somerset had fathered her son, Edward, instead of her husband. However, these rumors are seen more frequently during the 1460s, which suggests that they were mostly used for Yorkist propaganda.[26] Therefore, the animosity and conflict between the Duke of York and Queen Margaret can possibly be traced to the Duke of Somerset's imprisonment during the 1453-54 crises.

However, the Duke of York's seniority only lasted approximately a year, as King Henry VI suddenly recovered on Christmas Day of 1454. A few days later on December 30, Queen Margaret brought the young prince to meet his father, and upon meeting his son, the king "held up his hands and thanked God thereof." [27] Henry's initial joy and approval of Prince Edward eliminated any speculation of adultery or illegitimacy, at least for the time being. The issue of illegitimacy in medieval Europe emerged from the canon law of the Roman Catholic Church that *defectus natalium*, or illegitimacy, rendered a man unfit for ordination.[28] If a person bearing a royal title produced a bastard, the child was barred from any inheritance unless legitimized by the Pope. The king's recovery essentially reversed all that the Duke of York had instituted over the course of 1454, starting with the release of the Duke of Somerset on January 26, 1455.[29] The Duke of York was stripped of his Protectorate title just 13 days later on February 9, and he was

[26] Patricia-Ann Lee, "Reflections of Power: Margaret of Anjou and the Dark Side of Queenship." *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 39, no. 2, 1986, pp. 183–217. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2862114.
[27] Jones, p 137
[28] Laura Wertheimer, "Children of Disorder: Clerical Parentage, Illegitimacy, and Reform in the Middle Ages." *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2006, p. 382. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4629669.
[29] Ralph Flenley, ed. *"Six Town Chronicles of England,"* Oxford Press 1911, p 140-141

also stripped of his captaincy of Calais, which was once again given to the Duke of Somerset. In addition to this, Richard, the Duke of Salisbury was forced to resign his chancellorship.[30]

After he fled from court, the Duke of York began to raise an army, as it became clear that his rivalry with the Duke of Somerset would always restrict him politically. The goal of the Duke of York only included the removal of the Duke of Somerset, someone he considered to be corrupt.[31] The royal army of the Lancastrian faction and the Yorkist army met in St. Albans, just north of London. The First Battle of St. Albans took place in May of 1455 and is considered the first violent conflict of the Wars of the Roses. The battle was considered a Yorkist victory, as the Duke of Somerset was "hacked to death in the street," which signified the end of the battle. [32] The Yorkists effectively rid the English government of Somerset, and Henry VI was left unharmed, as he had suffered his second mental breakdown during the conflict. The Duke of York was appointed Protector for the second time on November 15, 1455, and declared himself the king's "humble subject and liegeman Richard Duke of York."[33] However, the death of Somerset marked the loss of an ally for Queen Margaret, and the decline of her husband's health provided a sense of uncertainty once again.

The ability of the Duke of York to assume power portrayed his immense popularity among the English people. The English commoners whispered of their dislike for Queen Margaret because they believed the "Kings marriage to Queen Margaret," was the main cause of the loss of English control over French land, as well as the division among the English lords.[34] The disposal of Henry VI and the loss of the Duke of Somerset left Margaret with no allies, no protection and a two year old son. Despite these setbacks, Margaret had motivation. She was

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[30] Ibid
[31] Matthew Lewis,. *Richard, Duke of York: King by Right*, Amberley, 2017.
[32] Jones, p 143
[33] Dockray, p 88
[34] *Brut, or Chronicles of England,* ed. F.W.D. Brie (Early English Text Society, 1908)

"deeply offended" by the actions of the Duke of York, both politically and personally. The Duke had killed one of her most valued advisors, and left him to bleed in the streets of England. He also had captured her husband, and inevitably caused his second breakdown. It was from 1455 on that Margaret began to assert herself into the scheming and parley of politics. The rumors then began as to who would inherit the throne after Henry's death: his son, or the Duke of York. However, York's power would once again, be short lived, as he was forced to resign his Protectorship on February 25, 1456. Despite his fall from power, York attempted to maintain his involvement in politics. In 1457, Margaret began to strengthen her territorial power in the Midlands, and employed her son's council with only those she deemed loyal. [35] While she favored those close to the royal household, she also actively excluded York and his allies, which caused more tension between the Duke and the Queen. However, King Henry sought peace, which was displayed on March 25, 1458 during Love Day. Love Day was a procession through the city of London, one in which was meant to demonstrate the unity among the Yorks and Lancastrians after the Battle of St. Albans. After this public display of mutual affection and respect, both sides did agree to reconciliation.

Despite the public reconciliation, growing tensions caused both the Yorkists and Lancastrians to prepare for violent conflict by spring of 1459. The second battle of the wars occurred on September 23, 1459 and is remembered as the Battle of Blore Heath. The battle itself lasted four hours and resulted in the death of two thousand men, but the Yorkists emerged victorious.[36] Despite the victory, the Yorkists had suffered heavy casualties and their forces were depleted. The Yorkist faction was ordered by the King and Queen to lay down their weapons and beg for royal pardon within six days, but they refused. Their refusal led to the development of a

[35]Jones, p 153
[36]Anthony Goodman, *The Wars of the Roses: Military Activity and English Society, 1452-97*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981, p 27

larger, more efficient royal army, headed by Queen Margaret in the name of her son and husband. The Lancastrian victory which followed forced the Yorks and the Nevilles to "scurry like mice" in all directions. The Duke of York and his son Edmund fled to Ireland, while the Nevilles fled to Calais, taking the seventeen year old Edward, Earl of March with them. [37]

The victory for the royal household allowed Margaret more power than ever, as she was slowly becoming the leader of the Lancastrian faction in place of her husband. Although there is no evidence that Margaret had necessarily wanted to raise an army, she held resentment and contempt for her enemies.[38] Her militaristic victories served as propaganda to brand her as ruthless and merciless Queen. Margaret's ability to control and lead such a large military force, and succeed in it, was reminiscent of her late father in law, Henry V. Although Henry V had been praised during and after his lifetime for his military success, Margaret did not receive the same praise. She was seen by the Yorkist faction as a vile, corrupt Frenchwoman who meant to control her weak and indisposed husband. It was because of this view of the Queen that allowed the Yorks to amass support for her displacement as Queen and for York's appointment as King of England. The Duke's declaration of his claim to the throne shocked everyone, even his followers. The Yorkist cause had always been to rid Henry VI of his "corrupt and distrusting" advisors. The change in the Duke's motivation can be attributed to the growth of Margaret's strength, both politically and militaristically. Like many other English lords at the time, the Duke may have seen Margaret as overstepping in her role as Queen consort, and wanted her to be stopped.

In June of 1460, the Lancastrians and Yorks once again met in Northampton for a bloody battle, which saw the royal forces quickly depleted. Led by the earl of Warwick, the heir to the

[37] Jones, p 163
[38] Lee, p 192

Neville family, the Yorkist force overcame the Lancastrians quickly. The weather made it especially difficult to fight, and caused massive confusion among the royal forces. The earl of Warwick himself declared to his men, "No man should lay a hand upon the king or the common people, but only on the lords, knights and squires."[39] With this proclamation, many soldiers fled, or drowned as a result of their heavy armor.[40] The battle ended with the capture of Henry VI by the earl of Warwick, and Queen Margaret was left to flee with her young son.

On October 25, 1460, the English parliament passed the Act of Accord. The Act essentially made the Duke of York heir to the throne after Henry VI, and disinherited Margaret's son from the succession.[41] The Act stated "it is accorded, appointed, and agreed that Richard Duke of York be entitled, called and reputed henceforth, very and rightful heir to the crowns of England and France."[42] Despite the acceptance of the act by Henry VI, Margaret felt betrayed, as the Act disinherited her son from the throne. This angered not only her, but many Lancastrian loyalists, who viewed the Duke of York as a usurper. On the other hand, the confirmation of the Duke as heir was supported by those who believed the Queen's son to be a bastard, and "not the king's son."[43] This view of the young prince not only discredited him, but his mother. The thought that Margaret had stepped outside of her marriage, and that a child had been produced from it, shamed her not only as a Queen but as a woman. The rumors of her indiscretion only fueled the idea that she was a malicious, power hungry woman, who did not really love her husband. Despite the formality of the Duke's appointment as heir, there was still immense animosity and anger among the two groups, who still held grudges from St. Albans.

