NOBILITY AND WITCHCRAFT IN FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND

by

Lincoln Frye

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Approved By

_____
Dr. Amanda Pipkin

_____
Dr. Christine Haynes

_____
Dr. John Smail

ABSTRACT

LINCOLN FRYE. Nobility and Witchcraft in Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century England. (Under the direction of DR. AMANDA PIPKIN)

Between 1419 and 1536, five English noble women, including three queen consorts, stood accused of witchcraft: Joan of Navarre, queen of Henry IV; Eleanor Cobham, Duchess of Gloucester; Jacquetta of Luxembourg, Duchess of Bedford and Countess Rivers; Elizabeth Woodville, queen of Edward IV; and Anne Boleyn, queen of Henry VIII. These cases are surprising for several reasons. First, that these elite women would face persecution for the crime of malevolent sorcery, for which the majority of cases came from lower classes. Secondly, that these instances occurred nearly a century before witch-hunting reached its peak in England.

Examining these individual women and the circumstances surrounding their accusation, what made noble women vulnerable to such a charge? Elite women who were exceptionally wealthy, influential, and who attempted to take control of English Crown, were the most likely candidates to be associated with witchcraft. Such association could come either in the form of a direct accusation – such as Eleanor Cobham and Elizabeth Woodville – or the association could be more subtle during her life, with a charge appearing posthumously, as with Anne Boleyn. A woman's enemies readily used the accusation to vilify her and remove her from a position of authority. The context of these accusations also reveal they took place during periods of political disunity. By charging these women with sorcery, their enemies used them as scapegoats to explain the difficulties and anxieties their society was experiencing at the moment the accusation took place and restore themselves to power or establish their right to rule.

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Lastly, I wish to recognize the contributions of Dr. Margaret Leigh 'Morgan' Adams, my aunt, friend, and mentor, whose love has sustained me through many hardships, and without whose unwavering support this work would not exist. I dedicate these pages to her memory.

DEDICATION

For Morgan –

May you walk with Merlin,

And may the road lead you unto the Holy Isle of Eternity.

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INTRODUCTION

In May of 1536, Anne Boleyn prepared to live out her final days. Once the queen of England, she now found herself imprisoned in the Tower of London. What must she have hoped for, as her last hours approached? News would have undoubtedly proved slow for her. She was certainly aware that the executioner was delayed, and her execution postponed – twice now. She had already written the king, now her former husband, a heartfelt and emotional letter, apologizing for any offenses she may have given him.[1] Perhaps all these were reasons to believe that she might yet live, albeit in exile, just as Katharine of Aragon, her predecessor, did after her annulment. Besides, in England, no historical precedent dictated a queen consort should die for her treason.

The Arthurian legends tell that King Arthur merely banished Queen Guinevere for her crimes, namely adultery, though some also accused her of sorcery.[2] Even when Arthur declared that she should burn for her sins, the story regales its readers of how Sir Lancelot valiantly rescued Guinevere from the fires, only later for King Arthur to forgive her, graciously allowing her to return to her place as high queen.[3] Even after her husband's death, Guinevere retired to the nunnery at Almesbury, living in peace until her natural death, after which she received all due funeral honors as a queen, and was buried beside King Arthur at Glastonbury.[4] Although it was clear Henry VIII meant to take Jane

[1] For more on the discussion of Anne's letter, see Eric Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn: 'The Most Happy'* (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 58. For more on Anne Boleyn's last days, see Retha M. Warnicke, *The Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn : Family Politics at the Court of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 239-33.
[2] Thomas Malory, *Le Morte d' Arthur: Sir Thomas Malory's Book of King Arthur and His Noble Knights of the Round Table*, introduction by Edward Strachey and preface by William Caxton (1899; repr., Lawrence, KS: Digireads, 2017), 194.
[3] Malory, 653-4.
[4] Malory, 684-9.

Seymour as his third wife, leaving no room for Anne to remain queen, was it so far to hope that she might also be rescued from certain death and be allowed to live in peace until her passing?

More tangibly still, history tells us that after toppling her government, Edward III pardoned his mother, Isabella of France, of her crimes, though her offenses were the very definition of treason. On his deathbed, Henry V exonerated his stepmother, Joan of Navarre, for her transgressions, whether they were real or imagined, and returned her property, declaring the royal council to "make deliverance unto our said [step]mother…wholly of her said dower, and…ordain [for] her horses…and let her remove into whatsoever palace within our realm."[5] Even Henry VII allowed Elizabeth Woodville to live peacefully at Bermondsey Abbey after both Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck paraded themselves as one of her vanished sons.[6] Never before had a queen of England been burned, beheaded, or otherwise executed for any of her crimes. Then again, never before had a king of England divorced his wife, bastardized his daughter, openly broke with Rome, created a new Christian church, and all to marry a common young woman of little social standing. That thought, should it have ever crossed Anne's mind, must have been chilling.

If this were simply a test of her faith or fidelity, then the masterminds behind it went to extreme measures to prove it. On 19 May, Anne Boleyn mounted a scaffold in the Tower Green. Facing the small crowd that had come to watch their former queen's

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[5] Agnes Strickland, "Joanna of Navarre, Queen of Henry IV," in *Lives of the Queens of England: From the Norman Conquest; Now First Published from Official Records and Other Authentic Documents, Private as Well as Public*, 54-118, vol. 3 (1854; repr., Miami: HardPress Publishing, 2016), 109-10.

[6] Both claimed to be Richard, Duke of York, Elizabeth Woodville's youngest surviving son, and the younger of the Princes in the Tower. Later, Simnel would change his story and identify himself as Edward of Clarence, a first cousin of Richard, Duke of York.

final moments, she gave a short speech, offering the traditional prayer of God save the king, asking the crowd to pray for her and "only judge the best" of her cause.[7] She dispensed the customary alms before her attending ladies blindfolded her and gently helped her to kneel before the silent onlookers.

As with Guinevere, Anne stood accused of sexual heresy, namely adultery and incest. Some of her contemporary adversaries whispered that Anne had an affinity for magic, which she used to rise through the ranks of society. Anne's later enemies would openly claim as such, and that by sorcery she had seduced Henry VIII, murdered the displaced Katharine of Aragon, exterminated the Catholic Church in England, delivered a deformed male fetus, and rendered the king impotent, unable to father a much-desired male heir.[8] Consequently, it is hard to imagine that any of the onlookers prayed too severely for her. As Anne whispered repeatedly, "To Jesus Christ I commend my soule; Lord Jesu receive my soule," the executioner dispatched the former queen's head with a single stroke of his sword. While he collected his £24, Anne's ladies placed their former queen's remains in an elm chest – the Crown apparently neglecting or refusing to provide a coffin – and buried her in an unmarked grave near the Chapel Royal of St. Peter ad Vincula.[9] Even after her death, rumors of England's infamous witch-queen persisted. Later legends claimed she had a tumor on her neck, extra fingers or fingernails, a protruding tooth under her upper lip, and a mole under her chin.[10]

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[7] Retha M. Warnicke, *The Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn : Family Politics at the Court of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 232.
[8] Nicolas Sander, *The Rise and Growth of the Anglican Schism* (1585; repr., Rockford, Ill: Tan Books and Publishers, 1988), 24-8, 130-5; Retha M. Warnicke, *The Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn : Family Politics at the Court of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 230-2.
[9] Warnicke, 233-4. The church is sometimes known by its English name, St. Peter in Chains.
[10] Sander, 23-6. Note that in November 1876 while Chapel Royal of St. Peter ad Vincula underwent a restoration, workers discovered remains that matched Anne's description. A contemporary medical examiner described the bones as those of a young woman who died during the mid-sixteenth century,

At first glance, Anne Boleyn's case may appear unique, an isolated event, an adverse result of Henry VIII's foolish antics and turbulent whims; another victim to his questionable exploits. The witch-hysteria that would later overrun Europe had not yet begun, much less reached British shores. Even when the trials did begin in 1542, they would not reach their peak until after 1603, when James VI of Scotland inherited the English throne from his cousin Elizabeth I.[11] Even then, in England most accused witches came from the lower classes. Historians have long declared the average person charged with witchcraft as someone from a rural community, and therefore probably poor, probably at least fifty, and probably unmarried, most likely widowed. Furthermore, the stereotypical witch was someone who could be described as "sharp-tongued, bad-tempered,…quarrelsome [and] prone to cursing."[12] Given that most accused witches came from a lower socioeconomic background, it must be a rare occurrence that a powerful woman, no less a queen of England, could be associated with such evil practices.

However, Anne Boleyn was not the first English queen linked to witchcraft, though she was the first to die from it. By 1536, there was ample precedent in England for charges of sorcery among nobility and royalty that dated back over a century – even

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between twenty-five and thirty, with a delicate frame and small neck, whose head had been cut off. While it is impossible to determine with absolute certainty that these are Anne's remains, the only other possible candidates are Kathryn Howard and Jane Grey, both of whom were in their late teens at the time of their beheadings, meaning the bones in question are probably too old to be theirs. In any case, the bones gave no indication of an extra finger bone nor any other deformity Sander described. Queen Victoria reburied the skeleton and commissioned a marble plaque that reads "Queen Anne Boleyn" which still stands today. See Warnicke, 237-45.

[11] Daughter of the infamous Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth I succeed her half-sister Mary I in 1558, before dying in 1603, herself succeeded in turn by her cousin James VI of Scotland. For more on James VI's effects on English witch-hunting, see Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 3rd ed. (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2006), 177.

