The Queens of the Wars of the Roses: Queenship Under Pressure

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Queen Elizabeth Woodville, circa 1472. The Book of the Fraternity of Our Lady's Assumption of the Skinners' Company, London. By kind permission of the Worshipful Company of Skinners.

Summary: The three queens of the Wars of the Roses - Margaret of Anjou, Elizabeth Woodville, and Anne Neville - have often been obscured by partisan propaganda, historical fiction, and research biases. This paper assesses their reigns in the contexts of late-medieval standards of European queenship and in the perilous circumstances of their times. This paper argues that, far from overstepping or failing in their duties as queen, each of these three queens performed queenship as conventionally as she could in the face of failures of kingship, usurpations, and readeptions.

Late Medieval Queenship: Europe and England

In her study of medieval European queenship, Theresa Earenfight asserts that "queens were fundamental to the smooth running of a realm."[1] How they participated in the running of a realm was based on a complex role that varied according to local tradition and across time. However, some broad statements may be said about medieval European queens. (For the purposes of this discussion, queens who governed in their own rights and/or as sole monarch are excluded.)

The most obvious aspect of the role of queen was her "position as sharer in the royal dignity"[2] and specifically, as the foremost royal woman of a kingdom. A queen was defined by her proximity to a king in a way that blended both private and public spaces, and she was also defined by medieval notions of gender. Earenfight provides a succinct overview regarding both:

> Together, the queen and king formed a continuous unity, and the public display of marital unison to their subjects was critical in shaping the official face of each partner. They were part of a dynamic and discursive public conversation on masculinity, femininity and the proper ordering and behavior of men and women; they followed social norms concerning masculinity and femininity, and were active in the creation of those norms.[3]

The concept of a king and queen forming a "continuous unity" is worth exploring further. Medieval monarchy was concerned not just with the king, but with the family[4]. It was in the family where royal governance was centered, and it was through family ties that royal governance was passed from monarch to monarch. While men were always going to be privileged when it came to exercising rule due to medieval gender dynamics, that does not mean that monarchy was a male sphere alone. The continuous unity required both masculine and feminine elements, and the presence of a queen legitimized the king.[5] The queen was also

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[1] Theresa Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe*, (Basingstoke ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 6.
[2] J. L. Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens: English Queenship 1445 - 1503*, (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006), 2.
[3] Earenfight, 7.
[4] Earenfight, 10.
[5] Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens,* 30.

expected to uphold the king's interests, once again displaying a "continuous unity" to their subjects.[6]

Queens occupied an integral role in constructing the royal family and therefore even queens considered politically "inactive" by some modern standards had dynastic importance with implications for her entire country. The role of queen as royal mother is a key role of a queen consort, and it is also an example of public space and private space not being neatly delineated. Because a queen was expected to provide a royal heir, that made her sexuality – and the sexuality of the king – a public affair instead of a private one. This could be a vulnerability for her, as her sexual fidelity could be questioned. In her book *Le trésor de la cité des dames*, (*The Treasure of the City of Ladies*, also sometimes known as *The Book of the Three Virtues*) fifteenth-century writer Christine de Pizan cautioned at length the damage that even a rumor of infidelity could do to the reputation and honor of a royal woman.[7] In addition to giving birth to the royal heir, a queen was also expected to provide for her children's education and to protect their interests.

Queens were expected to bring important family ties to a marriage, and many marriages were brokered as part of treaties. These ties were preferably dynastic, linking two royal families together, but could also be monetary if she had wealthy relatives and stood to inherit. A queen could potentially strengthen those family ties by marrying other family members with other members of her husband's polity.[8]

Queens contributed to constructing the king's image as a Christlike one, providing another form of validation of the kingship. J. L. Laynesmith explains that "the king as a type of Christ (or God) was commonplace of fifteenth-century European political discourse"[9] and that the queen helped contribute to this image via the sacrament of marriage. Just as marriage was a sacrament that represented the marriage between Christ and the church, the marriage of a king and queen helped stress "the sovereign's divine authority."[10] Queens also contributed to the Christlike image of the king by publicly displaying their piety via going on pilgrimages, founding religious colleges, and by giving alms.

The queen's role as symbolizing the church was also linked to her symbolism as Mary, especially Mary as Queen of Heaven. As Mary was known as an intercessor between humanity and Christ, the queen served as an intercessor between her subjects and the king. Intercession also helped maintain consistent medieval gender dynamics by allowing a king to be warlike, uncompromising, and resolute - masculine attributes - while the queen could be merciful and peacemaking - feminine attributes. Intercession therefore provided space for a medieval king to change his mind without losing the public perception of his will being absolute.[11]

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[6] Pizan, Christine de. *A Medieval Woman's Mirror of Honor: The Treasury of the City of Ladies*. Edited by Madeleine Pelner Cosman. Translated by Charity Cannon Willard. 1st ed. Tenafly, N.J: Bard Hall Press, 1989.
[7] Pizan.
[8] Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens,* 193.
[9] Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens,* 30.
[10] Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens,* 31.
[11] Earenfight, 12.

By the fifteenth century, there were specifically English facets to queenship. Across Europe, the role had become an institutional one with a bureaucratic foundation,[12] with different quirks from place to place. In late fifteenth-century England, the queen was a principal landholder. She had her own council to manage her dower, which was comprised of crown lands that reverted back to the crown upon her death. As Anne Crawford writes, "each queen was the driving force that kept the administration running."[13] An English queen was an active runner of her estate, and could personally take action to make sure her interests were being protected.

The Wars of the Roses

The Wars of the Roses stemmed from a crisis in monarchy, fueled by problems and fears built up over the last several decades. The conflict between England and France now known as the Hundred Years' War had been a significant strain on England's finances. England had also, in its recent past, had two regencies for the throne and two monarchs overthrown and replaced. Edward II had been overthrown by his wife, Isabella of France,[14] and Richard II had been overthrown by Henry IV.[15] Richard II had also come to the throne at the young age of ten, requiring a regency council. All these events had contributed to instability in England, and, when considering the line of succession, a rather confused descent from the Plantagenet king, Edward III.