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[39] John Silvester Davies, *An English Chronicle of the Reigns of Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V, and Henry VI Written before the Year 1471*. Printed for the Camden Society, 1856, p 83
[40] Philip A. Haigh, *The Military Campaigns of the Wars of the Roses*. Combined Books, 1997, p 132
[41] Davies, p 104-105
[42] Dockray, p 172
[43] Jones, p 174

The estrangement and hostility between the two sides came to a head at the Battle of Wakefield. On December 30, 1460, the York forces were overcome by those of the Lancastrians. Queen Margaret still had allies in the late Duke of Somerset's son, Henry Beaufort, who never forgave the Nevilles or Yorks for his father's death. The Duke of York was surrounded on all sides, "outnumbered perhaps five to one by men who not only opposed his political ambition, but for the most part genuinely loathed him." [44] The battle immediately resulted in the death of the Duke himself, as well as his son Edmund, earl of Rutland. The Duke of York was dragged by Lancastrian soldiers, who removed his helmet and placed a paper crown on his head. He was then beheaded. Sir Thomas Neville and the Earl of Salisbury were also both killed, and all four of the Yorkists heads were sent to the city of York. Their heads were displayed on the city gates, with the Duke of York's paper crown still rested on his head.[45] Despite popular propaganda that it was Queen Margaret who gave this order, it is impossible considering she was still in Scotland at the time of the battle. However, with the Duke of York dead, his eldest son and heir, Edward, Earl of March, became the leader of the Yorkist faction. With his cousin by his side, the son of the fallen Earl of Salisbury, the Earl of Warwick, the man known as the "Kingmaker," they set out to rid England of the Lancastrians.

For Margaret, it seemed that with the death of the Duke of York, her problems died with him. Despite the Act of Accord naming the duke's sons as his heirs, she had effectively rid herself of her largest enemy. Margaret was prevented from resuming any normalcy in government, as Henry VI was still held captive by the earl of Warwick. Margaret was able to recover her husband after the Second Battle of St. Albans, which took place on February 17, 1461. The Lancastrian forces were able to overcome those under the control of Warwick, due to

[44] Jones, p 177
[45] Griffiths, p 870

his cousin, Edward's delay in arrival. When King Henry was found, Lord Bonville and Sir Thomas Kyriell were found next to him. They had been assigned by Warwick to guard Henry from any harm that the battle might bring him. Margaret showed no mercy, and asked her seven year old son to pass their sentences, to which the young Prince sent the two men to be beheaded.

Although the Lancastrians succeeded in recovering the King from the Yorks, they were barred from entering London due to their reputation of pillage, rape and outright brutality. The restriction from London allowed the earl of March to campaign for his claim to the throne. His claim was that the Act of Accord was broken with the death of his father, and that the Yorkist claim to the throne was stronger than that of the Lancastrians due to their connection to Edward III and his son, John of Gaunt. To his supporters, despite not being crowned, Edward, earl of March was now King Edward IV. However, Queen Margaret was not sitting idly during her enemy's ascension, and she was raising armies in northern England. The Battle of Towton was fought on March 29, 1461 and was another bloody battle, described as a "ten hour endurance test in which men slogged each other to exhaustion."[46]

The battle ended as a Yorkist victory, and caused Margaret, her son and her husband to flee north to Scotland, defeated. Soon after in 1464, a new Queen of England would be crowned, discrediting Margaret and the Lancastrian dynasty as a whole in every way possible. Margaret's replacement was the beautiful Elizabeth Woodville, who the young King Edward IV had married in secret. Edward's marriage to Elizabeth caused such strain within his administration, more specifically, on his relationship with his cousin, the earl of Warwick. The estrangement over Edward's choice of bride would cause the Earl of Warwick to seek Margaret's help in recrowning Henry as king.[47] However, Warwick did not seek out Margaret until 1470; all the

[46]Gristwood, p 64
[47] Maurer, p 203

while Margaret was making secret alliances with those in Scotland and even in her home country of France. There are not many accounts that detail Margaret's efforts when she was exiled abroad, but one thing was certain: as long as Margaret was alive, she would continue to fight for the right of her husband and son to rule England. Margaret waited for her opportunity, and for the right allies, which eventually came to her in 1470.

Elizabeth Woodville

Elizabeth Woodville was a widowed mother of two boys when she met the newly crowned Edward IV. Theirs is a love story still remembered today, as it was so controversial, dramatic and bore great consequence for the land of England. After Margaret of Anjou was uncrowned and exiled from the land in 1461, the newly crowned York king Edward IV struggled to establish his reign unchallenged against Lancastrian loyalists. As for his future queen, Elizabeth Woodville was the farthest thing from royalty.

Her birth year is disputed, mostly due to the fact that she was not all that important at the time of her birth. Elizabeth was the first child born to Richard Woodville and Jacquetta of Luxembourg, whose marriage itself was a scandal. Jacquetta was a high-ranking woman in the English court before her marriage to Richard. Jacquetta married her first husband, John of Lancaster, 1st Duke of Bedford in 1433. The Duke was the grandson of John of Gaunt, the third son of King Edward III, making Jacquetta the King's aunt by marriage. The marriage ended childless as the Duke died in 1435. Sir Richard Woodville served as the late Duke's chamberlain and was relatively low in status compared to Jacquetta at the time of her first husband's death. Despite this, he was commissioned by the king, Henry VI, to bring the young widow to England. During this time, the couple fell in love and was secretly married sometime before 1437, despite not having the king's permission. Although initially banned from court and heavily fined, they

were quickly forgiven and Jacquetta retained her Duchess title, and her husband became the 1st Earl Rivers. Therefore, Jacquetta and Richard had fourteen children that led a comfortable life.

The first of their children was Elizabeth, who was "probably born at Grafton in Northamptonshire in 1437."[48] Although no record exists as to exactly when, it is known that Elizabeth married Sir John Grey of Groby sometime in the early 1450s.[49] She gave birth to two sons, Thomas and Richard, in the early years of her marriage. When the War of the Roses broke out at the First Battle at St. Albans in 1455, the Woodville and Grey families were not directly affected. However, they "were almost bound to be drawn into the conflict as the situation worsened," and Elizabeth's mother, father, and brother were captured by the Earl of Warwick in 1460.[50] This incident is the first of many that would lead Elizabeth to dislike and distrust the Earl of Warwick, who became the biggest advocator against her marriage to Edward. The Woodvilles were not physically hurt, and were released after the Battle of Northampton, a Yorkist victory.[51]

Elizabeth's husband, Sir John Grey, was killed at the Second Battle of St. Albans in early 1461. Her husband's death left Elizabeth widowed with two young sons, and in a bitter battle with her former mother-in-law over rights to her husband's land. It is still unclear as to when or how Elizabeth and Edward first met, but there is a legend that Elizabeth waited for Edward under an oak tree in Whittlebury Forest near her family residence with her two sons and pled for the securement of their inheritance. Despite her lack of royal status and that she was the widow of a knight from the wrong side; Edward fell in love with her. Secretly, "on the first day of May in the beginning of his third year and in the year of our Lord 1463," "the said King Edward wedded

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[48] David Baldwin, *Elizabeth Woodville: Mother of the Princes in the Tower*, History Press, 2010, p 1
[49] David Baldwin, Michael Jones, and Philippa Gregory, *The Women of the Cousins' War,* Simon & Schuster, 2011, p 155
[50] Ibid, 156
[51] The Earl of Warwick is also known as Richard Neville, the "Kingmaker"

the fore said Dame Elizabeth."[52] It is said that Edward fell in love with Elizabeth's "sober demeanor, lovely looking, and feminine smiling beside her tongue so eloquent and her wit so pregnant." [53] The marriage, although made for love, was very unpopular amongst Edward's family, particularly the Earl of Warwick. At the time of Edward's secret marriage, the Earl was in France negotiating a marriage for Edward and a French princess. Such a marriage would've further solidified peace between England and France, both of whom were still recovering from the aftermath of the Hundred Years War. Also, the Earl wanted to keep any French military aid out of the hands of Margaret of Anjou, the exiled queen of the dethroned Henry VI. Furthermore, not just the Earl of Warwick, but most of Edward's councilmen felt as if Elizabeth was "so ill-qualified for the post," and it was "generally assumed Edward IV let passion override political calculation in marrying her at all."[54] Despite criticism, she was crowned Queen consort on the 26th of May in 1465, at "Westminster."[55] Although Elizabeth came with no dowry, lands or foreign alliances, she did bring something very crucial for a queen to have: fertility. She differed from her predecessor Margaret of Anjou in this way, as Elizabeth gave birth to ten children, although three died early in childhood. In 1466, and "in the fifth year of Edward IV," "the Queen delivered a daughter."[56] Elizabeth gave birth to two more daughters, Mary and Cecily, in 1467 and 1469. Reproductive success was essential for a medieval woman, as infant mortality was so low. It was very common for children to die in infancy, as there were no vaccines or knowledge of disease prevention or birthing complications. Also, due to the lack of modern medical knowledge and equipment, "pregnancy and childbirth were risky in the Middle