[12] Levack, 137-60.

longer, if one includes Guinevere. In 1419, Henry V issued a bill of attainder against his stepmother Joan of Navarre and later imprisoned her, claiming that she attempted to murder him via witchcraft while he was on campaign in France.[13] Courts sentenced Eleanor Cobham, the wife of Prince Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, to do public penance for witchcraft in 1441, after which they annulled her marriage, the Crown exiling her to Beaumaris Castle in Anglesey. Although she admitted to having attained potions from the Witch of Eye, Margery Jourdemayne, Eleanor claimed they were to help her conceive. Others believed these vials contained poison meant for her nephew-by-marriage, Henry VI, his death leaving room for her husband to be king with Eleanor as queen.[14] More recently to Anne Boleyn, Richard III claimed in 1484 that his sister-in-law, Elizabeth Woodville, and her mother, Jacquetta of Luxembourg, used witchcraft to seduce Edward IV and force him to marry Elizabeth.[15]

What made these English noble women vulnerable to witchcraft accusations? In addition to their elite status, what attributes did they share? What role did economic prosperity and political disunity play in these accusations? Furthermore, how did the idea of kingship, queenship, and royal authority/prerogative play in the charges? In answering these questions, it is necessary to examine how England experienced the witch-hunts that

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[13] Chris Given-Wilson, ed., *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England 1275-1504*, vol. 9, *Henry V: 1413-1422* (London: The National Archives, 2005), 236.

[14] Records created, acquired, and inherited by Chancery, and also of the Wardrobe, Royal Household, Exchequer and various commissions, Records of the Chancery as central secretariat, Chancery: Inquisitions Post Mortem, Series I, Henry IV, 137/10/50, The National Archives, Kew, London; London: indictments file, trial of Eleanor duchess of Gloucester and others for conspiring and contriving the death of the king by necromancy on 20 June 1440, 1441, Court of King's Bench: Crown Side: Indictments Files, Oyer and Terminer Files and Informations Files, 9/72, The National Archives, Kew, London.

[15] Untitled, 1 Rich III, Records created, acquired, and inherited by Chancery, and also of the Wardrobe, Royal Household, Exchequer and various commissions, Records of the Enrolment Office, Chancery: Parliament Rolls, 65/114, The National Archives, Kew, London. For a more complete version, see Chris Given-Wilson, ed., *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England 1275-1504*, ed. Rosemary Horrox. Vol. 15, *Richard III: 1484-1485; Henry VII: 1485-1487* (London: The National Archives, 2005), 13-18.

began several decades later. By examining English attitudes towards witches and sorcery during the sixteenth century, we can better understand the early beliefs that laid the foundations of the later witch-hunts. In other words, how the accusations against these noble women helped to either create or reinforce English ideas of sorcery and the stereotypes of an average person accused of witchcraft.

In general, witch-hunts on the European continent were far more destructive than those in England. This is most likely due to the publication of Heinrich Kramer's and Jacob Sprenger's *Malleus Maleficarum*, or *Hammer of Witches*, which first appeared in Speyer in 1486. The *Malleus* represented the culmination of contemporary intellectual beliefs in witchcraft and the ability of witches to manipulate the natural world by supernatural means. The book claims that becoming a witch involved making a pact with the Devil and renouncing Christianity, and, once a witch, a person would repeatedly engage in sexual activity with the Devil and other witches, attend a sabbath over which Satan would preside and at which attendees would dance and engage in sexual acts, after which they would return home via flight and preform malevolent rituals to harm their community until the next sabbath, including killing crops and livestock, causing floods or droughts, spreading plague, and murdering infants.[16] In addition, the book also served as instruction manual on how to identity a witch – someone who made a pact with the Devil – and the various means of torture one could inflict on a witch to extract a confession.

The *Malleus Maleficarum* quickly spread across the European continent, and was at least partially responsible for the severity of the hunts that occurred between 1560 and

[16] Not all described the witches' sabbath as a physical meeting. Some believed the meeting took place mentally via a form of astral projection, with the person never actually leaving their current location. For more on this topic, see Levack, 48-9, 54-6.

1630.[17] Of these panics, 75% occurred in western Europe: France, the German states, the Spanish kingdoms, the Low Countries, and the Italian nations.[18] In total, probably around 90,000 formal accusations led to a trial, of which approximately 45,000 would end in execution. At least half these originated from the politically disunified Holy Roman Empire.[19] The gruesome manner by which many of these people died only adds to the horror. One historian relates the story of Anna Pappenheimer, a Bavarian woman accused of witchcraft in 1600, who was repeatedly raped and beaten before confessing to the crime, at which point she was publicly stripped, her flesh removed using red-hot pinchers, her breasts cut off and placed into her mouth and the mouths of her grown children (also accused of witchcraft), before being burned alive.[20]

In England, witch-hunting was remarkably different. Compared to the rest of Europe, English witch-hunting was relatively tame: of the approximately 5,000 that stood accused, only 1,500 to 2,500 died as a result.[21] Historians have attributed this not only to England's physical separation from their continental counterparts, but also the substantial independence of the English Church, which was more hesitant to torture accused witches.[22] This is likely a result of the *Malleus Maleficarum* failing to find footing in England; no English translation ever found its way to the British shores.[23] Furthermore, scholars note that the bull Pope Innocent VIII issued in 1484, *Summis desiderantes*

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[17] The *Malleus Maleficarum* would have several reissues and reprints during this period. See Levack, 206-8
[18] Levack, 211-15.
[19] Levack, 24-6, 210-12.
[20] Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of European Witch Hunts* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 144-5.
[21] Levack, 219.
[22] Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study*, 2nd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 1999), 20.
[23] Indeed, it would appear that no English translation ever existed. By comparison, there were thirteen editions on the continent by 1520 in various languages. See Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1971), 439-40.

affectibus, which set off a large scale panic, also never found is way to England. As a result, the English Church formed no Inquisition, as many German kingdoms did, to manage the growing number of accusations.[24]

These facts directly led to a simplistic view of sorcery in Elizabethan England. For example, historians observe that the sabbath described in the *Malleus* is never mentioned in any English trial records.[25] With this in mind, many have then deduced that the hunts were primarily social in nature. For example, one scholar relates the story of Alice Trevisard who fell out with her neighbor John Baddaford. She called him – in a modern terms – a witless fool, and swore to his wife Joan that within seven years Joan would live in poverty, become homeless, and "have no coat upon her back." Just as Alice promised, so it came to pass: John's mental health soon deteriorated and Joan lost much because of it, all within the seven years Alice promised. [26]

Religion in England also played a significant role within the hunts. It is no coincidence that the Protestant Reformation occurred simultaneously with the hunts, and reached England roughly the same time as Protestantism. Many have argued that the English Reformation remains the source of the hysteria, starting with Henry VIII's breaking from Rome and the formation of the Anglican Church in 1534, which allowed him to marry Anne Boleyn.[27] The medieval Catholic Church readily embraced a sense of ethereality and promoted the magical works of saints, believing them to be holy interference with the natural world. The rejection of these qualities coupled with the much more direct and simplistic approach to religion that Anglicanism embraced then

[24] Thomas, 439-40.
[25] George Lyman Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1929), 25.
[26] Kittredge, 9-10.
[27] Thomas, 49-51.

placed the populace of England in a position that they were not yet ready for, intellectually. Protestantism called for the dissolution of magical remedies many relied on for plague, famine, and fire, and yet offered no alternative solution to replace this fundamental aspect of life. It asked people to disregard any notion of mysticism, which had been critical to the contemporary Catholic Church for generations, yet put forth no substitute to explain the uncertainty and troubles of everyday life.[28] The void this paradox created left room for the social tensions, which eventually led to the witch-hunts. If God was not responsible for the hardships of early modern life, something – or someone – was.

England's changing political positions also played a significant role. Scholars have maintained that witch-hunting occurred both during England's periods of a strong central government, and in the gaps between.[29] These historians argue that the idea of whether one had read the *Malleus Maleficarum*, accepted the idea of witchcraft, supported the *Summis desiderantes affectibus*, was Catholic or Protestant, or believed in malevolent sorcery was irrelevant – people changed their minds daily as they acknowledged new truths about the world.[30] Witchcraft did not come as an adverse result of Protestantism or social revenge. Instead, the most influential factor was the political context of the hunts and trials – whether one aligned with the current governing body or represented a form of resistance against it.[31]

[28] Thomas, 76-7.
[29] Peter Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-hunting, and Politics in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 3.
[30] Elmer, 53.
[31] Elmer, 293.

However, witch-hunting in England cannot be reduced to a single interpretation. Many have repudiated this idea, and argue scholars must examine witch-hunting in multiple contexts, legally, literarily, socially, and religiously.[32] Varying factors could trigger a witch-hunt, including political, social, religious, economic, and even climatic instability, and such influences could be singular or come in any combination.[33] For example, a series of storms formed in the North Sea in late summer of 1589, preventing Anne of Denmark from landing in Scotland and marrying James VI. The violent gales eventually forced Anne and her ships to seek refuge in Oslo, Norway. James VI ordered public prayers said for his fiancée's safety, before sailing to Norway to meet with her personally. Further storms prevented the couple from returning to Edinburgh until the following spring. Upon their safe arrival, a witch-hunt began in both Scotland and Denmark, seeking to find those who had endangered the new queen's life and nearly prevented the royal marriage.[34]

Indeed, while many factors may play a role in triggering a witch-hunt, instability repeatedly appears as the catalyst. People used accused witches as scapegoats to their community – the source and explanation for any uncertainty their society experienced. As many scholars have pointed out, the majority of individual, more serious accusations stemmed from any form of contested authority.[35] In the British Isles, especially England, hunts triggered by a natural event, such as the storms in the North Sea described above, rarely ended in a series of formal accusations, trials, and executions. This exists in direct

[32] Macfarlane, xxii.
[33] Levack, 3.
[34] Levack, 183.
[35] Malcom Gaskill, *Crime and Punishment in Early Modern England*, Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 55.

contrast to continental Europe's experience, for the same reasons already listed: the absence of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, the independence of the English Church, and the simplistic view of sorcery. In England, challenges to authority or status quo – whether temporal or spiritual – were the primary catalyst that began a more severe hunt that would probably end in at least one execution, either by being found guilty in a court or by means of a mob.[36] Witches and witchcraft accusations served as a means to relieve social pressure, and bring a community back to equilibrium.[37]