Henry VI had come to the throne of England in 1422, before he was even a year old. His young age necessitated a regency council, headed by his uncles. John, Duke of Bedford, was appointed senior regent, but as he was away in France directing the war, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, was appointed Protector to deal with domestic matters. The title was an imprecise and ill-defined one.[16] Henry's mother, Queen Catherine of Valois, had married Owen Tudor without the king's permission (which could not be granted, as he was still a minor) and eventually left the king's household, effectively ending any power she might have had over the young king.

In England, a regency council, even with a Lord Protector, had a limited scope of duties. The monarch remained the head of the government, and actions that others took had to be carried out in his name. The minority of a king also led to diminished enthusiasm for funding and fighting a war, as the king could not lead military expeditions and battles himself.[17]

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[12] Earenfight, 185.
[13] Crawford, Anne. "The Queen's Council in the Middle Ages." *The English Historical Review* 116, no. 469 (November 1, 2001): 1193–1211. https://doi.org/10.1093/ehr/116.469.1193.
[14] Evans, Michael. "Isabella of France: She-Wolf and Rebel Queen?" In *Later Plantagenet and the Wars of the Roses Consorts*, edited by Aidan Norrie, Carolyn Harris, J.L. Laynesmith, Danna R. Messer, and Elena Woodacre, 27–47. Queenship and Power. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-94886-3_3.
[15] Carpenter, Christine. *The Wars of the Roses: Politics and the Constitution in England, c. 1437-1509*. Cambridge Medieval Textbooks. Cambridge ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
[16] Carpenter, 77.
[17] Carpenter, 76-77.

When Henry VI assumed his full powers in 1437, England had lost ground in the war in France and was in an economic downturn due to the strain of the war on the country's finances. Loss of land to France was unpopular and Henry's docile nature had led to powerful magnates jockeying for control of the government. One in particular was Richard of York, Duke of York. Richard of York could also claim descent from Edward III.

In the summer of 1453, England lost all land in southern France, limiting their area of influence only to the Pale of Calais. This, effectively, lost England the Hundred Years' War. A second crisis occurred: Henry VI entered a state of madness – sometimes called catatonia – that lasted for eighteen months and left him completely unresponsive to the world. Queen Margaret of Anjou gave birth to a son, Prince Edward of Westminster, in October 1453, and it is this that may have prompted her bid for the regency, which was denied by the lords of England. Rule by council was established instead, and in 1454 Richard, Duke of York was named Protector.[18] While serving as Protector, Richard of York imprisoned several nobles he felt had poorly counseled the king.

When Henry VI recovered in 1455, he reversed many of the changes Richard of York had made, and a Great Council was called. Richard of York and his supporters, including Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, fearing that they would be accused of treason, travelled towards the council with armed men, hoping to intercept the king before he reached the council. What resulted was the Battle of St. Albans, which started the civil war in earnest. Richard of York was able to take the king in his custody, have himself declared Henry's heir, and when Henry VI fell to illness once again, was declared Protector. Richard of York's status as heir was fiercely contested by Queen Margaret, in favor of her son, the Prince of Wales.

After Richard of York's death at the Battle of Wakefield in 1460, his cause was championed by his son, Edward, who, after successes at the Battles of Mortimer's Cross and Towton, was able to enter London in 1461 and crown himself Edward IV. Margaret of Anjou and Prince Edward of Westminster's flight to France via Scotland and Henry VI's captivity in the Tower of London made this easy.

Edward IV's reign was bolstered by the support of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick. However, Edward's desire to step out of Warwick's shadow led to several snubs of Warwick – one notably being Edward spurning Warwick's choice of a foreign bride and marrying the English widow Elizabeth Woodville in secret in 1464 – that caused Warwick to break away from Edward IV's cause.[19] Warwick eventually allied with Queen Margaret, marrying his daughter, Anne Neville, to Edward, Prince of Wales in 1470. Warwick staged an invasion of England that caused Edward IV and his supporters to flee to Burgundy. Henry VI was restored to the throne.

The Battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury in 1471 put a swift end to Henry VI's readeption. Warwick was killed at Barnet and the Prince of Wales at Tewkesbury. With no heir of Henry VI other than Edward IV, Edward IV redeclared himself king in the spring of 1471. In 1475, Margaret of Anjou was ransomed to France, where she spent the rest of her life.

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[18] Carpenter, 129.

[19] Clark, K.L. *The Nevills of Middleham: England's Most Powerful Family in the Wars of the Roses*. The History Press, 2016, 298.

Edward IV reigned until his death in 1483. Upon his death, his heir, Edward V, was only twelve years old. Edward IV's youngest brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, seized control of the young king, declaring himself Protector. Richard, Duke of Gloucester, had the young king and Edward V's younger brother, also named Richard, placed in the Tower of London. Both boys were not heard from again. Richard, Duke of Gloucester, had himself crowned King Richard III in the summer of 1483.[20] Richard's reign was only to last two years, as in 1485, Henry Tudor, who had a claim to the English throne through his mother, invaded England and defeated Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth. Henry Tudor became Henry VII. The rule of the Plantagenet dynasty had ended.

Margaret of Anjou

It can be hard nowadays to find Margaret of Anjou separated from her Shakespearian characterisation as the "she-wolf of France," as Helen Maurer points out in her study of her.[21] She is often depicted as wildly overstepping the bounds of her role as queen in pursuit of her own personal vengeances and tyrannies. Yet it was the circumstances that made her position difficult - that, and her refusal to not champion her husband's and son's rights.