[52] John Warkworth, *The Chronicles of the White Rose of York*, Bohn, 1845, p 16
[53] Henry Ellis, Richard Grafton, Edward Hall, *Hall's Chronicle; Containing the History of England,* Creative Media Partners, 2008, p 254
[54] Helen Jewell, *Women in Medieval England,* Manchester University Press, 1996, p 135
[55] Ellis, Grafton, Hall, *Hall's Chronicle*, p 264
[56] Warkworth, *The Chronicles of the White Rose of York*, p 18

Ages."[57] Along with the infant, it was very common for a mother to die in childbirth.[58] Pregnancy, childbirth and infant care was more religious than medical during this time, as many midwives "were inclined to base their understanding of childbirth on scripture."[59]

While Edward's nobles conspired against the royal couple, Elizabeth exercised her abilities as Queen Consort. She convinced her husband to grant her relatives lands and marriages which elevated them socially and economically. By elevating Elizabeth's family to higher positions in court and solidifying marriages of advancement for her many siblings, Edward created more tension throughout his court. Even so, Elizabeth's father was made Earl Rivers and appointed Lord Treasurer in 1466. He was also made Constable of England in 1467. Her brother, Anthony Woodville, was made a Knight of the Garter and was married to the "sole heir of Thomas lord Scales and by her he was Lord Scales."[60] Thomas Grey, Elizabeth's first child, was made Marquess of Dorset later in 1475 and was married to Cecily Bonville, 7th Baroness Harington. Also, three of her sisters married the sons of the respective Earls of Kent, Essex and Pembroke. Her family's elevation is just one example of how Elizabeth used her status as Queen to her advantage.

While Elizabeth and her family gained wealth and lands, the Earl of Warwick was secretly plotting to overthrow Edward IV. Warwick had his spies and connections spread false rumors throughout England that Edward IV was a bastard, making his younger brother George the true heir and king to the Yorkist faction. The Earl convinced Edward's brother, The Duke of Clarence, to aid in overthrowing his brother and instating him to the throne instead. The first

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[57] Alixe Bovey, "Women in Medieval Society." *The British Library*, The British Library, 2014, https://www.bl.uk/the-middle-ages/articles/women-in-medieval-society.

[58] Albrecht Classen, *Old Age in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Interdisciplinary Approaches to a Neglected Topic*, Walter de Gruyter, 2007, p 128

[59] Margaret Cormack, "Introduction: Approaches to Childbirth in the middle Ages." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 21.2 (2012): 201,207,364. ProQuest. 11 Oct. 2019.

[60] Ibid

offense to the king was the marriage between Warwick's daughter, Isabel and the Duke of Clarence in July of 1469. The marriage was done without the knowledge or approval of the king, "wherefore the king took great displeasure with."[61] Warwick pushed for Clarence and his daughter to produce a son quickly, as the king only had daughters at the time. A son of Clarence would secure the line of succession and give the Nevilles an advantage over Edward IV and the Woodvilles. However, 15 days after the marriage between Clarence and Isabel, the Battle of Edgecote Moor took place. The battle was the beginning of a rebellion, the product of the rumors surrounding Edward IV regarding his parentage. The battle, fought near Northamptonshire, was the first time Clarence and Warwick openly supported a rebellion against Edward. It was a rebel victory, and led to the capture of Edward IV himself, leaving Elizabeth to seek sanctuary with their three young daughters. Also, the Earl of Rivers, father of the Queen, and his son John were taken prisoners at Chepstow. They were both beheaded at Kenilworth in August of 1469 on the orders of Warwick.[62] Warwick was forced to release Edward in September 1469, and the King issued a pardon to Warwick and his brother.[63] The decision to pardon the men responsible for her father and brother's death had an effect on the Queen tremendously. Despite public reconciliation, Henry Percy's restoration to earl of Northumberland "prevented any chance of full reconciliation."[64] After a failed attempt to capture Edward IV again, Warwick and Clarence fled to France with their wives to seek refuge with King Louis XI.

At the same time, Elizabeth fell pregnant with her and Edward's fourth child. This period of uncertainty, with Clarence and Warwick plotting abroad, caused stress on the king and queen.

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[61] Ibid, 23
[62] Cora L. Scofield, The Capture of Lord Rivers and Sir Anthony Woodville, 19 January 1460, *The English Historical Review*, Volume XXXVII, Issue CXLVI, April 1922, Pages 253–255, https://doi.org/10.1093/ehr/XXXVII.CXLVI.253
[63] A.J. Pollard, *Warwick the Kingmaker: Politics, Power and Fame*, Hambledon Continuum, 2007, p 88
[64] Maurice Keen, *England in the Later Middle Ages*, Routledge, 2003, p 378

In France, Clarence and Warwick began negotiating with the exiled queen, Margaret of Anjou. A deal was made that Warwick's younger daughter, Anne, would marry Henry VI's son, Prince Edward of Wales and Henry VI would be restored to the throne of England. The couple was married in October of 1470, after many delays due to their close blood relation.[65] Relation in the fourth degree or closer was considered a "canonical impediment," because "since 1215, canon law prohibited marriages between those related."[66]

The Duke of Clarence fled with his wife back to England to ask for forgiveness from his brother after learning that he would be further from the crown. Back in England, Edward received word of a rebellion in the north and moved the queen and their daughters to the tower of London. Edward soon learned that his capture was inevitable by Lancastrain forces, and fled to Holland with his youngest brother, Richard, Anthony Woodville, and William Hastings. With her husband in exile and eight months pregnant, Elizabeth sought sanctuary at Westminster Abbey in October of 1470.[67] From Westminster, she attempted to rally the citizens of London to defend the city from rebels in the name of King Edward. Although they tried, the rebel forces were too great and they took London, and released Henry VI, who had been imprisoned in the Tower of London. Henry VI was restored to the throne on October 15, 1470, which uncrowned Elizabeth as Queen of England. Her crown gone, three small children and a fourth on the way, Elizabeth and her children were confined to the small rooms at Westminster.

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65 Michael Hicks, *Anne Neville: Queen to Richard III*, The History Press, 2007, Chapter 3

66 Peter D. Clarke, "English Royal Marriages and the Papal Penitentiary in the Fifteenth Century." *The English Historical Review*, vol. 120, no. 488, 2005, p. 1016, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3489227

67 Arlene Okerlund, *Elizabeth: England's Slandered Queen*, Tempus, 2006, p 101

On November 2, 1470, Elizabeth gave birth in sanctuary to Prince Edward, the male heir to the Yorkist throne.[68] The infant did not meet his father until he was three months old, in April of 1471 when Edward IV entered London with no resistance with help from his brother in law, Charles the Bold of Burgundy. The conflict between Burgundy and France prompted Charles' intervention on Edward's behalf. However, Henry VI welcomed the Yorkist king warmly, stating "my cousin of York, you are very welcome. I know that in your hands my life will not be in danger."[69] Henry VI was moved to the Tower of London, and Edward went to Westminster to see his wife and meet his newborn son. According to Fleetwood's chronicle, the newborn was "the King's greatest joy, a fair son, a prince wherewith she presented him at his coming, to his hearts singular comfort and gladness."[70] Elizabeth, her children, and her mother were once again moved back to the Tower, now that her husband occupied London again. On Easter Sunday of 1471, the Battle of Barnet ensued. According to military history, the battle was a Yorkist victory because a thick fog caused the Lancastrians to begin attacking their own men. [71] The Earl of Warwick was killed in an attempt to retreat as a result of this battle, which made Edward VI's success inevitable. However, Margaret of Anjou, her son and Anne Neville were still at large with an army. With money and men provided by King Louis XI, Margaret of Anjou sailed with an army to England. The respective armies of York and Lancaster met at the Battle of Tewkesbury on May 4, 1471. Margaret's son was killed during this battle, completely destroying her cause. Edward took Margaret captive after the fall of her son and army, and on May 21, he

[68]*Edward V (1470–1483), King of England and Lord of Ireland: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 10 Nov. 2017, www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-8521;jsessionid=5C08624FA0A086E1A114EA87DE425CE9.
[69]Charles Ross, *Edward IV,* University of California Press, 1974, p 166
[70]Okerlund, p 121
[71]Richard Brooke, *Visits to Fields of Battle, in England, of the Fifteenth Century,* J.R. Smith, 1857, p 205

triumphantly traveled through London with Margaret as a prisoner beside him. Henry VI was killed in the Tower of London that night, and many modern historians believe Richard of Gloucester was responsible.[72] The Lancastrian cause was officially dead, and Elizabeth and Edward could finally start their reign after eight years of marriage.