One of the most famous examples of this model is the 1612 witch-panic in Pendle, Lancashire. A woman named Alizon Device reportedly cursed the peddler John Law for refusing to sell her any sewing pins (the reason for his refusal is never mentioned). A short time later, John suffered a stroke, and accused Alizon of sorcery. As a result, Alizon, her brother, mother, and maternal grandmother, were all charged with witchcraft and brought to trial, and eventually found guilty and executed. During their trials, Anne Whittle, Anne Redferne, Katherine Hewitt, John and Jane Bulcock, and Alice Nutter were also accused of using sorcery and various other magical means to murder other members of their community. All were later executed alongside Alizon Device and her family.[38]

While the trials appear somewhat straightforward, the community of 1612 Pendle had an extreme underlying social tension. Lancashire had been steadily growing in economic importance since the reign of Henry IV of England, who transferred Pendle and

[36] Gaskill, 66-7.
[37] Gaskill, 36-8.
[38] J.T. Swain, "The Lancashire Witch Trials of 1612 and 1634 and the Economics of Witchcraft," in *New Perspectives on Witchcraft, Magic, and Demonology*. Vol. 3, *Witchcraft in the British Isles and New England*, 76-97, edited by Brian P. Levack (New York: Routledge, 2001), 79.

other areas of Lancashire from independent ownership to part of the Crown lands.[39] As such, prices and rents began to climb as more tenants moved to the area, especially after a brief economic boom in the early 1600s.[40] Farmers began to complain of rising rents, and directed many of their complaints towards wealthy families like the Nutters, who owned significant amounts of land which they regularly rented out to farmers, including Alizon Device and her family. Of course, it did not help that the Device family were among the leaders of the dissatisfied farmers. The Nutter family used their wealth to open markets and other trading centers, which attracted peddlers like John Law, whom they also charged tariffs for trading in. In short, the economic situation in Pendle in 1612 was one where the rich were getting richer and the poor were getting poorer.[41]

John Law's stroke was undoubtedly the event that sparked the witchcraft panic in the area. The Nutter family – and other rich families in Pendle – probably hoped that by him accusing Alizon Device of witchcraft they might silence the dissent among the lower classes.[42] Unfortunately for them, the Nutter family, via Alice Nutter, found themselves swept in the hysteria. Alice Nutter's execution severely hurt the local power of the Nutter family, who lowered their rents and tariffs shortly afterwards. The death of Alizon Device and her family members also effectively silenced the farmers, who now had no clear leader, but had achieved their goal of lowering rents. The result was that the community reached equilibrium. The pressure felt on both sides – the wealthy like the

[39] Henry IV had originally been Duke of Lancaster, inheriting the dukedom and duchy from his father John of Gaunt. When Henry IV overthrew his cousin Richard II in 1399, the title merged with the Crown, and has since never been recreated, save for Henry IV's son, Henry V. However, Henry V never used the title before his ascension, as Henry IV created it a subsidiary to Henry V's higher title, Prince of Wales. See Appendix B: The House of Plantagenet and its Cadet Branches, the Houses of York and Lancaster.
[40] For more on the economic boom, see Swain, 85-7.
[41] Swain, 96-7.
[42] Swain, 88-92.

Nutter family and the poor like the Device family – had been released, and the community continued to exist in relative harmony.[43]

But in the case of Pendle, and the other trials, what made someone a witch? What attributes did the accused share that made the charges believable? Age certainly played a role; in England, most of the people tried and executed for witchcraft were at least fifty years old.[44] Many also had some form of physical abnormality, such as an amputated leg or a missing eye.[45] As to their temperament, the accused tended toward ere on the side being "un-neighborly," meaning that they may have been harsh and unforgiving towards other members of their community, and enjoyed disrupting certain rituals.[46] In turn, this may cause them to appear envious or wrathful.[47] They may have also suffered from mental illnesses, such as depression, and experienced hallucinations, heard voices, or displayed similar symptoms.[48] In short, those who stood accused of witchcraft often existed on the fringes of society – nonconformists to their community's idea of normalness, anomalies to the current order. Take for example Alizon Device's mother, Elizabeth Device. Records indicate she was quite old at the time of her execution, having a face full of wrinkles (her exact birthdate is never mentioned), a wooden leg, and readily criticized the wealthy families of Pendle for raising rents.[49]

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[43] Swain, 95-7.
[44] Levack, 137-60, 162.
[45] James Sharpe, *Witchcraft in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 128-9.
[46] Annabel Gregory, "Witchcraft, Politics, and "Good Neighbourhood" in Early Seventeenth-Century Rye," in *New Perspectives on Witchcraft, Magic, and Demonology*, vol. 3, *Witchcraft in the British Isles and New England*, 99-172, edited by Brian P. Levack (New York: Routledge, 200), 99-103.
[47] Edward Bever, "Popular Witch Beliefs and Magical Practices," in T*he Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, 50-68, edited by Brian P. Levack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 53-4.
[48] Elmer, 253-4.
[49] Swain, 80-83.

Of course, not every witch looked or acted abnormally. Alizon's grandmother may have neatly matched these descriptions, but Alice Nutter does not. While she was possibly in her early fifties when executed (she was certainly postmenopausal), there is nothing to indicate she possessed some deformity or that she was at all disagreeable towards her neighbors. She appears to have existed somewhat quietly, enjoying the wealth her family had amassed. The only common attribute she shared with Elizabeth and Alizon Device was that they were all female. Indeed, in England being a woman may have been one of the most influential factors in determining if one was a witch.

Of those tried and executed in England, the overwhelming majority were women.[50] Many scholars have argued that previous historians of witchcraft have failed to place women and gender at the center of their analyses. Witch-hunting was not sex-related, but sex-specific, a means by which patriarchal Europe could control women and female sexuality.[51] Many authors have also emphasized the sexual violence women experienced during the hunts. Accusations of rape began to rise in England during periods of high-tension and witch-panics, although conviction rates for the crime steadily decreased. Men were unwilling to convict other men of sexual crimes, and, as a result, after the hunts the number of cases brought to courts of law where a woman accused a man of unwanted or violent sexual offenses decreased. However, historians have not taken this to mean that crimes, such as rape, were decreasing – rather, women were too afraid to take their case forward, or thought that doing such would be a waste and yield no punishment for the man, while the woman could face social ostracization.[52]

[50] Macfarlane, 160.
[51] Barstow, 2-7.
[52] Barstow, 158-9.

Witchcraft could also be viewed in the maternal sense. Many witches in England were also mothers, both in a literal sense of having children, and in figurative sense, of being a well-respected member of their community. In many places, motherhood was a communal effort – women often cared for each other's children and families when other women were ill.[53] When children, husbands, other women, or entire families fell into misfortune, women often served as an easy target since they frequently traveled from household to household. Witches could then be viewed as mothers-gone-bad – a perversion of the maternal instinct that women were seen to carry with them wherever they went. In other words, witches were postmenopausal women – like Alice Nutter – who used their maternal powers against others who had wronged them, instead of using it to aide other members of their community.[54] In sum, women most likely made up the bulk of those accused because of their perceived physical weakness. Since contemporary Europeans believed that a woman could not overpower a man, she must resort to spells and magic to defend herself; and since magic was inherently evil – the result of a pact made with the devil – any woman practicing magic, even for defensive purposes, was herself evil.[55]

By this, we can conclude that being a woman who possibly defied contemporary social expectations likely made for a believable witchcraft accusation. But how does this relate to noble women? Most of those charged with witchcraft came from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Rarely did such accusations climb the social ladder, as in Pendle in 1612. Witch-hunting remained almost restricted to the lower class for the

[53] Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), 6.
[54] Willis, ix.
[55] Willis, 148-9.

duration height of the witch-hunts in England, from the late-sixteenth century to mid-seventeenth century.[56]

However, in early the fifteenth century and early sixteenth century, those accused of witchcraft came not from lower classes, but rather from wealthy, privileged, titled, noble families, or those that married in to such families. Prior to the height of the English witch-hunts, elite women like Joan of Navarre, Eleanor Cobham, Jacquetta of Luxemburg, Elizabeth Woodville, and Anne Boleyn, were more likely to stand accused of sorcery than untitled women from lower classes. As we have seen, those who faced such charges tended to exist in some form of an anomaly to society. This is also true for the noble women who faced such accusations.

In England, men expected all women, including noble, to exist in a subservient role to their male-counterparts, usually a father or husband. It was common belief that women were inferior in nature, their place belonging in child-bearing and household management.[57] Social conventions restricted women's political power and rights to govern to the private sphere within the home. Even landowning unmarried women – young heiresses whose fathers died early or widows whose husbands left their spouse income-generating property – were not expected to control such assets directly. Rather, society expected a woman to form a type of governing council and appoint men who would make decisions and maintain her holdings for her, either until she married, in which case the property would transfer to her husband *jure uxoris*, or died, wherein her sons would inherit.[58] Conversely, a man's place was outside the home, in the public

[56] Levack, 137-60
[57] Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 3rd ed., New Approaches to European History (Cambridge: University Printing House, 2008), 289-90.
[58] Wiesner-Hanks, 290.

sphere. Making broader political decisions and governing estates, duchies, counties, and kingdoms was their domain. Men did not expect other men to discuss political activities with the female members of his family, and women were neither to ask nor to give unsolicited advice on how a man should govern.[59]

Interestingly, sexuality was more frankly discussed in England during the early fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, compared to other regions of Europe. Sexual innuendos and outright jokes found their way into the works of many English playwrights, including William Caxton, John Herrington, John Heywood, and William Shakespeare. Noble women regularly attended these shows, and laughed along with the other men in the audiences at the puns and imagery the players acted out on stage.[60] However, open discussion and comedic portrayals of sexuality were much different than actual practice. Especially for noble women, sexuality was directly linked with honor. Chastity was a virtue, and men expected women to engage in sexual activity only with their husband. Even then, upper class women were not necessarily expected to enjoy sex, but rather to use it as a means to conceive children and secure the bloodline of their husband's family.[61]

For a noble woman to exist in contrast to these ideas, she would have to make an entrance into the public sphere, symbolically or actually leaving the private domain behind. She could also be sexually liberal, engaging in such activity while either unmarried or married to someone else. This was a rare occurrence in England, though over the centuries there had been noble women who attempted take power for themselves

[59] Wiesner-Hanks, 289-90.
[60] Katherine Crawford, *European Sexualities, 1400 to 1800*, New Approaches to European History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 222-3.
[61] Crawford, 43-6.

and exert their direct rule over their holdings. This was true both for the lesser nobility – duchesses, countesses, and baronesses – and for royalty.