Margaret of Anjou was born in 1430, the daughter of René of Anjou and Isabella, Duchess of Lorraine. Her childhood was marked by time spent with her mother and her grandmother, Yolande of Aragon, as her father was often away supervising his holdings.[22] Her mother and grandmother were no strangers to ruling for absent men per necessity: her grandmother had served as regent for her son and her mother had fought her husband's wars while he was captive.[23]

Margaret was betrothed to Henry VI of England in 1444, and arrived in England, married, and was crowned in 1445. The marriage was brokered in order to bring peace between the English and the French, which was made clear by the pageants that accompanied her procession into London. The pageants were accompanied by spoken English text that addressed both her and the watching public, making the new queen's entry into the capital a communal occasion. The religious imagery of these pageants served to emphasize the divine nature of the king and queen. In the pageants, she was addressed by representations of Peace and Plenty, and compared to St. Margaret as holy intercessor.[24]

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[20] Horspool, David. *Richard III: A Ruler and His Reputation*. London: Bloomsbury, 2017.
[21] Maurer, Helen. *Margaret of Anjou: Queenship and Power in Late Medieval England*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003, 1.
[22] Levin, Carole. "Margaret of Anjou: Passionate Mother." In *Later Plantagenet and the Wars of the Roses Consorts: Power, Influence, and Dynasty*, edited by Aidan Norrie, Carolyn Harris, J.L. Laynesmith, Danna R. Messer, and Elena Woodacre, 195–213. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-94886-3_12.
[23] Maurer, 23.
[24] Maurer, 20-21.

Margaret frequently served as intercessor, as shown by her letters.[25] Many of her letters range from arranging marriages, recommending candidates for secular and religious posts, to mediating disputes. There are some where she worked in tandem with Henry VI, such as letters written in 1445 and 1446 to Charles VII of France concerning the transfer of the territory of Maine from England to France. In these letters is the use of intercession as a diplomatic device between king and queen made clear.

> "[...] And as to the deliverance that you desire to have of the county of Maine, and other matters contained in your said letters, we understand that my said lord has written to you at considerable length about this, and yet herein we will do for your pleasure the best that we can, as we have always done [...]"[26]

Henry's letter to Charles VII, following a few days later, spoke about his reasons for the cession of Maine. This had, of course, been agreed when he and Margaret had been betrothed, but as Margaret had already performed queenly intercession in her letter to Charles VII, Henry was able to say that one of the reasons he agreed to cede Maine was his wish to please his queen, "'who [had] requested [this] … many times.'"[27] This was a device that allowed him to save some face while losing ground in France. The loss of land in France could therefore not be placed solely on his inability to keep it. This device would be used again by Henry VI, for example, when pardoning Kentish rebels in 1450, highlighting the "intercessory role played by Margaret's 'most humble and persistent supplications, prayers and requests' in persuading the king to show mercy."[28]

Though her husband gained the saintly reputation, Margaret also displayed royal piety. There are records of her going on pilgrimage to St. Thomas Becket's shrine at Canterbury, and to the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, which was associated with women and childbirth.[29] She commissioned a window for the chapel of Mary of the Pew in Westminster Abbey and a roll of prayers to the Virgin.[30] She also founded the Queen's College of St. Margaret and St. Bernard at the University of Cambridge.[31] This foundation would be patronized by her successors.

Margaret's letters also display an active interest in governing the affairs of her estate. Margaret had her own council, mainly to manage the affairs of her dower lands. As many of these lands came from the Duchy of Lancaster, her council often worked alongside the separate Duchy council. This council had rooms in Westminster, as well as a keeper of the council chamber and a messenger.[32] Margaret often wrote personally to authorize business dealings on

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[25] Maurer, Helen E., and B. M. Cron, eds. *The Letters of Margaret of Anjou*. Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK ; Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 2019.
[26] Maurer and Cron, 176.
[27] Maurer and Cron, 178.
[28] Maurer, 68.
[29] Maurer, 43.
[30] Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens*, 253.
[31] Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens,* 255.
[32] Crawford, 2001.

her estates, such as the sale of timber in order to raise funds to repair manor houses[33] or authorizing payment to trusty servants with funds from her holdings.[34] She also kept an eye on the state of her parks, requesting one be stocked with several bucks for hunting purposes.[35] Margaret would also direct grievances concerning her tenants to her council, reminding troublemakers that they would answer to her.[36]

In August 1453, Henry VI was incapacitated by illness. This threw the government of England into a state of uncertainty. Margaret of Anjou gave birth to a son in October 1453, muddying the situation further. Though the birth of an heir was a cause for celebration, that heir still had to make it to adulthood to rule. If Henry VI never recovered from his illness, that would mean another long regency for England, which would weaken the nobles as they rivalled each other for control of the young prince.[37] At the beginning of 1454, Margaret presented a series of articles as a bid for the regency. These were reported by John Stodeley in a letter to the Duke of Norfolk, as edited by Keith Dockray in his source book on Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou:

> "... the queen has made a bill of five articles, desiring them to be granted, the first of which is that she desires the whole rule of this land; the second is that she may appoint the chancellor, treasurer, [keeper of the] privy seal, and all other officers of this land, with sheriffs and all other officers, that the king should make; the third is that she may give all the bishoprics of this land, and all other benefices belonging to the king's gift; the fourth is that she may have sufficient livelihood assigned to her for the king, the prince, and herself. As for the fifth article, I cannot yet find out what it is."[38]

This request, which to her might have had reasonable precedent set by her grandmother and mother's examples, was denied by the lords. Margaret found herself in a position of limited agency. Her efforts to rouse Henry by presenting him with his infant son failed.[39] Richard, Duke of York, was granted the Protectorate, which Margaret seems to have accepted.

As long as the Protectorate was temporary and her son, Prince Edward of Westminster, was recognized as her husband's heir, Margaret seemed to have accepted the limits of her role. Even after the Battle of St. Albans, Margaret was not confrontational. Men commanded by Richard, Duke of York, defeated men commanded by the king in battle, and the Duke of York accompanied the king back into London. York's supporters were put into positions of power. A second Protectorate was established.[40] Still, in 1456, Margaret responded simply by taking her son and leaving London instead of making a second bid for formal power.[41]

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[33] Maurer and Cron, 58.
[34] Maurer and Cron, 64.
[35] Maurer and Cron, 161.
[36] Crawford, 1208.
[37] Maurer, 80.
[38] Dockray, Keith. *Henry VI, Margaret of Anjou and the Wars of the Roses: A Source Book*. Sutton History Paperbacks. Stroud: Sutton, 2000.
[39] Dockray. *Henry VI, Margaret of Anjou and the Wars of the Roses,* 70.
[40] Maurer, 121.
[41] Maurer, 130.