Despite a seemingly happy marriage and many children, Edward IV was not known for his fidelity. According to Arlene Okerlund, "Edward IV always treated Elizabeth with utmost respect, treasured her intelligence and good sense, and perhaps loved her as deeply as it is possible for man to love woman, he also exercised his royal and masculine prerogative."[73] This philosophy was not uncommon in medieval marriages. Many kings before and after Edward IV did not hide their promiscuity with their mistresses, such as Edward's grandson, Henry VIII and his many mistresses. Edward's most famous mistress was Elizabeth "Jane" Shore, and Elizabeth's exact feelings on his infidelity remains unknown, although it can be assumed that it bothered her. However, a king taking a mistress was not uncommon. Many famous mistresses are seen throughout British history, from medieval to modern. Included in this group is Camilla Parker Bowles, the mistress turned wife of the next King of England.

During the next twelve years, Edward IV ruled with no major opposition, and Elizabeth retained her title as Queen of England. In her position as Queen, she re-founded Queens' College, Cambridge, which had been originally founded by Margaret of Anjou. Elizabeth issued "the first set of statues" to Queens' College in March of 1475 after convincing her husband to save the institution in 1465 after his disestablishment of any institutions created by Henry VI.[74] In the statue issued, administrative structure was established, such as elections, establishment of residence, and designation of stipends. Due to Margaret's inability to finish the task, Elizabeth is

[72]A.L Rowse, *Bosworth Field & the Wars of the Roses*, Wordsworth Military Library, 1966, p 170-171
[73]Okerlund, p 135
[74]Ibid, p 202

credited as being the *vera fundatrix*, or "true founder." Both queens' interests in domestic and academic affairs are significant, as it was abnormal for an English medieval queen to be involved in such matters. Elizabeth continued her interest in domestic pursuits and endowed a chapel dedicated to St. Erasmus at Westminster Abbey and issued a royal charter in January of 1479 authorizing the build. Elizabeth was also directly involved in promoting the interests of Merchant Adventurers of London, which "by the Queen's grace" allowed the reduction of subsidy by 500 marks. Also, despite consistent pregnancy, Elizabeth and Edward visited Oxford University in September of 1481 where they observed speeches and a tour of the college.[75] Her presence and position in affairs of state was new, as a medieval queen was expected to bear children and keep a household. During these years, Elizabeth used her position and influence as Queen and one of King's advisors to expand and fund educational and religious institutions, while also providing heirs for the King.[76]

Elizabeth and Edward ruled unchallenged for many years, until his sudden death in 1483, which left Elizabeth a target for nobility aspirations. Edward fell ill in April of 1483, and named his brother Richard, Lord Protector before he died. As his eldest son, Prince Edward of Wales was only twelve at the time of his father's death; he needed a protector to guide him until he was of age. The events of June 1483 changed the legacy and longevity of the York dynasty, and England itself, indefinitely. The Duke of Gloucester quickly moved to take control of the young king by removing his mother's ambitious family and had Earl Rivers and Richard Grey arrested. The young king was moved to the Tower of London to await the coronation. At the news of her son and brothers arrests, Elizabeth fled to sanctuary once again with her children. Richard executed William Hastings, a loyal member of the late Edward's council and also a sworn enemy

[75]Ibid, p 230
[76] "College History." *College History-Queens' College*, https://www.queens.cam.ac.uk/conferences/history

of the Woodville family. Richard accused Hastings of plotting against his life, and he was beheaded on June 13, 1483. On June 16, Elizabeth sent her youngest son, Richard, to join his brother in the tower. [77] On June 22, a sermon was preached at Saint Paul's Cross claiming Gloucester to be the only legitimate heir of the House of York.[78] This sermon came after it was revealed that Edward IV had a pre-contract of marriage with Lady Eleanor Talbot, which invalidated his marriage to Elizabeth Woodville and made all their ten children bastards. Two days later on June 24, the citizens of London wrote a petition asking Richard to take the throne, though many contemporary writers believe that they saw no other alternative.[79] The next day, Richard executed Anthony Woodville and Richard Grey, Elizabeth's brother and son, even though "no evidence against them was ever produced."[80] Richard and his wife Anne were crowned King Richard III and Queen Anne of England on July 6, 1483 by the Archbishop of Canterbury.[81] Parliament later confirmed Richard as the King of England in 1484 with *Titulus Regius.* Within this document read "the said King Edward during his life, and the said Elizabeth, lived together sinfully and damnably in adultery, against the Law of God and his Church; all the children of the said King Edward have been bastards, and are unable to inherit or to claim anything by inheritance, by the Laws and Customs of England; the undoubted Son and Heir of Richard late Duke of York, and as in right King of England, by way of inheritance."[82]The events that followed led to one of the most debated historical mysteries in English history, which is now referred to as "The Princes in the Tower." This refers to the disappearance of Elizabeth's two

[77] David Baldwin, *Richard III,* Amberely Publishing, 2013, p 101
[78] Michael A. Hicks, *Richard III*, Tempus, 2001, p 117
[79] Charles Woods, "THE DEPOSITION OF EDWARD V." *Traditio*, vol. 31, 1975, p 276, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/27830988
[80] Allison Weir, The Princes in the Tower, Ballantine Books, 1995, p 123
[81]"Richard III." Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., www.britannica.com/biography/Richard-III-king-of-England/Usurpation
[82] "Titulus Regius." *Richard III Society*, http://www.richardiii.net/2_7_0_riii_documents.php

younger sons, Edward V and Richard of Shrewsbury, when they were imprisoned in the Tower of London by their uncle. The two young boys were never seen again after the summer of 1483.

Many theories surround their disappearance, such as; Richard murdered his nephews so he could assume the throne with no opposition. Another theory states that Henry Stafford murdered the boys on Richard's orders, which still implicates Richard as the responsible party. Fewer historians believe that Henry Tudor, later Henry VII, murdered the boys when he took the throne in 1485 to prevent any opposition to his rule. Most historians agree that the most probable suspect is Richard III, however it is still debated and there is no solid evidence confirming his guilt. The topic has been the subject of many modern non-fiction novels, TV shows and movies, all of which have different culprits as to who was responsible.

With Richard III's accessention to the throne, Elizabeth was now crownless, without protection or knowledge of where her sons were. According to Polydore Vergil, upon learning of her son's deaths, "she fell in swoon and lay lifeless a good while; after coming to herself, she wept, she cried out aloud and with lamentable shrieks made all the house ring." [83] Elizabeth spent the next two years plotting with Margaret Beaufort to overthrow Richard III and instate Henry Tudor as king, with her daughter Elizabeth of York as his queen. However, from 1483-1485, there was a new queen of England. Queen Anne Neville, daughter of the man known as the "Kingmaker" and one of the richest women in England during her time, took the mantle as Queen during her husband's short reign.

Elizabeth Woodville never regained her title after Richard III assumed the throne, however, her legacy remains. As queen, she reshaped the expectations and criteria of a queen and she became a model consort. She proved that despite her non-royal upbringing, she was able to

[83] Polydore Vergil, *Three Books of Polydore Vergil's English History, comprising of the Reigns of Henry VI., Edward IV., and Richard III*, ed. Henry Ellis, Camden Society, 1844, https://archive.org/details/threebooksofpoly29verg/page/n33, p 37

perform as an effective and influential queen just as well as any high born queen. She differed entirely from her predecessor, Margaret of Anjou. In terms of medieval womanhood, Elizabeth Woodville was victorious over Margaret. Elizabeth Woodville's ability to flaunt her fertility and reproductive success is the one thing that Margaret could never achieve. Although it should be noted that Margaret's failure in war had more to do with her husband's lack of competency, the blatant rejection of a female ruler and the power of the Yorks. However different, an examination of the two rival queens proves that regardless of your status at birth, a medieval woman was confined to the traditional role as a wife and mother. Elizabeth Woodville died as queen dowager at Bermondsey Abbey, on June 8, 1492 and was laid to rest next to her husband, Edward IV.

Anne Neville

Anne Neville is remembered as Richard III's tragic queen, who died suspiciously at the young age of 28, months after her only child also tragically died. Her life, actions and contributions to the English monarchy are tremendously overshadowed by that of her very famous husband. Richard III is known as one of the greatest villains in history, emulated through Shakespeare as being a usurping murderer who "slew Henry in the Tower, and Edward, at Tewksbury."[84] In Shakespeare, Anne is portrayed as easily manipulated and naive in regard to her relationship with the future king. However, before she was Richard's queen, she was the Kingmaker's daughter and the Princess of Wales. Nevertheless, her obscure life joins those of her predecessors in the examination of the transition from a medieval queen to a modern queen.

The name Neville wielded great power and influence at the time of Anne's existence. Anne was the second daughter born to Richard Neville, 16th Earl of Warwick, and Anne Beauchamp at Warwick Castle on June 11, 1456, just a year after the First Battle of St.