Empress Matilda serves as a prime example, as a royal woman who readily assumed greater power than others found acceptable. As we will explore later, Matilda was the first woman who attempted to take control of the English Crown in 1114. The eldest living child of Henry I of England, she attempted to act on the relative fungibility in succession laws of the new Norman-England and establish herself as the modern equivalent of queen regnant. Her male cousin, Stephen of Blois, contested her rights, and the resulting war is known as the Anarchy. Matilda's ultimate failure to attain the Crown was a significant blow to women's rights in England, establishing the precedent that no woman could inherit property from their father, but it did effectively transform the nation from male primogeniture to male-preference primogeniture. It allowed for the blood royal to descend in a cognatic line, and a royal woman's descendants to present a valid claim to the throne. I discuss this further in Chapter 2.

Isabella of France, wife of Edward II of England, is possibly the most well-known example in English history of a woman who defied contemporary standards and took power for herself. A daughter of Phillip IV of France, she married Edward II while still in her teens, and bore him several children. Isabella found little joy in her marriage and tenure as queen, however. Edward II readily shunned his wife and engaged in romantic relationships with other men whom he appointed to his privy council and whose advice left England teetering on the edge of civil war and anarchy several times. Whether out of frustration over her husband's homosexual behavior or genuine desire to see England stabilize, Isabella together with her eldest son, also named Edward, returned to France.

From there, she publicly declared that she would not travel back to England, famously declaring "someone hast come between my husband and myself."[62] However, Isabella did return to England, and together with the English nobility, headed by Roger Mortimer, Baron Mortimer, she deposed her husband and crowned her son King Edward III. While her son played the spectacle, Isabella kept all real authority to herself and Roger Mortimer. By then, the pair were openly living together, despite Roger's status as a married man, and readily engaged in sexual activity without having signed a formal marriage contract.[63]

Isabella acted as regent for four years, from 1326 to 1330. During this time, she shared power with Roger, whom she created Earl of March. Edward III eventually overthrew his mother, and executed Roger on the grounds of treason. Though Isabella was undoubtedly guilty of the same – indeed she was the mastermind behind Edward II's deposition and probably his death – Edward III graciously allowed his mother to retire from public life on a generous pension. Why he did so we will never know. It may have been a son's love for his mother, the knowledge that Edward II was an ineffectual ruler and Isabella's actions were somewhat justified, or that he feared negative repercussions from the nobility if he were to put his mother to the block.[64]

Men's intolerance towards women in positions of authority did not change until 1553. The teenage Edward VI, possibly suffering from tuberculosis, soon realized that he would not live long enough to marry or have children, leaving the Crown with no clear male successor. In writing his "De[v]ise for the Sucession," Edward VI originally

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[62] Helen Castor, *She-Wolves: Women who Ruled England Before Elizabeth* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011), 292.
[63] Castor, 290-300.
[64] Castor, 315-21.

recorded that, for lack of any children, the throne would pass to the nonexistent "heires males" of his first cousin one removed, the Lady Jane Grey. He likely wrote this sometime in early 1553, before he or his councilors realized the seriousness of his degenerative disease, that Edward VI would not live past July. To correct this error, Edward VI hastily scribbled between the margins of his devise, altering his original statement to read the Lady Jane Grey "*and her* heires males."[65] Before, Jane was merely the vessel that would pass on her claim to her eventual sons – she could neither claim the Crown for herself nor rule in her own right. But with two simple words, she became Edward VI's virtual heir apparent. The fact that Jane was deposed nine days after Edward VI's death – making Jane the shortest reigning monarch in English history and earning her the soubriquet "Nine Days' Queen" – did nothing to demean the rights of women in England or reestablish the traditional roles assigned them. It was Edward VI's eldest half-sister Mary who deposed Jane, and it was Mary who successfully established herself as England's first queen regnant.

Before 1553, when a woman at last obtained the Crown, men displayed an intolerance for women in positions of authority. When an elite woman dared to defy social convention either by taking power for herself or entering into a sexual relationship

[65] Edward VI of England, "Me Deuise for the Sucession," in *Literary Remains of King Edward the Sixth. Edited From his Autograph Manuscripts, With Historical Notes and a Biographical Memoir*, edited by John Nichols (London: J B Nichols and Sons, 25, Parliament Street, 1857), 571. My emphasis. Jane Grey was the granddaughter of Henry VIII's youngest sister Mary, Duchess of Suffolk. In his various acts of succession, Henry VIII placed Jane Grey behind his son Edward VI, and his daughters, Mary and Elizabeth. Being a staunch Protestant, Edward VI probably did not wish to leave his throne to his half-sister Mary, a well-known Catholic sympathizer. Rather than attempt to navigate the inevitable legal complications of passing over Catholic Mary while still keeping Protestant Elizabeth, Edward VI most likely skipped both his sisters in favor of Jane who shared Edward VI's faith. For reasons unknown, both Henry VIII and Edward VI excluded Jane's mother Frances Brandon, who was still living at the time of Edward VI's death. Since she carried the blood royal, under normal circumstances the mother would precede the daughter. Nonetheless, Frances seems to have been content with being passed over, and never pressed her claim to the Crown. See Appendix E: The House of Tudor.

outside of marriage, she became an abnormality. Instead of being quarrelsome or sharp-tonged, a noble woman controlled her assets directly, or at least attempted to do so, and asserted her right to rule. Rather than a physical deformity, a noble woman engaged in sexual relationships while unmarried or married to someone else. A noble woman could display one of these attributes – there is no evidence that the Empress Matilda ever entered a sexual relationship with anyone other than her two husbands – or both, just as Isabella of France did. Yet, despite England's apparent aversion to women like Matilda and Isabella, women continued to gain rights and power throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth century.

When a woman did gain power prior to 1553, there was inevitably a male pushback. One of the ways their enemies sought to remove them from power and rebalance whatever anxieties their positions may have upset was to accuse them of sorcery. As we will explore, this repeated itself several times, occurring in the cases of Joan of Navarre, Eleanor Cobham, Jacquetta of Luxembourg, Elizabeth Woodville, and Anne Boleyn. The goal of these chapters is to understand what made elite women vulnerable to a witchcraft accusation in England during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, to add the growing movement both in witchcraft historiography of societal instabilities as triggers for witch-hunts and of women's personal agency during the early modern period. This project will highlight the years and events that made it possible for Anne Boleyn to mount her scaffold in May of 1536 and become the first and only queen of England to face execution. It was not a unique nor an isolated event, but rather the result of nearly a century's worth of precedents that made clear the susceptibility of elite women to witchcraft.

In that, elite women who were exceptionally wealthy, influential, and who attempted to take control of English Crown, were the most likely candidates to be associated with witchcraft. In other words, a noble woman who defied male-created social conventions. Such association could come either in the form of a direct accusation – such as Eleanor Cobham and Elizabeth Woodville – or the association could be more subtle during her life, with a charge appearing posthumously. Anne Boleyn is perhaps the best example of such a case. A woman's enemies readily used the accusation to vilify her and remove her from a position of authority. The context of these accusations also reveal they took place during periods of political disunity. By charging these women with sorcery, their enemies used them as scapegoats to explain the difficulties and anxieties their society was experiencing at the moment the accusation took place and restore themselves to power or establish their right to rule.

CHAPTER 1: WHY NOBLE WOMEN?
THE SOCIOECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES

Between 1419 and 1536, five English noble women, including three queen consorts, stood accused of witchcraft: Joan of Navarre, queen of Henry IV; Eleanor Cobham, Duchess of Gloucester; Jacquetta of Luxembourg, Duchess of Bedford and Countess Rivers; Elizabeth Woodville, queen of Edward IV; and Anne Boleyn, queen of Henry VIII. Unsurprisingly, the lives of these women display a distinct pattern. Beginning with the accession of Henry IV in 1399, England would experience several turbulent episodes marked by disharmony and conflict. Questions over rights to authority – and rights to those who had authority – led to political disunity, which, for these women, would result in a witchcraft accusation. This discord would reach its peak after the early death of Henry V in 1422, and from this point, a series of unexpected deaths, weak kings, powerful nobles, and children sitting on thrones would ignite an era of tension and unrest. Therefore, it is not hard to understand why England saw its first accused witches during this period. As previous historians asserted, people wanted – if not needed – an explanation for disorder, just as those in power required legitimacy. As we shall explore, these women and their accusations satisfied both: it granted an origin to turmoil and validity to those who would wield authority.

This chapter will explore the socioeconomic and political roots of these accusations. To achieve this, it is necessary to examine the lives of these women, to see the events that surrounded these accusations. In this chapter, I argue that the frequently experienced periods of social disharmony and political disunity in England throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries led women in positions of authority to serve as

scapegoats. By accusing a powerful woman of witchcraft or associating her with the stereotypes of a witch, their enemies found a way to relieve pressure and assign blame during turbulent episodes, and to reunify the nation and restore communal tranquility. This was especially true of women who came from common or distantly aristocratic backgrounds and rose through the ranks of society to become noble – the lower her birth, the more vulnerable she became.