When Margaret did begin to exercise military power, she often did so in the name of her husband or her son, for instance, handing out her son's livery badges.[42] An English chronicle reports that "'at once by [the queen's] urging the king assembled a great power [...] and went forth …'"[43] It was only when her husband was in captivity that she raised men in her own name. Here she could not plausibly claim to be working under the king's orders, though she was pursuing his interests.

In 1461, Edward IV deposed Henry VI after a series of military victories, notably the Battle of Towton. Margaret and her son were forced to flee to Scotland, then France. Though Margaret would work to try to win the crown back for her husband and son for the next decade, raising men, brokering a marriage for her son, and invading England once more in 1471, her reign was effectively over. Her husband and son would both die that year.[44] Margaret was taken prisoner, and was eventually ransomed by Edward IV back to France in 1475. She would die there in 1482.

Elizabeth Woodville

When Elizabeth Woodville's second marriage became widely known, it was a medieval kerfuffle. Yet she was accepted as Queen of England, bore her husband, Edward IV, ten children, and eventually became the grandmother and great-grandmother of the most famous of the Tudor monarchs, Henry VIII, Mary I, and Elizabeth I.[45]

Elizabeth Woodville was likely born in 1437, to Jacquetta of Luxembourg, the Dowager Duchess of Bedford, and Sir Richard Woodville. Her mother had previously been married to Henry VI's uncle, and she had not gotten the required king's permission for this second marriage, which was viewed in the European chronicles as being unevenly matched.[46] Elizabeth was the eldest of what would eventually be thirteen children. Her first marriage, to Sir John Grey, is first mentioned in 1455. Elizabeth and John Grey would have two sons, Thomas and Richard, likely born in 1456 and 1460, respectively. Sir John Grey was killed in 1460, fighting for King Henry VI.[47]

While it is not known when exactly Elizabeth and Edward IV first met,[48] they were wed in 1464 in secret. The date is traditionally given as May 1st; J. L. Laynesmith points out, however, that "1 May is a suspiciously apt day for a young king to marry for love. May had long

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[42] Maurer, 165.
[43] Dockray, *Henry VI, Margaret of Anjou and the Wars of the Roses,* 88.
[44] Maurer, 203-208.
[45] Okerlund, Arlene. *Elizabeth Wydeville: The Slandered Queen*. Stroud, Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2005, 263.
[46] Pidgeon, Lynda J. *Brought up of Nought: A History of the Woodvile Family*. Stroud, UK: Fonthill Media, 2019, 110.
[47] Laynesmith, J. L. "Elizabeth Woodville: The Knight's Widow." In *Later Plantagenet and the Wars of the Roses Consorts: Power, Influence, and Dynasty*, edited by Aidan Norrie, Carolyn Harris, J.L. Laynesmith, Danna R. Messer, and Elena Woodacre, 215–36. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-94886-3_13.
[48] Okerlund, 24.

been the month associated with love, [...] celebrated in the poetry of the troubadours."[49] Assuming that date is correct, Edward kept his marriage secret for months, revealing it in autumn at council.[50] The news was not taken completely well. In his source book on Edward IV, Keith Dockray quotes Jean de Waurin: "'[The king's council] told him that she [Elizabeth Woodville] was not his match; however good or fair she might be, he must know well that she was no wife for so high a prince as himself.'"[51] Edward IV quickly worked to promote his queen's image, showing that public acceptance of a queen was important to public acceptance of a king. Elizabeth was escorted by the Earl of Warwick and Edward IV's brother, the Duke of Clarence, into Reading Abbey in September 1464, where the assembled lords and people honored her as queen.[52] Throughout her reign, Elizabeth would continue to use spectacle to display her splendor as queen, such as at grand feasts for her churching[53] (a woman's formal re-entry into public life after the birth of a child) and for the reception of foreign dignitaries.[54]

Elizabeth would not be crowned until a year after their marriage, in May 1465. Edward had made sure that Elizabeth's foreign uncle, Jacques de Luxembourg, was able to arrive in England with an impressive entourage. While Elizabeth's marriage had not been brokered due to a treaty, the presence of noble foreigners served to display the familial links she did bring to England. Elizabeth's coronation procession was lined with pageants, as Margaret of Anjou's entry into London had been, but with an emphasis on St. Elizabeth and Mary Cleophas. Both Biblical women were married (Mary Cleophas had been twice married, like Elizabeth Woodville) and fertile, and their inclusion therefore shone a light on Elizabeth's own motherhood and turned it into a holy virtue.[55] Elizabeth would also highlight her virtuous motherhood by taking as her emblem the gillyflower, or clove pink, "one of the flowers connected with the Virgin Mary, [standing for] her purity and virginity, but also for her motherhood and fruitfulness."[56] Elizabeth's construction of herself as virtuous mother, akin to the Virgin Mary, would have bolstered Edward's association with Christ.

Elizabeth Woodville's first royal child, Elizabeth of York, was born in 1466, and her first royal son, Edward, was born in 1470. Elizabeth Woodville was initially the "key-holder" of her royal son's household, but as he grew older, a prince's council was established for him. Elizabeth still maintained close links to her son's household, as her brother, Anthony Woodville, Earl Rivers, was one of the heads of it.[57] Elizabeth Woodville also paid attention to her daughters'

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[49] Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens*, 66.
[50] Dockray, Keith. *Edward IV: A Source Book*. Sutton History Paperbacks. Stroud: Sutton, 1999.
[51] Dockray, *Edward IV: A Source Book*, 45.
[52] Laynesmith, "Elizabeth Woodville: The Knight's Widow," 220.
[53] Laynesmith, "Elizabeth Woodville: The Knight's Widow," 226-228.
[54] Dockray, *Edward IV: A Source Book,* 108.
[55] Laynesmith, "Elizabeth Woodville: The Knight's Widow," 222.
[56] Sutton, Anne F., and Visser-Fuchs, Livia. "The Device of Queen Elizabeth Woodville: A Gillyflower or Pink." *Ricardian: Journal of the Richard III Society* 11 (1997): 17–24.
[57] Cunningham, Sean. "A Yorkist Legacy For the Tudor Prince of Wales on the Welsh Marches: Affinity-Building, Regional Government and National Politics, 1471–1502." In *The Fifteenth Century XVIII*, edited by Linda Clark and Peter Fleming, NED-New edition., 119–30. Rulers, Regions and Retinues. Essays Presented to A.J. Pollard. Boydell & Brewer, 2020. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv18x4j6d.14.