[84] William Shakespeare, *Richard III*, Mass Market Paperback, 2004, lines 118-119

Albans.[85]At the time of her birth, Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou were still the King and Queen of England, with a rocky truce between the houses of York and Lancaster. The two houses had been plotting against one another through Henry VI's illness, though Anne had no part in this. She spent the early years of the wars at Middleham Castle, alongside her sister and the two young Dukes of Clarence and Gloucester, the two girl's future husbands.[86] Her father's involvement in the replacement of Henry VI with Edward IV in 1461 gained him the title of "Kingmaker," and gave their family extreme power and influence on the affairs of court and the monarch.

The cousin families of Warwick and York were at an all time high when they removed Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou from their thrones, but when Edward IV secretly married Elizabeth Woodville, the Neville family was enraged. As mentioned previously, Edward's consistent elevation of the Woodville family over the Nevilles eventually led to the second outbreak of civil war, a continuation of the Wars of the Roses. The tension rose between Warwick and Edward IV when Edward refused to give Isabel Neville and his brother, George, Duke of Clarence, permission to marry. Historians believe that Edward's refusal to the match was mostly rooted in the fact that Isabel and George were first cousins, and a papal dispensation was needed in order for the marriage to be valid. Despite many attempts by Edward to block a dispensation, one was granted to Isabel and George on March 14, 1469. The wedding took place in Calais on July 12, 1469, where Anne was "undoubtedly" present.[87] Although Anne was present, most historians assert that both she and Isabel were unaware of their father's true intentions. After a failed rebellion and brief capture of Edward IV by Warwick and Clarence,

[85] "Anne Neville, Wife of Richard III." *Westminster Abbey*, https://www.westminster-abbey.org/abbey-commemorations/royals/anne-neville-wife-of-richard-iii
[86] Amy Licence, *Anne Neville: Richard III's Tragic Queen*, Amberley Publishing Limited, 2013, p 63
[87] Michael Hicks, *Anne Neville: Queen to Richard III,* Tempus, 2007, p 71

they were forgiven, even after executing Queen Elizabeth's father and brother. Despite receiving forgiveness, Warwick and Clarence continued to conspire against the King and Queen, with the ultimate goal of Clarence replacing Edward as king. However, Clarence, a heavily pregnant Isabel, Anne and her parents were forced to flee to France as "defeated traitors."[88] During their trip to France, on a ship which "plunged and rolled," Isabel went into labor and delivered a stillborn son. The reason for the loss of Isabel's child is debated, some believe that the child was premature, and others believe that Isabel was under immense stress from her husband and father's precarious political plans.[89] Nonetheless, the loss of her child "must have been a particularly bitter blow for herself, her mother, and Anne."[90]

The Earl of Warwick quickly realized that the original goal of placing Clarence and Isabel upon the throne was not attainable. With his eldest daughter already married, he looked to his second daughter in order to conjure a situation that would benefit the family and save them from execution. He looked to King Louis XI of France, who suggested an alliance between Warwick and his old nemesis, the exiled Margaret of Anjou and offered to fund an invasion. Louis XI had the end goal of conquering the land of Burgundy, which was controlled by Charles the Bold and Margaret of York, Edward IV's sister. [91] The fallen queen was apprehensive and doubtful of Warwicks intentions as he was the one responsible for her removal in the first place. Persuaded by Louis XI and her father, King of Naples, she agreed to the alliance which would see the union of her son, Edward Prince of Wales and Anne Neville and the restoration of the Lancastrains and Henry VI to the throne. Although distant, it was revealed that Edward and Anne were related in the fourth degree, as they both shared common ancestry through John of

[88] Ibid, p 80
[89] Michael Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker,* Wiley-Blackwell, 2002, p 287
[90] License, p 123
[91] Susan Abernethy, "The Universal Spider: King Louis XI." *Medievalists.net*, 2017, http://www.medievalists.net/2014/01/the-universal-spider-king-louis-xi/

Gaunt, which was prohibited without a dispensation. [92] The need for a dispensation delayed their marriage, but did not delay the restoration of Henry VI. The new Princess of Wales to be, Anne was left in the care of Queen Margaret while her father continued to promote the Lancastrian cause in England [93]Anne and Edward were married in December of 1470 at Amboise after much delay and many dispensations.[94] With this, although brief, the Lancastrain restoration was successful and was referred to as the "Readaptation of Henry VI." The invasion two months prior in October of 1470 was overwhelming successful, as "Henry VI was replaced on his throne without any fighting, and Edward IV exiled."[95]

Anne's life during her marriage to Edward was one of instability, uncertainty, and unfamiliarity. More is known of the relationship between Anne and her mother-in-law than with her husband. Many historians agree and infer that although Anne was previously her enemy, Margaret of Anjou "understood most of what Anne must've been feeling, as she was a young bride as well."[96] It is not confirmed if Anne's marriage was consummated, but it can be assumed, as per consummation rendered a medieval marriage valid and unbreakable. However, Anne's suspected joy at her new position was short lived, as her brother-in-law switched his allegiance and "led his army of 12,000 and knelt in submission" to Edward IV in April 1471.[97] The "three sons of York" were once again reunited and growing stronger by the day.

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[92] "The History of England." *Cropped-Cropped-12273776_1063787626987078_1778995889658306313_o-1.Jpg*, 14 Nov. 2018, https://thehistoryofengland.co.uk/resource/wars-of-the-roses-family-trees/
[93] Hicks, *Anne Neville,* p 101
[94] Alison Weir, *The Wars of the Roses*, Ballantine Books, 2011, p 383
[95] Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker,* p 296
[96] License, 170
[97] Weir, p 392

Anne's fate became even cloudier when her father was killed in the Battle of Barnet in April 1471 during an attempt to flee the battle.[98] According to the Yorkist chronicle *Arrival*, the dead body of Warwick was "laid naked" on display at St. Paul's Cathedral in order to confirm his death and crush the Lancastrian cause. Princess Anne remained with her husband and mother-in-law at the news of her father's death, however, all their futures seemed grim and uncertain. According to the same chronicle, *Arrival*, both Margaret and Anne were "right heavy and sorry," at the news of Warwick's death. Anne's mother, Anne Beauchamp, fled to sanctuary and left her daughter in the custody of her husband and mother-in-law. Nonetheless, Margaret of Anjou and her young, inexperienced son led the small remaining Lancastrian forces, which met the Yorkist army at the Battle of Tewkesbury on May 4, 1471.[99] While her army and son fought on that morning, Margaret and Anne waited at Glupshill Manor, "anxiously awaiting news."[100] The result of the battle left Anne widowed and any chance for Margaret of Anjou resuming her rule completely destroyed. The death of the last remaining Lancastrian prince has been debated, as to whether "he actually died in battle of was put to death afterward, as other chroniclers suggest or state."[101] Nevertheless, despite the nature of his death, Anne was now a widow from the wrong side, much like her predecessor, Elizabeth Woodville. Margaret and Anne were found "three days later, in a poor religious house, where Margaret had hidden herself and Anne."[102] Anne was then taken into the care of her sister, Isabel and her brother-in-law, who had been newly pardoned by his brother. Margaret was taken to the Tower of London, where her husband, Henry VI had been imprisoned. Henry VI died in the Tower of London the day that Margaret

[98] "The Battle of Barnet: Wars of the Roses." *Historic UK*, https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryMagazine/DestinationsUK/The-Battle-of-Barnet/
[99] "The Battle of Tewkesbury." *English Monarchs*, http://www.englishmonarchs.co.uk/battle_of_tewkesbury.html
[100] Weir, 409
[101] Gristwood, 112
[102] Ibid

arrived, under Yorkist custody.[103] Many historians and contemporary sources infer that it was Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who killed the king, although there is no solid evidence to support this claim.