Joan of Navarre

In 1419, King Henry V of England prepared to conqueror France and at last end The Hundred Years' War. Late that year, Henry V began negotiating the Treaty of Troyes with Charles VI of France. The treaty – which both kings signed on 21 May 1420 – would force Charles VI to transfer the line of succession of the French Crown from his son Prince Charles, Dauphin of Viennois, to Henry V by acknowledging the Dauphin as illegitimate. The treaty would also require Henry V to marry the Princess Catherine of Valois, Charles VI's youngest daughter, with their eventual heirs succeeding to the Crowns of both England and France.[66] Henry V's ancestors long claimed the French throne, and, at last, he stood at the edge victory, achieving the ambition that was both his and theirs. The two nations would finally stand united under one king, one crown, one family, one royal line.[67]

Despite this momentous occasion, the two kingdoms were far from peace. Dauphin Charles, as one would expect, refused to acknowledge the treaty's validity and

[66] Musée des Documents Étrangers: Grands documents de l'histoire de France. Pièces concernant les relations de la, France avec les pays ètrangers, 21 mai 1420, AE / III / 254, Archives Nationales de France, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, Paris. Accessed 5 January 2020. https://www.siv.archives-nationales.culture.gouv.fr/siv/rechercheconsultation/consultation/ir/consultationIR.action?irId=FRAN_IR_055193&udId=A1_171&details=true&gotoArchivesNums=false&auSeinIR=true.

[67] See Appendix A: English Claim to the French Crown.

accept his new status as a bastard. As such, he retreated south to the Loire Valley to the estates and protection of Yolande of Aragon, where he married her daughter Marie of Anjou and attempted to rally the French forces behind him.[68] Simultaneously, in England Henry V's councilors scrambled to find a solution to an impending economic collapse. War was a costly business, and although Henry V was unequivocally the new heir of France, if he meant to keep his newly fashioned empire and maintain his victory, he would need to extinguish his remaining rivals – namely, the Dauphin Charles and his supporters. It was a feat he could not accomplish without securing more funds from the English government, which already teetered on the verge of bankruptcy. An increase on taxes, the obvious solution, would undoubtedly spark domestic unrest.

In response to the growing crisis, in October 1419 Henry V ordered his regency council to issue a bill of attainder against his stepmother, the Queen Dowager Joan of Navarre. In addition to confiscating her property, the bill also accused Joan of "the most evil and terrible [crime] imaginable" – witchcraft.[69] An unpopular, extremely wealthy, twice-widowed, middle aged woman, Joan was the perfect target. The council soon placed her under arrest and sized control of her assets. Quick to put his stepmother's fortune to a more practical use, Henry V used Joan's wealth and estates to pay off some his debts and continue his war with France. Due in no small part to Joan's imprisonment, the signing of the Treaty of Troyes went forward, as did Henry V's marriage to Catherine

[68] The situation was further complicated by those French nobles, collectively called the Armagnac faction, who refused to accept the Treaty of Troyes while simultaneously believing Dauphine Charles illegitimate. Instead, they recognized his cousin Charles of Valois, Duke of Orléans, and the rightful heir to France. However, the Duke's claim was short lived. He was an English prisoner of war from 1415 until 1440, making a bid for power by him impossible and by his supporters extremely difficult. For more on this topic, see Helen Castor, *She-Wolves: Women who Ruled England Before Elizabeth* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011), 330-40; and Michael Hicks, *The Wars of the Roses* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 56.
[69] Chris Given-Wilson, ed., *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England 1275-1504*, vol. 9, *Henry V: 1413-1422* (London: The National Archives, 2005), 236.

of Valois on 2 June 1420. Henry V had both successfully avoided an economic collapse and continued to secure his victory over France.

Unbeknownst to him, when Henry V accused Joan of witchcraft, he created a dangerous precedent that would last for generations. Almost twenty years later, when England was once again facing an internal crisis, Eleanor Cobham, who rose through class ranks to become the Duchess of Gloucester, would also stand accused of witchcraft, charged with having used sorcery to divine and procure the death of King Henry VI of England. Similarly, just as the Wars of the Roses reached their peak, Jacquetta of Luxembourg, Duchess of Bedford and Countess Rivers, would stand accused along with her daughter Queen Elizabeth Woodville of using magic to seduce and marry King Edward IV.

Despite her notoriety as England's first 'witch-queen,' only a select number of scholars have written on Joan of Navarre. This may be because of the limited records of her still extant, or because some historians have believed her life and legacy relatively insignificant. In her own time, Joan would lead no armies, claim no victories, control no governments. She was neither exceptionally intelligent nor a great patron of the arts. Although she could boast an impressive lineage, Navarre was only a minor kingdom, even in her own time. One scholar wrote that Joan "[was], in most respects, not of outstanding note."[70] The most complete picture of Joan comes from Agnes Strickland, whose twelve-volume series *Lives of the Queens of England* covers all English queens, both consort and regnant, from Matilda of Flanders to Anne of Great Britain. Although

[70] Alec Reginald Myers, "The Captivity of a Royal Witch: The Household Accounts of Queen Joan of Navarre, 1419-21," *The John Rylands Library* 24, no. 2 (1940): 263, accessed 27 August 2017, https://luna.manchester.ac.uk/luna/servlet/detail/Manchester~25~25~1073~196989.

she published her works around 1854, Strickland's detailed biography retains its status as one of the most significant works concerning her life. Unlike other historians, Strickland showcases both Joan's unconventional entrance into English politics and how she navigated her roles as queen, wife, and mother, in addition to her status as an imprisoned witch. Although Joan probably never intended to make a grand spectacle of herself during her lifetime, as we shall see, she most certainly stood out as a particularly notable queen consort.

Joan of Navarre first entered unto the English stage when, on 20 March 1402, she married by proxy King Henry IV of England. The union proved a surprise to their contemporaries, as they previously made no public announcement of their betrothal. Henry IV and Joan had probably only met in person once before during Henry IV's temporary exile in 1399, meaning that their meeting would have been brief.[71] Evidently, Henry IV remembered Joan fondly, and apparently the feeling was mutual.[72] The pair had probably planned to wed not long after the death of John IV, Duke of Brittany, Joan's first husband, around which time Henry IV claimed the English throne. Soon after her husband's death, Joan wrote to Benedict XIII, the Pope in Avignon, asking for a dispensation to marry any man with the fourth degree of consanguinity, which he nonchalantly granted.[73] Simultaneously, Henry IV wrote to Boniface IX, the Pope in

[71] Henry IV's cousin Richard II was still on the throne, and responsible for Henry IV's exile. See Appendix B: The House of Plantagenet and its Cadet Branches, the Houses of York and Lancaster.
[72] Agnes Strickland, "Joanna of Navarre, Queen of Henry IV," in *Lives of the Queens of England: From the Norman Conquest; Now First Published from Official Records and Other Authentic Documents, Private as Well as Public*, vol. 3, (1854; repr., Miami: HardPress Publishing, 2016), 73-8.
[73] The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 declared marriage between persons of or between the fourth degree of consanguinity illegal, counting back to the nearest common ancestor. Since Joan of Navarre and Henry IV were, at the neatest relation, third cousins as the great-great grandchildren of King Philip IV of France, their union would be illegal under Catholic law – a papal dispensation would absolve them of this, and validate the marriage in the eyes of the Church.

Rome who stood in opposition to Benedict XIII, asking for the same; again, the pope agreed.[74] After surrendering the regency of her son, John V of Brittany to her uncle Philip II of Burgundy, Joan departed Brittany for England in November of 1402, arriving not long thereafter. On 7 February 1403, Joan and Henry IV were married in person at Winchester Cathedral, and on 26 February Joan made her formal entry into London as queen consort of England.[75] Records indicate that Joan was content in her second marriage, and, although unpopular among the English people, she enjoyed a close relationship with both her husband and her stepchildren.[76]

Henry IV died nearly ten years later, on 20 March 1413. To ensure Joan would remain provided for, Henry IV recorded in his Last Will that "the Quene [Joan] be endoyed of the Duche of [Lancaster]," an act that would grant her financial independence for the rest of her life.[77] Additionally, the bequest also signaled the immense respect and love Henry IV had for Joan, as the duchy not only lent its name to the new royal house, but was also significant to him personally, it being the place of his birth and childhood

[74] Strickland, 79-81. For more on the schism between Boniface IX and Benedict XIII, see Edwin Mullins, *The Popes of Avignon: A Century in Exile* (Katonah, NY: BlueBridge, 2007), 220-8.
[75] Strickland, 84.
[76] See for example, Records of various departments, arranged artificially according to type, Special Collections: Ancient Petitions, Petitions to the king, the king and council, to the council, to the Parliament, and the like, 8/248/12366, The National Archives, Kew, London. This petition, submitted by Joan to Henry IV, describe offenses of "Tikhill," a man who refused to surrender some muniments relating to a manor belonging Joan in Moor End. See also Records of various departments, arranged artificially according to type, Special Collections: Ancient Petitions, Petitions to the king, the king and council, to the council, to the Parliament, and the like, 8/229/11446, The National Archives, Kew, London. Here, Joan petitions her husband again, this time for rights to wardship of a local lord within her lands still in his minority, which would customarily fall to her. An unnamed person holds custody of the lord, and refuses to surrender him to Joan. For more on her relationship with her stepchildren, see Strickland, 95.
[77] Henry VI of England, "Henry the Fourth," in *A Collection of All the Wills, Now Known to be Extant, of the Kings and Queens of England, Princes and Princesses of Wales, and Every Branch of the Blood Royal, From the Reign of William the Conqueror, to that of Henry the Seventh Exclusive: With Explanatory Notes, and a Glossary*, edited by John Nichols (London: [illegible], 1780), 204.

home.[78] Despite the death of her husband, Joan, now merely queen dowager, appears to have continued to enjoy a close relationship with Henry V, her stepson and Henry IV's successor. If Henry V ever felt jaded by his father for effectively making Joan the duchess of Lancaster in all but name, he certainly never gave any indication of it. Indeed, it appears that he may have also held his stepmother in high regard. When he departed for France in 1415 to continue The Hundred Years' War, he may have allowed Joan to exert her influence on the ruling council he installed in his absence, and may have given her a measure of authority over the councilors. Although some historians question the precise nature of Joan's control, if any, many agree that Joan was "treated with higher consideration than was ever shown to a queen-dowager of [England] who was not also queen-mother."[79] Unfortunately, their close relationship would not endure.