education and piety, for instance, taking Elizabeth of York on pilgrimage to Canterbury. It should also be noted that her daughters were evidently close enough to her that she could go into sanctuary with them in 1470 and 1483.[58]

Elizabeth was an active manager of her estates. Like her predecessor, she had her own council and a team of lawyers to manage her dower lands and household expenses.[59] Her household had a smaller income than her predecessor, but it seems that she did not run her household extravagantly and focused on living within that income.[60] She was not afraid to take to task people who infringed on her rights, such as when she told Sir William Stonor, hunting on her land without permission, to present his excuses to her council.[61]

As queen, Elizabeth was expected to publicly demostrate her piety, and she did so throughout her life. The Queens' College at the University of Cambridge received her patronage and a portion of her income, in order to restore it to the income it had received under Henry VI. Eton College, also founded by Henry VI, was restored by Edward IV after he'd already given the order to have it disbanded, and Okerlund attributes this change of mind to Elizabeth's intercession. Elizabeth also founded a fraternity of priests in London and a chapel of St. Erasmus in Westminster Abbey.[62] An Hours of the Guardian Angel may have been presented to her, as argued by Anne Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs:

> This small volume contains a presentation scene showing a woman presenting the book to a crowned queen and a dedicatory poem in English addressed to a 'Sovereign Princess' with an acrostic 'Elisabeth'. The decoration of the book has been dated to Elizabeth Woodville's reign. [...] If the statement in the dedicatory poem preceding the miniature is precisely true and the 'souvereign princess' did request a copy of the text, then Elizabeth's taste in devotional literature may have been both positive and sophisticated.[63]

At the end of her life, Elizabeth Woodville entered Bermondsey Abbey. It was there she died in 1492, showing piety all the way up until the end of her life.

Anne Neville

Anne Neville remains a more elusive figure than her predecessors in the historical record. She was queen consort for only twenty-one months[64] before dying at the age of 28 in 1485, only

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[58] Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens,* 148.
[59] Crawford, 1206.
[60] Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, "'A Most Benevolent Queen,'" 216.
[61] Laynesmith, "Elizabeth Woodville: The Knight's Widow," 224.
[62] Okerlund, 70-71, 74.
[63] Sutton, Anne F., and Visser-Fuchs, Livia. "'A Most Benevolent Queen': Queen Elizabeth Woodville's Reputation, Her Piety and Her Books." *The Ricardian* 10, no. 129 (1995): 214.
[64] Sutton, Anne F., and Visser-Fuchs, Livia. "Anne Neville: Heiress and Highest Ornament of Her House." In *Later Plantagenet and the Wars of the Roses Consorts: Power, Influence, and Dynasty*, edited by Aidan Norrie, Carolyn Harris, J.L. Laynesmith, Danna R. Messer, and Elena Woodacre, 237–57. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-94886-3_14.

five months before her husband's defeat at the Battle of Bosworth. Over the course of her lifetime, she held the titles of Princess of Wales, Duchess of Gloucester, and finally Queen of England.

Anne Neville was born in 1456 to Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, and Anne Beauchamp, Countess of Warwick. She was their second daughter and therefore heiress to her parents' considerable wealth, along with her older sister Isabel. When she was born, the English crown was in turmoil, and she spent the first few years of her life in Calais as her father waded the fraught political waters.[65] Anne would spend much of her youth moving between England and Calais as her father's political status demanded it.

In 1470, Anne was married to Prince Edward of Westminster, the exiled Prince of Wales. For a year, she was Princess of Wales; Edward of Westminster was killed in 1471 at the Battle of Tewkesbury. It is not known how Anne felt about her first husband. As K.L. Clark points out, "the young couple may have delighted in each other's company; they may have disliked each other from the start. Without their voices, this is something that cannot be known."[66] What is known is that just shy of age 15, she found herself a widow.

By 1472, she was married again, this time to the king's brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester. Anne and Richard would have been at least familiar with each other from a fairly young age. As a young boy, some of Richard's education had been under the supervision of Anne's father, the Earl of Warwick,[67] and he and Anne had shared a table at her uncle's feast celebrating his accession to Archbishop of York.[68] Anne was Duchess of Gloucester for eleven years, during which time her only child, Edward of Middleham, was born. In 1483 her husband usurped his nephews and ascended to the throne as Richard III, making her Queen of England.

Evidence of Anne's activities as queen have made it to the present very sparsely. She and Richard were crowned together, on July 6th.[69] She wore the traditional coronation raiment of a queen, as described by Anne F. Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs:

> Anne wore the traditional white with her hair spread on her shoulders to represent her purity; she sat on cushions in a litter strung on poles between white palfreys; all the furnishings were white damask and white cloth of gold. The coronation followed [...] with two robes for the Queen, the first of crimson velvet for her anointing and the other of purple velvet furred with ermine and miniver.[70]

This raiment and her public procession was twofold: first, it served to reinforce the unity of the new king and queen, as the king was also magnificently robed. The white clothes highlighting her purity would draw comparisons with the Virgin Mary, emphasizing the divinity of the queen and therefore the king.

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[65] Clark, 155, 200.
[66] Clark, 326.
[67] Horspool, 49-50.
[68] Clark, 288.
[69] Dockray, Keith. *Richard III: A Source Book*. Gloucestershire: Sutton Pub, 1997, 63.
[70] Sutton and Visser-Fuchs. "Anne Neville: Heiress and Highest Ornament of Her House," 247.