Anne Neville had gone from Lady Anne to Princess of Wales to a widow all before her sixteenth birthday. She was placed under the custody of the Duke of Clarence, now Earl of Warwick, and Isabel, who were newly pardoned for their brief participation in Henry VI restoration. Her mother, still in sanctuary at Beaulieu Abbey, was legally declared dead as she was the widow of a traitor. [104] Anne's previous title of Princess of Wales meant nothing to Edward IV, who pardoned her mostly because she was a fourteen year old girl who posed no threat to him.[105] While in her sister's custody, it became clear that she would need to remarry, as she was young, childless and despite her father's traitorous actions, still a Neville. However, Clarence and Isabel were not particularly interested in sharing the Neville/Beauchamp inheritance, which included a large amount of money and lands. Therefore, when Richard, Duke of Gloucester, showed interest in marrying Anne, her sister and brother-in-law were very against the match, as Clarence had no interest in sharing the inheritance with his younger brother.[106] Whether Gloucester's interest in Anne was due to her large inheritance or if he actually loved her is unknown. There are contemporary stories and chronicles which paint the two as childhood sweethearts, but there is no proof that gives a clear answer as to if they were romantically involved prior to their marriage in 1472. Medieval marriages often had little to do with love, and everything to do with political and social advantage.[107] Further study of medieval courtship and

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[103] Hicks, *Anne Neville*, p 160
[104] Ibid, 163
[105] License, 190
[106] Norman Davis, *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century: Part 1*-. Clarendon, 1971, p 447
[107] Conor McCarthy, *Marriage in Medieval England: Law, Literature, and Practice*, The Boydell Press, p 92

marriage shows that the act of marriage differed greatly by economic status. Such as, marriages at a high "social level," "were rarely love matches and often dynastic alliances."[108] This fact is what made Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville's union so different, as "the purpose of a royal marriage was not the happiness of husband and wife, or good sex, or even basic compatibility."[109]

Furthermore, "in terms of both birth and wealth, Anne Neville was the obvious bride Gloucester, just as Isabel had been for Clarence."[110] Gloucester possessed the power to challenge Clarence for custody of Anne and her share of the Warwick inheritance. Anne "willingly consented to her abduction by Duke Richard from Clarence's care, and was probably taken home to Middleham Castle."[111] However, the marriage between Gloucester and Anne required a dispensation, as they were first cousins once removed and their relation fell within the prohibited degrees. They were allowed to marry in the spring of 1472, although the exact date, location, and whether they actually obtained a dispensation, is unknown.[112] The two brothers continued to argue over the Neville estate for years, using their wives as pawns, until Clarence was executed for treason in 1478.

Anne and Richard settled in Middleham castle, where they produced one son, Edward. His birth date is not confirmed, and many historians disagree on when the child was born. Some say as early as 1473, and others say as late as 1476. Regardless of his birth date, he was certainly born by 1477 and remained the only child Anne and Richard produced. Richard however, had two illegitimate children from which he fathered during his teenage years, before his marriage to

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[108] Peter D. Clarke,"English Royal Marriages and the Papal Penitentiary in the Fifteenth Century." *The English Historical Review*, vol. 120, no. 488, 2005, p. 1016, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3489227.
[109] Eleanor Herman, *Sex with Kings: 500 Years of Adultery, Power, Rivalry, and Revenge*. Harpercollins, 2011, p 13-14
[110] Charles Ross, *Richard III*, Yale University Press, 1999, p 28
[111] Ibid
[112] Ibid, p 29

Anne. Despite this, there is no evidence to suggest that the Duke was anything but faithful to his wife, although it would not have been uncommon if he had been unfaithful. The couple mainly resided in their estate in the north of England, where the Duke maintained control and influence. This control and influence in Northern England later benefitted him in attaining the throne from his nephew. However, before that, Anne lived a relatively quiet life, one that included raising her child and running a household. Anne lived a life that was normal for that of a medieval royal Duchess.

Anne's involvement in her husband's usurpation of the throne from their nephew is still debated amongst historians. After Edward IV suddenly died in the spring of 1483, Anne was catapulted "from her quiet Middleham estate back into the centre of national politics."[113] Her husband's true intentions in seizing the throne and whether she was aware of them are not, is a fact that no one will ever know. The "identity, actions and motives of Richard III," "have been shaped and reshaped by a complex process of historical reportage and propaganda that began during his lifetime and continues until the present day."[114] The usurpation by Richard was especially "out of character" as he "proved his loyalty and devotion to his brother, accompanying him in exile, fighting at his side and ruling in his stead in the north."[115] Overall, the events of 1483 have caused academic controversy to an "unprecedented degree," as Richard is viewed in extremes as the murderous villain or the responsible king who reluctantly accepted the throne.[116] Moreover, another question posed by historians is whether or not Anne knew of the fate of the Princes in the Tower, but due to the lack of consensus on what actually happened to the boys, it is unlikely that any evidence to Anne's knowledge of the event survives. This uncertainty is

[113] License, p 230
[114] Amy Licence, *Elizabeth of York: The Forgotten Tudor Queen,* Amberley, 2013, p 60
[115] Ibid
[116] Ibid

reinforced by the fact that very little survives regarding Anne at all. However, it is known without a doubt that Richard and Anne went from Duke and Duchess, to King Richard III and Queen Anne. The coronation took place on July 5, 1483, in which Anne looked like "a lady of gracious fame," "robed in white and gold, over her litter twelve knights carried a canopy decorated with bells; in the summer sun."[117] The next day, Anne "sat on the queen's throne, to the left of the kings and somewhat lower, while Richard stood by his."[118] Not long after, their son was created Prince of Wales and named heir apparent to the throne in September of 1483.[119]

The remainder of Anne's life and queenship is riddled with various theories and presumptions regarding her husband. Her reign was severely overshadowed by that of her husband's scandalous kingship. What is known indefinitely is that the death of her son in April of 1484 was a personal tragedy for both her and Richard. As their only child, the death of Edward signified the lack of a direct York heir. According to Michael Hicks, Richard and Anne actively tried to produce another heir, but Anne fell ill with possible tuberculosis.[120] On March 16, 1485 at Westminster, "upon the day of the great eclipse of the sun, which then took place, Queen Anne departed this life, and was buried at Westminster, with no less honor than befitted the interment of a queen."[121] Despite Richard III's alleged public sadness at her death, rumors circulated that Richard III had poisoned his wife in order to marry his niece, Elizabeth of York. This theory is a popular one amongst historians who share Shakespeare's view of Richard and throughout popular culture. However, there is no credible evidence to suggest that Richard III intentioned to marry his niece.

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[117] Chris Skidmore, *Richard III: England's Most Controversial King*, St. Martin's Press, 2018, p 201
[118] Ibid, p 203
[119] Paul Murray Kendall, *Richard the Third*, W. W. Norton & Company, 2002, p 60
[120] Hicks, p 170
[121] "THE CROYLAND CHRONICLE: PART VIII." *Richard III Society*, p 499-500
http://www.r3.org/on-line-library-text-essays/crowland-chronicle/part-viii/

Therefore, Anne Neville's life was riddled with tragedy, loss and conformity. Despite her seemingly bad life and brief queenship, Queen Anne was central to many of the powerful and remarkable events that took place during the Wars of the Roses. She was essential in the restoration of Henry VI, and went from the widow of a traitor to the Queen of England. However, Anne remains somewhat of a mystery, as much of her life is left to assumption and inference, and not many credible sources survive to give any certain indication as to how she felt or what she thought. Despite her seemingly unaccountable life, she is one of the last medieval queens, and she contributed, however small, to the transition into modern queenship.

Elizabeth of York

Elizabeth of York is remembered as the last medieval Queen, as well as the first Tudor Queen. Her union with Henry Tudor effectively ended the Wars of the Roses by uniting the houses of York and Lancaster. Elizabeth of York represented what Margaret of Anjou once did: peace. She was a royal princess, Dauphine apparent, bastard, and Queen of England all within her 37 years. As Edward IV's eldest daughter and heir to the Yorkist regime, her marriage to the last remaining Lancastrian decedent inevitably gave England the peace it had sought for thirty years. She is remembered as a "beloved queen, whose popularity helped Henry VII build the image of his new dynasty."[122]

The first child of Queen Elizabeth Woodville and King Edward IV was born "this year (of 1466), the eleventh day of the month of February, was Elizabeth princess, and the first child of King Edward, born at Westminster."[123] Although she had not been the son and male heir that

[122] Alicia Carter, *The Women of the Wars of the Roses,* Alicia Carter; 1 edition, 2013, p 192
[123] Robert Fabyan, "The New Chronicles of England and France, in Two Parts." *Internet Archive*, London : Printed for F.C. & J. Rivington, 1970, https://archive.org/details/newchroniclesofe00fabyuoft/page/654

her parents desired, she was "christened as if she had been a prince."[124] Despite her rather lavish beginnings, Elizabeth would be forced into sanctuary with her mother at a very young age, multiple times while her father fought for the throne against her uncle and cousin. She was undoubtedly present at the birth of her brother Edward, named for their father and born amongst the Readaptation of Henry VI. The pregnant Queen Elizabeth Woodville fled into sanctuary with her three young daughters, Elizabeth, Cecily, and Mary at the news that her Yorkist husband had been dethroned.