In late 1415, English and French forces met at the Battle of Agincourt. The decisive English victory was a pivotal event, and the tide of The Hundred Years' War turned in favor of England. Henry V captured numerous French commanders, bringing them to England as prisoners of war. Among them was Arthur of Brittany, one of Joan of Navarre's sons by her first marriage. Joan and Arthur's reunion was emotional and brief, as Henry V had his stepbrother imprisoned first in the Tower of London and then at Fotheringay Castle. [80] Joan attempted multiple times to intercede on behalf of Arthur, and, while Henry V continued to treat his stepmother with the great respect he had

[78] When Henry IV overthrew his cousin Richard II, he ended the line of Plantagenet kings and established the House of Lancaster as the new royal house. See Appendix B: The House of Plantagenet and its Cadet Branches, the Houses of York and Lancaster.
[79] Strickland, 101. There is no extant record that indicates that Joan was ever formally queen regent, or held a position of authority on Henry V's council. The influence that Strickland refers to may reflect the positions of Henry V's brothers, princes John, Duke of Bedford, and Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, both of whom sat on the council.
[80] Strickland, 103-104.

previously, he refused to negotiate the release of Arthur. However, he may have written to John V, assuring him that he had no quarrel with him personally nor with Brittany per se, that he understood that Arthur had acted independently of his duke's orders.[81]

In 1417 Henry V went on campaign again, leaving as regent his brother Prince John, Duke of Bedford. On 27 September 1419, Prince John and the royal council unexpectedly issued a bill of attainder against Joan. Four days later, the prince regent had his stepmother arrested in her home at Havering-atte-Bower and transferred her to Rotherhithe.[82] Prince John then removed her usual entourage, replacing them with others who met the council's approval, and later placed her in the custody of Sir John Pelham at Pevensey Castle. There she learned that her confessor, John Randolph, had, under what appears to be somewhat uncertain circumstances, been previously arrested, and sent to Normandy to give testimony to Henry V. Upon hearing the confessions of the friar, Henry V issued a proclamation in October of 1419 in which he charged his stepmother with treason in the form of malevolent witchcraft, and formally deprived her of all her property:

> [F]ollowing the information delivered to [Henry V]…both through the account and confession of…John Randolph…and through other [credible] evidence, that Joan, queen of England, had plotted and schemed for the death and destruction of our said lord the king in *the most evil and terrible manner imaginable*…[therefore] all issues, rents, farms…customs, revenues, profits and proceeds issuing and arising from all the castles, manors, lordships, honours, lands…and other possessions of any kind which the same queen had held in dower or otherwise…should be received and kept by the treasurer of England.[83]

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[81] The letter no longer exists, but it is briefly alluded to in a promise Arthur made in 1419 after his release to return to England formally negotiate his ransom. See Records of the Exchequer, and its related bodies, with those of the Office of First Fruits and Tenths, and the Court of Augmentations, Records of the Treasury of the Receipt, Exchequer: Treasury of Receipt: Diplomatic Documents, 30/403, The National Archives, Kew, London. Strickland discusses the letter and the agreement further in her account. See Strickland, 104-105.

[82] Myers, 264.

[83] Given-Wilson, ed., *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England 1275-1504*, vol. 9, *Henry V: 1413-1422*, 236. My emphasis.

Of course, by "in the most evil and terrible manner imaginable," the bill meant sorcery, implying that the queen had employed them to aid in the death of Henry V.[84]

However, after so many years of a close relationship, why did Henry V arrest Joan? What drove him to vilify Joan and charge her with witchcraft? Did Henry V truly believe that his stepmother had conspired with the occult to have him killed? In this instance, Joan's accusation served as a scapegoat for Henry V, allowing him to continue The Hundred Years' War. Her arrest allowed the government to redistribute her assets and continue the financially exhausting war efforts in France. Henry V obviously held firm his belief that supernatural forces were actively working against him – in September 1419, he ordered all bishops in England to say a prayer for him for protection against sorcery and necromancy.[85] Although this act undoubtedly aided in helping others believe that Joan had indeed used some form of malevolent sorcery against the king, Henry V himself apparently believed that Joan was not the source. Joan never faced trial for these charges, continued to live a comfortable if not lavish lifestyle, and – most glaringly – would be fully absolved of her charges a few weeks before Henry V's death on his orders. The necessity of Joan's arrest then appears to rise from two bases: her French connections and her enormous wealth.

Agincourt represented a decisive victory for the English and a devastating loss for the French. The battle likely led to conflicting emotions for Joan – her adopted nation and stepson had won a great victory, yet both her son-in-law and cousin perished at the

[84] Given-Wilson, ed., *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England 1275-1504*, vol. 9, *Henry V: 1413-1422* 263.
[85] Myers, 274.

battle.[86] Her son, Arthur, too had fought, with the English now made him a prisoner of war. Given these facts, Henry V may have felt that his stepmother could no longer adequately set aside her personal feelings concerning The Hundred Years' War. Furthermore, one could not forget the close connection that Joan enjoyed with the French royal family: the House of Évreux, to whom Joan belonged, were related to the House of Valois, with Joan's mother herself a French princess besides. Of course, this was all common knowledge when Joan married Henry IV, and Henry V was not ignorant of his stepmother's French origins and connections. However, the battle of Agincourt now made English victory against the French probable, if not inevitable. When Henry V brought Arthur back as a prisoner, then for Henry V to hear his stepmother's complaints over an enemy's imprisonment, even if said enemy was her own son, perhaps Henry V suddenly realized that his stepmother was not as pro-Anglo as he assumed. Although she remained his stepmother, just as Arthur remained his stepbrother, perhaps now that relation came second. Perhaps now Joan was a French royal first and stepmother second, a dangerous swap to make during The Hundred Years' War.

The necessity for Joan's arrest did not arise solely from her French connections. Indeed, finances also play a significant role here. The ongoing war with France meant increasing demand for funds on the already drained exchequer. During the reign of Henry V, England grossed approximately £56,000 per year, of which the exchequer allotted £52,000 for the support of the army and the defense of the realm, leaving only £4,000 to pay the various salaries, wages, and pensions, including Joan's dowry, as well as to support the royal household, royal embassies, and the income due to clerk of the navy.

[86] John I, Duke of Alençon and Count of Perche, and Charles I of Albret, respectively.

This is did not include any payments towards debts owed by the Crown, for which the exchequer could not hope to make any provision.[87] With the only solution being an increase on taxes, Henry V's ruling council began to fear that the added pressure might result in public protests and other domestic disturbances that would require Henry V to return from France and regain control of England. With victory over the French now possible, it is unlikely that Henry V would abandon his campaign – not with Paris so near.[88] Unless the council wished to take responsibility for an economic collapse, then they must find a way to obtain the necessary funds, urgently.

Joan was probably one of the richest women in England at this time. Although her household accounts prior to her arrest have since been lost, we know for certain that she received 10,000 marks a year from the exchequer as part of her dowry, in addition to the profits from the duchy of Lancaster, and whatever funds she retained as both a Navarrese princess and wife of one duke of Brittany and mother to the next.[89] Although Henry V might have merely asked politely for funds from his stepmother, it is unlikely she would agree to hand over her vast fortune to the man who had so recently imprisoned her son. The quickest way to access her fortune, continue the war, and ensure that she had no sympathizers who might protest her imprisonment, was then to charge her with a most "evil and terrible" crime imaginable – malevolent sorcery.[90]

However, despite her imprisonment, Joan continued to live a rather luxurious lifestyle. Account records indicate that she rode her horses daily, purchased various bolts

[87] Myers, 275.
[88] Myers, 275.
[89] Records of various departments, arranged artificially according to type, Special Collections: Ancient Petitions, Petitions to the king, the king and council, to the council, to the Parliament, and the like, Individual petitions, 80/3963, The National Archives, Kew, London.
[90] Given-Wilson, ed., *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England 1275-1504*, vol. 9, *Henry V: 1413-1422*, 236; Myers, 274.

of expensive cloth, including miniver fur, Tartarin silk, and Flemish linen, to make new clothes for herself and her household, which consisted of at least nineteen grooms and seven pages. Other purchases include a girdle and rosary both made of gold; an ewer, bucket, pendant, and table knives of silver-gilt; she also ordered the repair of a silver-gilt clock, a harp, and a birdcage for one of her "jays."[91] Additionally, she ordered various quantities of foreign wine – Gascon, Rochelle, and Rhenish being the most common – which she used to entertain the visitors she received, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Winchester, the Baron de Camoys, as well as her stepson Prince Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester.[92] She routinely bestowed monetary gifts on her servants.[93] Although her expenditures decreased over time, this probably indicates that she was, by now, settled into her new home – if one could call it that. It should not be taken as a sign that the royal council, who funded her imprisonment, were attempting to reign in her spending.[94] These expenses imply that Joan was living in comfort and style, as one would expect a queen dowager to do, not as a prisoner charged with a crime as heinous as witchcraft. Nonetheless, it was still undoubtedly a relief to the exchequer to have the funds and property from Joan; the luxury she enjoyed as a prisoner cost only a fraction of what it did before.[95]

Despite her imprisonment, Joan never faced a formal trial for her crimes. A trial would have proved a demanding and expensive feat, and an innocent verdict would mean

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[91] Account Book of the household of Joan of Navarre, Manuscripts, Notebooks, Latin MS 238, John Rylands Library (The University of Manchester Library), Manchester, United Kingdom.
[92] It is unclear if the Lord Camoys described here is Thomas de Camoys (d. 1421) or his grandson Hugh (b. 1413), or some combination between the two. See Myers, 269.
[93] Account Book of the household of Joan of Navarre, Manuscripts, Notebooks, Latin MS 238, John Rylands Library (The University of Manchester Library), Manchester, United Kingdom.
[94] Myers, 266-8.
[95] Her imprisonment probably cost around £700 annually, saving the exchequer nearly £6,000 a year. For more on this subject, see Myers, 276.

that Henry V had no reason to confiscate his stepmother's property. On the other hand, a guilty verdict might warrant execution, just as King Arthur ordered Guinevere to burn in the Arthurian legends.[96] Neither her son John V of Brittany nor her brother Charles III of Navarre were likely to take kindly to Joan's death at the hands of Henry V, meaning that both could still cast their lot in with the French, if only to make English victory that much more difficult. It would have been easier – and more financially sound – to allow Joan to continue living in her comfortable prison, than go through the arduous process of trial. Besides, Henry V had what he wanted, and it would have been difficult for to Joan complain about her current living conditions. The situation was suitable for now.