Anne also accompanied her husband on royal progresses, with an assortment of unfortunately unnamed but high-ranking ladies.[71] This included journeying to York in 1483, where their son Edward of Middleham was invested as Prince of Wales. Her activities were documented in the York Civic Records, edited and compiled by Keith Dockray in his sourcebook on Richard III:

> "... the king's grace is in good health, and in likewise the queen's grace, and in all their progress have been worshipfully received with pageants …"
> "... it was agreed that [the] king shall be presented at his coming with 100 marks [...] and that [the] queen shall be presented with 100 of gold in a piece …"[72]

Anne's presence at this event would have cemented public perception of the royal family as a continuous unit, with king, queen, and heir. At that event, Anne was also able to exercise her royal patronage by choosing an appointment for the mastership of the Hospital of St. Mary *in le Horsfair*.[73]

In early 1484, Richard III visited the University of Cambridge. It is not known for certain whether Anne accompanied him, but she may well have, as the Queens' College had gained the new name "College of Queen Anne, St. Margaret and St. Bernard." This was a public display of her piety and royal patronage, as was expected for a queen. The scholars and priests of this college were expected to include Anne's and her husband's ancestors in their prayers - once again, a public display of piety. [74]

Anne was once again on progress with her husband in April 1484 when they received the news that their son had died. Both she and her husband were, according to the Crowland Continuation as edited by Keith Dockray, "almost out of their minds [...] with the sudden grief."[75] With Prince Edward of Middleham's death went the hope for an uncomplicated succession.

At the Christmas and New Year's festivities of December 1484 and January 1485, Anne presided. Her niece, Elizabeth of York, was also present, and Anne is recorded as having gifted her a dress.[76] It reflected well on a queen to give gifts, for they served as small forms of patronage to the giftee.

After the festivities, Anne grew ill, most likely of tuberculosis. On March 16th, 1485, she died. King Richard III was to follow his queen only a few months later.

English Queenship On Display

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[71] Dockray. *Richard III: A Source Book,* 70.
[72] Dockray. Richard III: A Source Book, 72.
[73] Sutton and Visser-Fuchs. "Anne Neville: Heiress and Highest Ornament of Her House," 255.
[74] Sutton and Visser-Fuchs. "Anne Neville: Heiress and Highest Ornament of Her House," 256.
[75] Dockray. Richard III: A Source Book, 98.
[76] Sutton and Visser-Fuchs. "Anne Neville: Heiress and Highest Ornament of Her House," 250.

Margaret of Anjou, Elizabeth Woodville, and Anne Neville each reigned as queen in times of turmoil and uncertainty. Margaret of Anjou championed her husband’s and son’s interests in the face of her husband’s incapacity and weak rule. Elizabeth Woodville navigated both resistance to her marriage and the overthrow and readeption of her husband. Anne Neville’s tenure as queen sought to bring a sense of legitimacy in the wake of her husband usurping his nephews.

Yet each queen upheld the standards of medieval European queenship at the time. All three worked to display a unity with their lord and to bolster his interests. Intercession and royal patronage were tools used by these queens to wield royal power while staying within the framework of queenship. All three queens engaged in displays of divine magnificence, especially at their coronations, and of piety, with special attention paid to the Queens’ College at the University of Cambridge. Though none of their sons successfully succeeded their fathers, all three queens gave birth to at least one royal son. Though there is no record of Anne Neville’s activities with her queen’s council, both Margaret of Anjou and Elizabeth Woodville managed their estates and actively protected their economic interests. It was the times that were unconventional, not the queenship.

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Appendix I: Timeline of Events[77]

1422 - Accession of Henry VI as infant.

1430 - Birth of Margaret of Anjou.

1437 - Henry VI assumes adult reign. Around this time, birth of Elizabeth Woodville.

1445 - Margaret of Anjou and Henry VI are wed.

1453 - Henry VI incapacitated by illness. Margaret of Anjou and Henry VI's son, Prince Edward of Westminster, is born.

1454 - Richard, Duke of York made Protector.

1455 - Henry VI recovers. Battle of St. Albans. Richard of York made Protector.

1456 - Birth of Anne Neville.

1460 - Richard of York and his heirs named heir to Henry VI. Richard of York is killed at the Battle of Wakefield.

1461 - Edward IV is declared king. Henry VI, Margaret of Anjou, and Edward of Westminster flee.

1464 - Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville wed in secret.

1465 - Elizabeth Woodville is crowned queen. Henry VI is captured and imprisoned in the Tower of London.

1466 - Birth of Elizabeth Woodville and Edward IV's first child, Elizabeth of York.

1469 - Edward IV is captured by Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, but released.

1470 - Warwick flees to France and allies with Margaret of Anjou. Warwick invades England, causing Edward IV to flee to Burgundy. Henry VI is restored. Anne Neville and Edward of Westminster are wed. Birth of Edward IV's heir, Edward.

1471 - Edward IV invades England. Warwick is killed at the Battle of Barnet. Edward of Westminster is killed at the Battle of Tewkesbury. Edward IV redeclares himself king. Henry VI dies. Margaret of Anjou is held prisoner.

1472 - Anne Neville weds Richard, Duke of Gloucester.

1473 or 1476 - Birth of Anne Neville and Richard, Duke of Gloucester's son, Edward of Middleham.

1475 - Margaret of Anjou is ransomed back to France.

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[77] Much of this timeline is adapted from the one in Davis, Norman, ed. *The Paston Letters: Selection in Modern Spelling*. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

1482 - Margaret of Anjou dies.