After her father had been restored to the throne in 1471, five year old Elizabeth resumed a normal royal life. A description of the court that Elizabeth grew up in is immortalized by *De Occupatione Regni Anglie per Riccardum Tercium,* an account written by Dominic Mancini, an Italian man who visited England during 1482-1483. Mancini described Edward IV as "cheerful and gentle," qualities which Elizabeth inherited from her father.[125] Elizabeth was educated, beginning around the age of five or six, the same way all royalty and aristocracy was: to be a wife, mother and head of a household. Education for women in late medieval England was regulated based on the woman's economic and social status and many women would enter convents to obtain an education. However, a woman born into royalty or wealth had a better chance of receiving an education over a woman of lesser status. Despite this, the education an elite woman would receive was still substantially less than that of her male counterpart. Women from elite or wealthy families "were taught at home or in the house of another nobleman," and "the basis of their education was the same: how to keep a household going so that their husband was well kept."[126] Some of the subjects included in a woman's education were "Latin reading

[124] Ibid
[125] Weir, The Princes in the Tower, p 2-3
[126] C.N. Trueman, "Medieval Education," Historylearningsite.co.uk., *The History Learning Site,* 2019

and writing, religion, embroidery, spinning, weaving, painting, manners, and music."[127] By Elizabeth's time, "the idea that an educated woman could also be a virtuous one," was becoming slowly more acceptable.[128]

In August of 1475, the Treaty of Picquigny was negotiated between England and France, after Edward IV invaded France with some help from Charles the Bold of Burgundy and Francis IIl of Brittany.[129] Negotiations concluded and the treaty was signed on August 29, 1475. Included in the terms was that Louis XI was to pay Edward IV 75,000 crowns upfront and receive a yearly pension thereafter of 50,000 crowns.[130] It was during these negotiations that Louis XI also ransomed the former Queen, Margaret of Anjou, who had been in Edward's custody since the Battle of Tewkesbury.[131] Margaret of Anjou spent the rest of her life in poverty, and died in France in 1482. Princess Elizabeth was named "Madame la Dauphine" after Louis XI of France agreed "a marriage should be contracted between" nine-year-old Elizabeth of York and his son Charles, the Dauphin of France.[132] However, this union never took place as Louis XI withdrew his commitment and his son married Anne of Brittany in 1491. According to an Elizabethan chronicler, Edward IV planned on marrying his eldest daughter to Henry Tudor, however he did not secure the union within his lifetime.[133]

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[127] Shirley Kersey, "Medieval Education of Girls and Women." *Educational Horizons*, vol. 58, no. 4, 1980, p 188, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/42924397.
[128] Alison Weir, *Elizabeth of York: A Tudor Queen and Her World*, Ballantine Books, 2013, p 35
[129] John A. Wagner, *Encyclopedia of the Wars of the Roses*, Clio, 2001, p 150
[130] Robert Knecht, *The Valois: Kings of France 1328–1589*, Continuum, 2007, p 100–101
[131] Ibid
[132] Weir, *Elizabeth of York*, p 62
[133] Raphaell Holinshed, "HOLINSHED'S CHRONICLES ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, AND IRELAND." *The Project Gutenberg EBook of Holinshed Chronicles, Volume I*, 2014, www.gutenberg.org/files/44700/44700-h/44700-h.htm#page763

Elizabeth's father died on April 9, 1483 and her little brother, named for his father, was proclaimed King Edward V two days later on April 11.[134] The events of 1483 and the usurpation of the throne by her uncle, Richard III drastically changed Elizabeth's life. She lost her father, her title and her younger brothers, immortally known as the Princes in the Tower. Due to Edward IV's alleged pre-contract with Lady Eleanor Butler, her parent's marriage was declared legally invalid, and Elizabeth and her siblings were proclaimed illegitimate. At the time of her demotion from Princess Elizabeth to Edward IV's bastard, she was hiding in sanctuary with her mother and fellow siblings. [135] In January of 1484, Elizabeth Woodville released her daughters after Richard III issued a public proclamation promising their safety in which he stated, "I promise and swear that if the daughters of Elizabeth Gray would come to me out of Westminster, then I shall see that they shall be in certainty of their lives and also not suffer any matter hurt by any manner of person or persons."[136] Many historians have inferred that Elizabeth Woodville's willingness to allow her daughters into Richard III's custody proves that she believed Richard innocent of murdering her sons. However, others suggest that the former queen simply "secured the best arrangement for herself and her daughters that she could."[137]

In the custody of Richard III, the girls were treated well. It was at this point that rumors began of Richard III's intent to displace his wife, Queen Anne, and replace her with Elizabeth of York. However, a month before Elizabeth left sanctuary, the exiled Henry Tudor made a vow on Christmas Day of 1483 to marry Elizabeth.[138] Henry Tudor's claim to the throne, however, was a weak one as he was the grandson of Catherine of Valois and her second husband, Owen Tudor.

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[134] Licence, *Elizabeth of York*, p 55
[135] Carter, p 85
[136] Baldwin, *Elizabeth Woodville*, p 104
[137] Ibid, 105
[138] Leanda Delisle, *Tudor: Passion, Manipulation, Muder. The Story of England's Most Notorious Royal Family*, PublicAffairs, 2013, p 60

Although, there is no surviving documentation to serve as proof that Catherine and Owen were actually married.[139]Henry VI later chose twelve year old Lady Margaret Beaufort as a bride for his half-brother, Edmund, the eldest of Catherine and Owen's children. Henry VII was the product of Edmund and Margaret's very short marriage. [140] Moreover, Henry's promise to take the throne and marry Elizabeth was inevitably a promise to join the houses of York and Lancaster, thus ending the Wars of the Roses. The union allowed for both a York and Lancaster to sit on the throne of England, as Elizabeth was a York princess, and Henry was a Lancastrian heir. However, this proclamation was not random. Elizabeth Woodville and Margaret Beaufort had been in communication about the marriage, in which they both agreed that "Henry would marry Elizabeth of York when he secured the kingdom.[141] However, a year later Elizabeth and her siblings celebrated Christmas with Richard III and Queen Anne, with Elizabeth wearing a "similar colour and shape" to that of the queen.[142] The similarity between the two women only fueled the rumors that Richard III intended to marry his niece, as Queen Anne's health was visibly deteriorating. More evidence to suggest the two engaged in a relationship resides with Sir George Buck, the author of *The History of the Life and Reign of Richard the Third.* Sir George Buck claimed to have seen a letter written by Elizabeth of York, in which she expressed her admiration of Richard, calling him "her only joy and maker in this world," and "that she was his in heart and in thoughts, in body and in all."[143] She continued in her letter, addressed to the Duke

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[139] Mary McGrigor, *Sister Queens: Isabella & Catherine de Valois*, The History Press, 2016, p 201
[140] Michael Jones, and Malcolm Underwood. "Beaufort, Margaret." Oxford Dictionary of National Biography , 2017, www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-1863
[141] Baldwin, *Elizabeth Woodville*, p 102
[142] "THE CROYLAND CHRONICLE: PART VIII." *Richard III Society,* p 498 http://www.r3.org/on-line-library-text-essays/crowland-chronicle/part-viii/
[143] George Buck,"The History of the Life and Reign of Richard the Third." *Internet Archive,* London, W. Wilson, 1970, p 191, archive.org/details/historyofliferei00buckuoft/page/n6

of Norfolk, to express her "fear that the Queen would never die."[144] However, a few things must be considered. Buck's original manuscript was damaged by a fire, and his great-nephew added revisions to the original text in which the words "never die" and "body" were added.[145] Despite this, historians are in agreement that this document alone does not provide sufficient evidence to suggest that the rumors surrounding Richard III and Elizabeth were anything but rumors. However, there remains a second theory. In light of Henry Tudor's declaration to marry Elizabeth, many assert that Richard may have been trying to damage Elizabeth's reputation so Henry would back out of his commitment. Richard succeeded in his goal to upset Henry, as it "pinched Henry to the very stomach," when word of the rumors reached him in exile.[146]

Furthermore, the Battle of Bosworth on August 22 of 1485 sealed Elizabeth's fate. The notorious King Richard III was killed during this battle, and his crown was taken from his "lifeless" corpse, and "placed on Henry's head."[147] With Richard's death, the Plantagenet dynasty, which had ruled England since the succession of Henry II in 1154, came to an end.[148] Henry Tudor was then crowned King Henry VII of England on October 30, 1485 by right of conquest. Henry was crowned before his marriage to Elizabeth in order to emphasize his right to the throne, and that was not just a King consort to his wife.[149] Although the Yorkist faction failed to hold the throne, political maneuvering ensured the Yorkist heiress still ended up on the throne. The marriage was inevitable, however, Henry spent many months between his coronation and their wedding reaffirming Elizabeth's own legitimacy and getting permission from the pope for

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[144] Ibid
[145] Carter, 152
[146] Thomas Penn, *Winter King: Henry VII and the Dawn of Tudor England*, Simon & Schuster, 2012, p 96
[147] Delisle, p 72
[148] "Who Was Richard III?" *Who Was Richard III - Last Plantagenet King to Die in Battle -Timeline - University of Leicester*, https://web.archive.org/web/20181204053826/https://www.le.ac.uk/richardiii/history/whowasrichard.html
[149] Carter, 138

them to marry. In a letter to the pope, Henry praised Elizabeth for her "beauty and chastity," as she was young, blue-eyed and fair-haired. [150][151]

The wedding took place on January 18, 1486 after Elizabeth and Henry were reassured that their union and subsequent children were legitimate. The union cemented Henry's place on the throne, and the Tudor rose was therefore created. The new Tudor rose contained the York white rose, with the outer petals containing the Lancastrain red rose, thus symbolizing the resolution between the two warring houses.[152] Elizabeth fell pregnant almost immediately after the wedding, and gave birth to Prince Arthur, eight months later on September 20, 1486. It can't be known for sure if Arthur was simply premature, or if Henry and Elizabeth had been sexually active before their wedding. Regardless, Arthur's birth was widely celebrated and his legitimacy was never questioned. Despite her marriage and newborn son to secure her husband on his throne, she was not crowned queen until November of 1487. On that day, "she wore a gown of white cloth of gold and damask, furred with ermies, fastened with gold and silk lace," and her "yellow hair hung down her back and her hair was adorned with a circle of gold studded with jewels."[153] Therefore, Elizabeth was crowned queen of England and became the embodiment of reconciliation, in which she represented an end to the dynastic rivalry. Throughout their marriage, Elizabeth and Henry welcomed Arthur, Margaret, Henry, Elizabeth, Mary, Edmund and Katherine. However, Katherine, Edmund, and Elizabeth would not survive infancy.