The final indication that finances were behind Joan's charges lies in one of Henry V's last dictates to his royal council, in July 1422. By that time, Henry V had forced the Treaty of Troyes, which recognized himself as the heir of Charles VI of France. He also married Charles VI's daughter, Princess Catherine of Valois, and by her fathered a son named in his honor, Henry. Having seemingly won The Hundred Years' War, he proclaimed:

> Howbeit we have taken into our hand…the dowers of our [step]mother…[Joan], except a certain pension thereof yearly…we, doubting lest it should be a charge unto our conscience for to occupy forth longer the said dower in the wise, the…charge [of witchcraft] we be advised no longer to bear on our conscience, will and charge [the royal council]…[to] make deliverance unto our said [step]mother, the queen, wholly of her said dower, and suffer her to receive it as she did heretofore…[a]nd because we suppose she will soon remove from the palace where she now is, [we] ordain [for] her horses…and let her remove [herself] into whatsoever palace [pleases her] within our realm.[97]

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[96] No royal person, besides Guinevere in the Arthurian legends, had been accused of sorcery at this point, and it is not improbable to think that courts may have turned to the legends in search of precedent. See for example Thomas Malory, *Le Morte d' Arthur: Sir Thomas Malory's Book of King Arthur and His Noble Knights of the Round Table*, introduction by Edward Strachey and preface by William Caxton (1899; repr., Lawrence, KS: Digireads, 2017), 194, 653-4. Although Malory published his work in 1485, several decades after Joan's arrest, courts could have drawn on the same tales that Malory used to create his work.
[97] Strickland, 109-10.

That this declaration came after Henry V's many victories is no coincidence. He was officially the heir to the ailing French king, and his son-in-law besides. His line was secure since the birth of his son. Although he continued military conquests in France, capturing the cities of Dreux and Meaux, he probably had little need of his stepmother's dowry by now – it had served its purpose. The War was, at last, coming to end.

While the return of Joan's funds probably gave the exchequer a headache, having once more to account for the enormous sum she was due, grim news arrived from France. After a nine-year reign, Henry V drew his last breath at the Château de Vincennes, probably dying from dysentery, which he most likely contracted during one of his sieges. He was thirty-five years old. The Crown then fell to his not quite two-year-old son, whom he had never actually seen, who began his reign as Henry VI.

Prince John, Duke of Bedford, ascended to the regency of his young nephew, and continued to allow his stepmother to withdraw her due pension from the exchequer. He also restored to her Havering-atte-Bower, which she made her private residence.[98] Joan continued to enjoy favor under Prince John and his brother, the effective co-regent Prince Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester. The last documentation we have of Joan records a fire at her residence in Langley, for which she received funds to compensate her losses.[99] She

[98] Joan appears to have had some trouble recovering her property, much of which had been redistributed during her arrest. See for example Records of various departments, arranged artificially according to type, Special Collections: Ancient Petitions, Petitions to the king, the king and council, to the council, to the Parliament, and the like, Individual petitions, 8/194/9697, The National Archives, Kew, London; Records of various departments, arranged artificially according to type, Special Collections: Ancient Petitions, Petitions to various officers of state, Individual petitions, 8/308/15366, The National Archives, Kew, London; and Records of various departments, arranged artificially according to type, Special Collections: Ancient Petitions, Petitions to the king, the king and council, to the council, to the Parliament, and the like, Individual petitions, 8/80/3963, The National Archives, Kew, London. These petitions address property held by Joan that Henry V confiscated, then gave away to others. In most cases, the council assented to Joan's demands.

[99] Records of various departments, arranged artificially according to type, Special Collections: Ancient Petitions, Petitions to the king, the king and council, to the council, to the Parliament, and the like, Individual petitions, 158/7900, The National Archives, Kew, London; Strickland, 113-114.

died on 10 June 1437, in Havering-atte-Bower. Henry VI granted his step-grandmother a public funeral fitting of her status, before interring her at Canterbury Cathedral in Kent, beside Henry IV.[100]

Between Joan's enormous dowry, the strain on the English economy due to The Hundred Years' War, the comfortable lifestyle she enjoyed while imprisoned, and the lack of a formal trial, it is clear that the basis of Joan's accusations were economic. She successfully served as a scapegoat and solved the turmoil surrounding the war. If Henry V had not accused his stepmother, England may have fallen into a severe recession, leaving him unable to continue his conquest of France. However, while Henry V managed to stabilize England's economy during his lifetime using Joan's dowry, albeit temporarily, his death would leave the kingdom in political turmoil, both as the tide of the war changed and as questions over the rights to the regency began to arise. Unsurprisingly, this would lead to the discovery of other royal witches, beginning with Joan's step-daughter-in-law, Eleanor Cobham. Accusing Joan had solved much of England's economic issues – perhaps naming another royal witch would solve its political ones as well.

Eleanor Cobham, Duchess of Gloucester

When Henry V died, his councilors and family attempted to rally behind his legacy and ensure that his victory in The Hundred Years' War remained secure. If there had been a clear leader who could keep everyone united, the attempt may have succeeded. Unfortunately, the situation soon deteriorated as three main figures emerged as potential regents for the infant Henry VI: John, Duke of Bedford, and Humphrey,

[100] Strickland, 114-16.

Duke of Gloucester, brothers to Henry V; and Henry, Cardinal Beaufort, uncle to Henry V, John, and Humphrey.[101] While John eventually emerged as the clear front runner, his early death would leave a void that both Humphrey and Henry attempted to fill. The disagreements between these two potential regents quickly led to disunity. As each struggled for power, they soon sought ways to discredit one another, including arresting Humphrey's wife, Eleanor Cobham, on the charges of malevolent sorcery.

Despite Eleanor's extraordinary life and her role as one of England's premier ladies, few primary sources detail her life. One of the only records still extant is her indictment file from 1441. Unlike Joan of Navarre, Eleanor came from an unimpressive background, and it is not improbable that she was illiterate. However, the two women share the fact that they both stood accused of witchcraft. Joan had been queen, and Eleanor – if one believes charges and rumors – almost became queen. Additionally, the source of the accusations against Eleanor is similar to the ones against Joan; Eleanor served as a scapegoat, to relieve societal and political pressure during the minority of Henry VI, and to solve the matter of the regency concerning the young king. The primary difference is that Joan never stood trial. Eleanor not only faced a court of judges, but was found guilty, and publicly punished for her crimes.

Eleanor first formally entered English politics when she married Prince Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, a younger son of Henry IV, in 1428. Their relationship had not been without scandal. Eleanor was the daughter of Reynold Cobham, 3rd Baron Sterborough, and became a lady-in-waiting to Jacqueline, Countess of Hainaut, shortly before the Countess herself married Prince Humphrey in 1423. Eleanor became

[101] Catherine of Valois, queen of Henry V and mother of Henry VI, never emerged as potential regent, probably due to her gender, young age, and foreign status. See Appendix D: The House of Lancaster.

Humphrey's mistress soon afterwards. In 1428, Pope Martin V annulled Jacqueline's marriage on the basis that her previous marriage to John IV, Duke of Brabant, was still valid at the time of her union with Humphrey. Given that John had died earlier that year, Jacqueline and Humphrey might have simply remarried – they had yet to produce any children, which only made remedying the matter more straightforward.[102] However, Humphrey decided to set Jacqueline aside and marry Eleanor instead. While the match initially produced idle gossip, the pair eventually joined the royal court, where Eleanor grew close with Humphrey's brothers – including Prince John, Duke of Bedford, and his wife Jacquetta of Luxembourg – as well as her nephew, Henry VI, who apparently well liked his new aunt.[103]

During this time, Prince John, Duke of Bedford, formally held the regency for the infant Henry VI. As such, he managed successfully to keep England's political framework intact and maintain the legacy of his elder brother, Henry V. Records indicate that John readily dedicated himself to affairs of state, working closely with the ruling council and his brother Humphrey to maintain the realm's security.[104] Under John,

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[102] Children who were born before their parents' union often faced questions of legitimacy, such as the children of John of Gaunt and Katherine Swynford (née de Roet), who were married in 1396 with their last child having been born in 1379. While they eventually obtained legitimacy for their children in both the eyes of the Church and State in 1397 – Richard II of England and Pope Boniface IX issuing separate decrees – Henry IV later barred them and their descendants from the English throne, adding *excepta regali dignitate* (except royal status) to the declaration issued by Richard II, whom he overthrew. The children of John of Gaunt and Katherine Swynford became the first members of the House of Beaufort, the name deriving from John of Gaunt's French holdings in Montmorency-Beaufort. For more on the legitimacy of the Beauforts, see Hicks, 225-53.

[103] David Baldwin, *Elizabeth Woodville: Mother of the Princes in the Tower*, 2nd ed. (Stroud: The History Press, 2010), 150. See also, Arlene Okerlund, *Elizabeth: England's Slandered Queen* (Stroud: The History Press, 2009), 114.