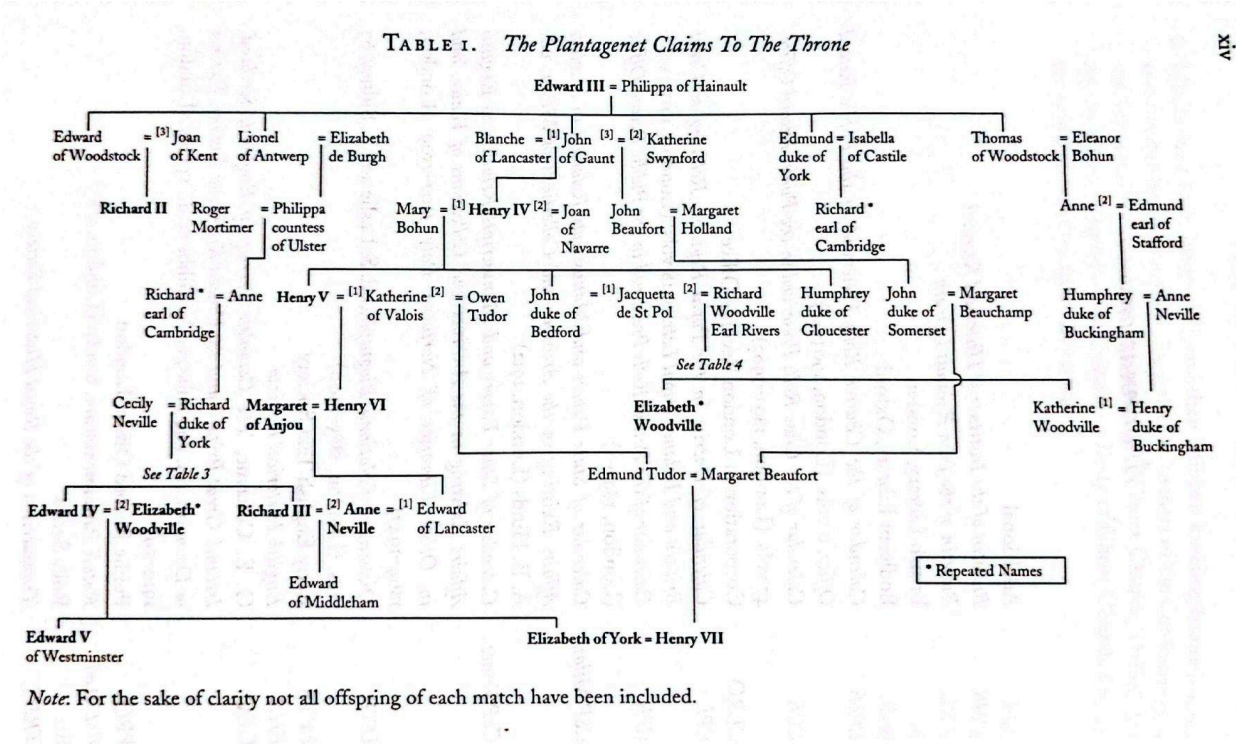
1483 - Edward IV dies. Edward V and his brother are murdered in the Tower of London, presumably on the orders of Richard, Duke of Gloucester. Richard Duke of Gloucester is crowned Richard III.

1484 - Prince Edward of Middleham dies.

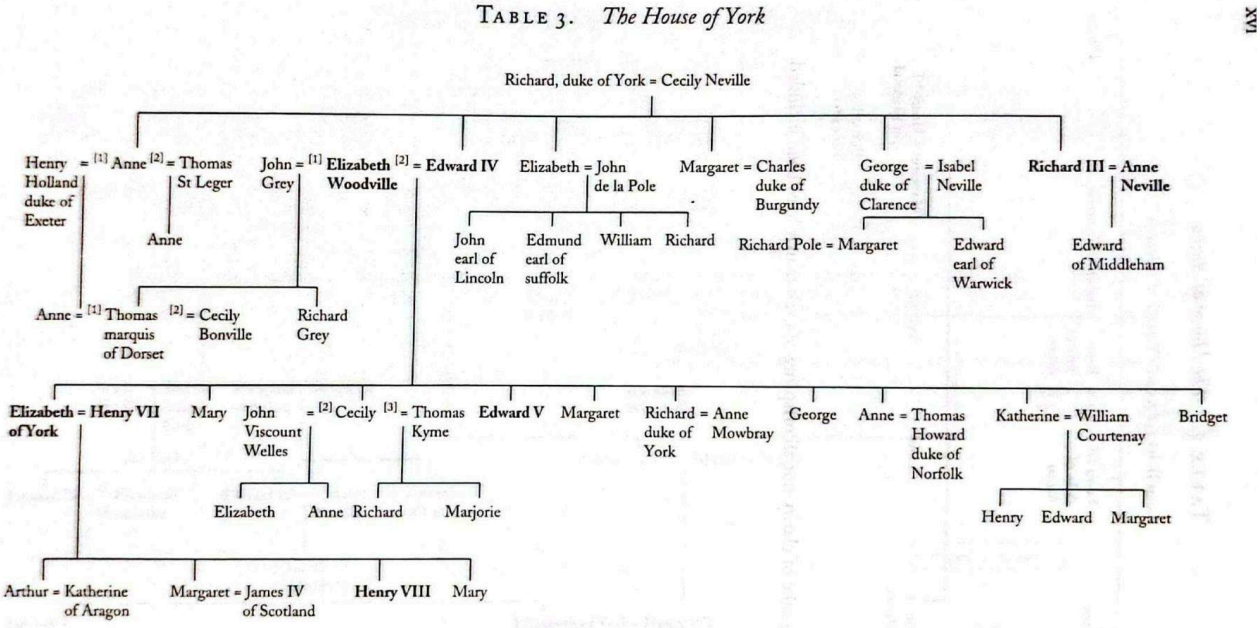
1485 - Anne Neville dies of illness. Richard III dies at the Battle of Bosworth. Henry Tudor claims the throne as Henry VII.

1492 - Elizabeth Woodville dies.

Appendix II: Family Trees[78]



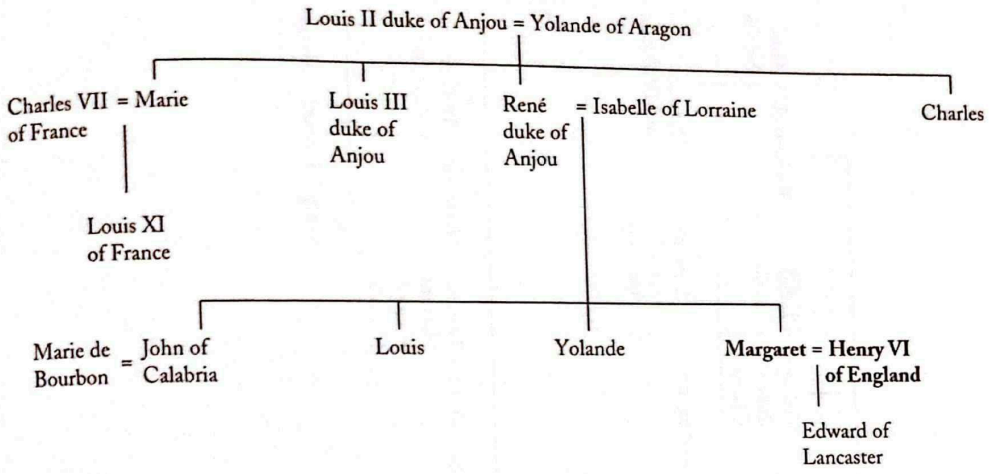
Note: For the sake of clarity not all offspring of each match have been included.