During her time as queen, Elizabeth had "some sort of influence" over her husband. However, she struggled to stay out of the shadow of her mother-in-law, Margaret Beaufort. Although Margaret was known as "My Lady the King's Mother," she was "a queen in all but

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[150] Laynesmith, p 59
[151] Delisle, p 80
[152] Arlene Naylor Okerlund, *Elizabeth of York: Queenship and Power*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p 158
[153] Gristwood, p 264

name and continued to maintain enormous influence over Henry.[154] However, Henry VII did choose to appoint Elizabeth's choice for a vacant Bishopric over his mother's choice, therefore showing Henry's willingness to listen and his trust in her judgment. Regardless of any quarrel she had with Margaret, Elizabeth established her position at the new Tudor court, and was widely popular throughout her kingdom. A stark comparison can be made to Margaret of Anjou, as they both were queens seen as beacons of peace, thought to bring hope, stability and prosperity to the land. Furthermore, she had considerable influence on her daughter-in-law, the Spanish Princess Catherine of Aragon, the first foreign queen consort since Margaret of Anjou. Catherine and Elizabeth exchanged letters prior to her arrival in England, and "Elizabeth made sure to welcome the girl to her new family."[155]

Elizabeth of York died on her thirty seventh birthday, February 11, 1503, of childbed fever. Although tragic, this was not uncommon. She had fallen pregnant after the death of her first child, Arthur. Arthur was the Prince of Wales and the heir apparent to the throne, and had married Catherine of Aragon. Their marriage secured an alliance between Spain and England, one that England desperately needed. Furthermore, at the news of Arthur's death, Henry sent for Elizabeth, stating "he and his queen would take the painful sorrows together."[156] However, Elizabeth "reminded him how God had left him yet a fair prince, two fair princesses, and they were still young enough to have more children."[157] Ten months later, Queen Elizabeth of York died after she went into premature labor and delivered a stillborn girl, named Catherine for Arthur's widow and the late Catherine of Valois. The baby followed her mother and died the

[154] Delisle, p 84
[155] Carter, p 163
[156] Delisle, p 110-111
[157] Ibid

week after. Henry VII fell into "deep despair," as "the loss of his wife and mother to his children was as heavy and dolorous to the King's highness as hath been seen or heard of."[158]

Therefore, Elizabeth of York was a strong, compassionate and gentle queen who assisted in establishing one of the most infamous dynasties in England's history. She served as a symbol of peace and unity after the turmoil which resulted in the deaths of her father, brothers, and uncles. Her successful marriage to Henry Tudor allowed the Tudor/Lancastrian and York factions to make peace, and her reproductive success only furthered fueled that peace. After her death, her granddaughters were the first queens in English history to assume the throne in their own name and blood right. Both Mary I (1553-1558) and Elizabeth I (1558-1603) assumed the throne unmarried, and ushered in the famous and prosperous Elizabethan "Golden Age" of the late sixteenth century. The Tudor Dynasty ruled England from 1485 to 1603, in which "England was economically healthier, more expansive, and more optimistic under the Tudors than at any time in a hundred years."[159] The success that England experienced during this time is directly correlated to the success of Elizabeth of York and her marriage in establishing a peaceful and unified land and monarch.

Conclusion

The War of the Roses is mostly credited for the emergence of the Tudor dynasty, as well as presenting the issues relating to succession, intermarriage and foreign relations in late medieval England. The treatment of women during this time period can be seen in the lives and legacies left behind by these four extraordinary women. Close examination of elite women and their role in the wars and subsequent politics displays the constraints that a medieval woman endured.

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[158] Gristwood, p 311
[159] John Guy, *Tudor England*, Oxford University Press, 1988, p 32

The evidence also suggests that women who stayed confined to the traditional role of medieval women were treated better, and are remembered better historically. Such as, Margaret of Anjou and Elizabeth Woodville had terrible reputations during their lives, as well as in their death. Due to propaganda, Margaret of Anjou is immortalized in literature and in the minds of historians as a cruel, manipulative Frenchwoman who acted in French interests against her weak husband. Margaret is remembered as such because she attempted to step outside of tradition, such as her attempts to gain control of the government over the Duke of York in 1455. Her decline in popularity can be attributed to her French heritage, as well as her "intervention in politics." This was considered "an activity inappropriate to her sex and to her position as consort."[160] Elizabeth Woodville, both her successor and enemy, faced the same problems in regard to her reputation and legacy. Although Elizabeth was English by birth, she was still an unfavorable choice for a wife and queen. Her non-royal background and her whirlwind romance with Edward IV gave her enemies ammunition in terms of her reputation. She did not fit the criteria to be queen, and she was accused of "ruling the very king himself."[161] Margaret and Elizabeth had this in common. Also, Elizabeth's family was also a target, as many branded them greedy and politically ambitious as much of the nobility was unhappy to see the Woodvilles elevated to such high positions. The rumors surrounding Elizabeth and her family are the reason that Richard III was able to assume the throne so easily in 1483. Both queens were considered mettlesome and manipulative for different reasons, but both suffered the consequences of enemy propaganda. They both eventually lost their crown due to this, and although they were defeated, they proved to be important figures within the wars themselves through their political maneuvering.

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[160] Patricia-Ann Lee, "Reflections of Power: Margaret of Anjou and the Dark Side of Queenship." *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 39, no. 2, 1986, p 185, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2862114.
[161] Baldwin, *Elizabeth Woodville,* p 130

On the other hand, their successors left a different legacy. Anne Neville and Elizabeth of York fell into the role of what a medieval woman, queen and mother were supposed to be, and they are remembered significantly more positive than their predecessors. As mentioned, Anne's life was tragic. She suffered the loss of her husband, father and inheritance all before her sixteenth birthday. Her second marriage to the infamous Richard III is questionable, and much of her married life and life as queen is overflowing with various unproven theories. This is a possible reason why she is seen more positively compared to Margaret of Anjou and Elizabeth Woodville. However, it is also important to note that a lack of knowledge regarding Anne's opinions and feelings can also be a reason why her reputation was and still is better, as women were expected to stay out of politics and matters of state during this time. More is known about Elizabeth of York, the York heiress whose marriage ended the Wars of the Roses. Elizabeth of York is credited for assisting her husband, Henry Tudor, in establishing the postwar Tudor dynasty. The mere idea of her and her marriage represented peace, unity and reconciliation. Also, she "settled into the traditional role of a medieval queen," and mostly stayed out of political decisions.[162] Elizabeth was "compassionate and pious, with a deep sense of family obligation;" all characteristics a medieval woman was expected to possess.[163] Therefore, Anne and Elizabeth were treated better than their predecessors, both in life and death, because they conformed more to the traditional role of a medieval woman and queen. Further comparisons can be made between Margaret of Anjou and Elizabeth of York. Both women were married to the reigning monarch in the midst of armed conflict and were viewed as beacons of peace, as their marriages represented the end of war.

[162] Carter, p 162
[163] Ibid, p 191

In late medieval England, a woman had her role, one that was determined exclusively upon her economic and social status. A peasant or common woman certainly had a different role than an elite woman, as the very circumstances of their lives differed so tremendously. An elite woman was expected to keep a household and provide multiple heirs for her husband. The Wars of the Roses and the instability of England during this time gave the elite women involved an opportunity to assert authority and influence outside of that traditional role. However, those who did, ended up dethroned and discredited as a queen and woman. Although having an elite title implied power, influence, and wealth, women were repressed by their gendered role and the overwhelming authority held by men.