Note: For the sake of clarity not all offspring of each match have been included.

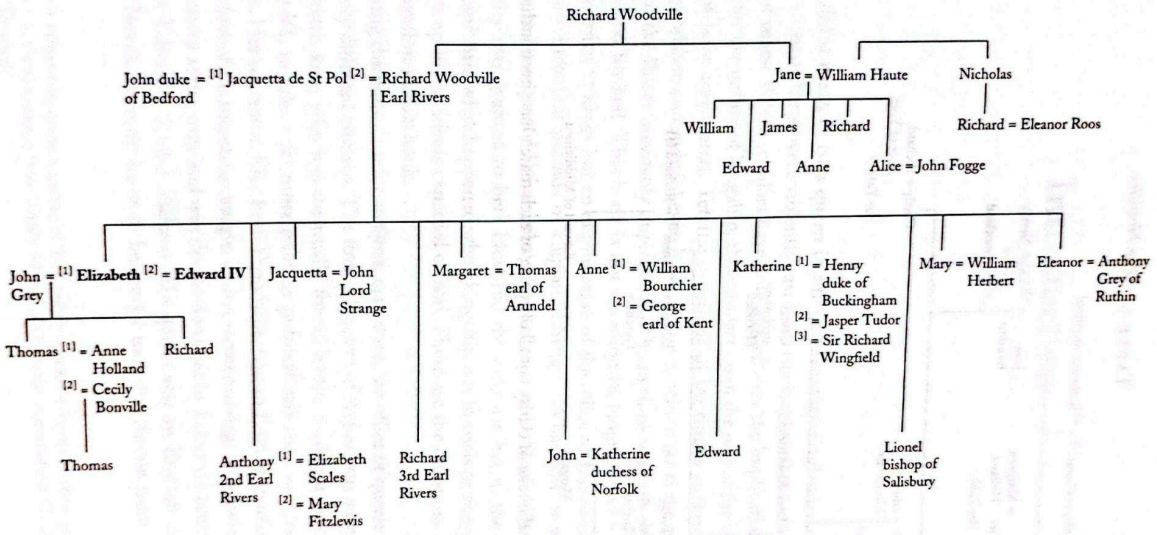
[78] These family trees have been taken from J. L. Laynesmith's *The Last Medieval Queens*.

TABLE 2. *The House of Anjou*



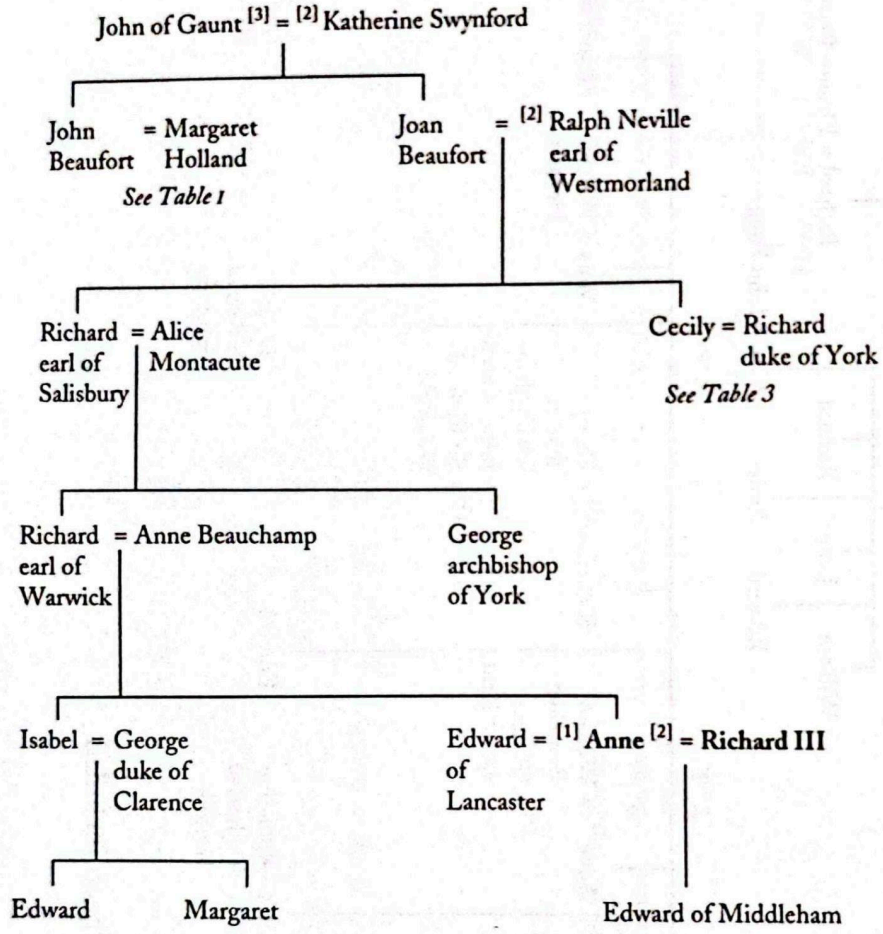
Note: For the sake of clarity not all offspring of each match have been included.

TABLE 4. *The Woodvilles, Greys, and Hautes*



Note: For the sake of clarity not all offspring of each match have been included.

TABLE 5. *The Nevilles*



Note: For the sake of clarity not all offspring of each match have been included.