[104] Records of various departments, arranged artificially according to type, Special Collections: Ancient Petitions, Petitions to the king, the king and council, to the council, to the Parliament, and the like, Individual petitions, 8/147/7348, The National Archives, Kew, London. This petition to John, which describes him as "Prince Regent of the realm and of France," asks that a man named John de Walton be allowed to enter a manor belonging to an adversary. A lowly petition such as this highlights Prince John's dedication to his role as regent. See also Records of various departments, arranged artificially according to type, Special Collections: Ancient Correspondence of the Chancery and the Exchequer, 1/43/191, The

England appears to have stayed politically unified. Unfortunately, that stability would come to end on 15 September 1435 when John suddenly died, just a few years before his stepmother Joan of Navarre. He left behind a young wife, Jacquetta of Luxembourg, no legitimate issue, and an empty seat on the royal council.

With the most powerful position in England – besides the Crown – left vacant, two members of the royal family attempted to claim it. Humphrey was the obvious choice. He was Henry VI's nearest living relative, and the only remaining brother of Henry V. Humphrey's claim was also supported by Henry V's Last Will.[105] Ultimately, the position of regent fell instead to Humphrey's half-uncle, Henry, Cardinal Beaufort, who contested Humphrey's right and quickly ousted him from the royal council. The situation, as one might expect, failed to satisfy neither Humphrey nor Eleanor.

The Duke of Bedford's death changed much in Eleanor's life, and, if she played her cards right, could bring even greater change. Humphrey may not have become regent, but he was now heir presumptive to the young, unmarried, and childless Henry VI. Thanks to the efforts of Jeanne d'Arc, who successfully led the French army in reconquering much of its Anglo-occupied territory, England's anticipated victory in The Hundred Years' War following Agincourt began to slip away. Coupled with the disagreements between the members of the royal family over the regency, this defeat meant the political fabric of England, which Prince John had so carefully maintained, had begun to fray. England needed a strong leader if it meant to stay politically unified. Humphrey was both a seasoned military leader, having successfully led the defense of

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National Archives, Kew, London. This correspondence between John and Humphrey discusses an upcoming state visit from the king of Scots, presumably James I. This showcases the trust John had in Humphrey, and the high role that Humphrey played on the council.

[105] Henry V of England, "Henry the Fifth," in *A Collection of All the Wills,* edited by Nichols, 237-41.

Calais during The Hundred Years' War, and an experienced politician who served on the regency council since Henry V's death, and had at one point acted as Chief Justice of South Wales.[106] He may have been the leader that England needed to complete what Henry V started. Moreover, if Henry VI were to die and Humphrey become king, it would make Eleanor undisputed queen of England, a fact that no one failed to notice.

By 1441, Eleanor had visited – or was in the process of visiting – Margery Jourdemayne, better known as the Witch of Eye Next Westminster. The precise nature of their meetings is unknown. Eleanor would later claim that she wished to obtain potions that would help her conceive.[107] However, Roger Bolingbroke, a cleric in her household who had been arrested on charges of sorcery, claimed that Eleanor visited Margery for the purposes of divination, to enquire if Henry VI would die young, and, if not, how to ensure that he did.[108] Upon learning of these accusations, Henry VI, under the advice of his council including Henry, Cardinal Beaufort, immediately arrested Eleanor on charges of witchcraft.[109]

Based on the precedent set by Joan of Navarre's charges, Eleanor might have hoped for a slow process. She probably expected to be confined to a comfortable house

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[106] Records of the Exchequer, and its related bodies, with those of the Office of First Fruits and Tenths, and the Court of Augmentations, Records of the Exchequer of Receipt and successors, Exchequer of Receipt: Miscellaneous Rolls, Books and Papers, 407/198, The National Archives, Kew, London. See also Records of various departments, arranged artificially according to type, Special Collections: Ancient Petitions, Petitions to the king, the king and council, to the council, to the Parliament, and the like, Individual petitions, 8/150/7491, The National Archives, Kew, London.

[107] Humphrey is known to have fathered two children, Arthur and Antigone of Gloucester, but whether their mother was Eleanor is unknown. They seem to have both been born outside of marriage, as Eleanor's comments here indicate that they would be unable to succeed to the dukedom. It may also indicate that she was not their mother, or at least was not Arthur's mother, as it would have made more practical sense to push for Arthur's inheritance rather than attempt to conceive another child.

[108] Myers, 272.

[109] Records created, acquired, and inherited by Chancery, and also of the Wardrobe, Royal Household, Exchequer and various commissions, Records of the Chancery as central secretariat, Chancery: Inquisitions Post Mortem, Series I, Henry IV, 137/10/50, The National Archives, Kew, London.

on a generous income for a few years, long enough to do away with any influence she and Humphrey had at court. In that respect, Eleanor's case proved remarkably different from Joan's: Eleanor's trial began quickly. While she defended herself by claiming it was fertility, not malevolency, that drove her to the Witch of Eye Next Westminster, the prosecution won by producing a wax figure in the likeness of Henry VI, which Margery and Eleanor might have melted to procure the death of the young king.[110] The court condemned Eleanor, forcing her to do public penance by walking barefoot through the streets of London on three designated market days, thus allowing more to witness her humiliation. Simultaneously, a religious inquest led by the Archbishop of Canterbury declared Eleanor's marriage to Humphrey invalid, claiming that by using witchcraft she had interfered with his freedom of choice.[111] After the courts stripped her of her status as Duchess of Gloucester, Eleanor began serving her life imprisonment first at the Isle of Man, then at Beaumaris Castle in Anglesey, where she died in 1452.[112]

The death of Prince John, Duke of Bedford, could have been the catalyst that brought civil unrest to England. The divided loyalties as to who should succeed him as regent might have proved the downfall of Henry V's legacy. English losses in France coupled with divided politics made for an uneasy nation. Eleanor's accusation successfully served to discredit Humphrey, preventing him from securing the regency, and allowed England to stay unified under Henry, Cardinal Beaufort. In other words, the charges against Eleanor relieved social and political pressure that England began to

[110] Baldwin, 151.
[111] This is surprising considering that Eleanor probably only met Margaery no later than 1440, twelve years into the marriage. See London: indictments file, trial of Eleanor duchess of Gloucester and others for conspiring and contriving the death of the king by necromancy on 20 June 1440, 1441, Court of King's Bench: Crown Side: Indictments Files, Oyer and Terminer Files and Informations Files, 9/72, The National Archives, Kew, London.
[112] Okerlund, 114.

experience after John's death. However, if anyone hoped that, after Eleanor, England would enter a state of long-term equilibrium, they would be sorely mistaken. The Hundred Years' War was indeed coming to an end, with a French victory now inevitable. The Cousins' War, however, was just beginning.

Jacquetta of Luxembourg & Elizabeth Woodville

Although we cannot know if she attended the trial's proceedings or watched Eleanor's penance, Jacquetta of Luxembourg certainly had cause to follow the events closely. Jacquetta was only nineteen when her husband, Prince John, Duke of Bedford, died. She had probably been close to Eleanor, and was undoubtedly shocked both at the events that took place, and at Eleanor's uncomfortable confinement – the exchequer provided for the ex-duchess only £182 annually for her maintenance, compared to Joan's £700.[113] Both Jacquetta and Eleanor had been premier ladies in England, close to Henry VI, and the wives of two very powerful brothers. While the Crown returned Jacquetta's dowry and granted her dower rights on 6 February 1436, before Eleanor's accusation, she had agreed not to marry again without the king's express consent. However, the Dowager Duchess of Bedford was still young, wealthy, and attractive: a member of the House of Luxembourg by birth, she could trace her ancestry back to both Emperor Charlemagne and Simon de Montfort, who led the baronial opposition to Henry III during the Second Barons' War.[114] Therefore, the marriage Jacquetta contracted between February of 1436 and March of 1437 to Sir Richard Woodville, a member of her late husband's household

[113] Myers, 273.
[114] Baldwin, 2. Jacquetta retained her title after John's death, and continued to use it even after her remarriage and the elevation of her second husband to an earl. See, Petitioners: Jacquetta of Luxembourg, Duchess of Bedford, 1433. Records of various departments, arranged artificially according to type, and formerly entitled Special Collections, Ancient Petitions, 121/6032, The National Archives, Kew, London.

whom she had probably met several years prior, must have shocked contemporaries on two accounts – once for having done so without royal permission, and again for him being so far beneath her in rank.[115]

As punishment, Henry VI fined the couple an enormous sum of £1000 on 23 March 1437. However, both were restored to favor by October that same year. Jacquetta probably delivered her first child around that time, a daughter named Elizabeth; the Woodville child's birth probably aided in the couple's reconciliation with Henry VI.[116] While it is hard to imagine that four-year-old Elizabeth Woodville witnessed Eleanor's walks through London – or if she did, she would probably have been too young to understand the significance – twenty-five year old Jacquetta would have understand the symbolism perfectly. The events most likely left her with a powerful message: magic can taint even the most powerful. Eleanor might have been queen of England, and if Eleanor could lose all her power, title, and marriage in a few short months, then so could Jacquetta. Perhaps she was next. Even as she clutched her toddler's hand, either witnessing or hearing about the torments Eleanor endured, Jacquetta had no idea the lasting influence that message had, that she herself would be accused twice, and the daughter she had delivered would one day be both queen and witch.

Jacquetta of Luxembourg and Elizabeth Woodville are inherently intertwined, both in their status as mother and daughter, and in the accusations of witchcraft they would later face. Although Jacquetta faced her first accusation alone, her second, posthumous, accusation occurred together with her daughter Elizabeth. The Titulus

[115] The spelling of the name Woodville has several contemporary variations, including Wydville, Wydeville, and Widvile. Here I have elected to use Woodville, a modern form of the name.
[116] Baldwin, 2-3.

Regius, which we will explore shortly, stated that Jacquetta and Elizabeth both used magic to seduce King Edward IV of England. It is for these reasons that I have chosen to consider these two women together.

After Eleanor Cobham's trial, Jacquetta and her new husband Richard stayed close to Henry VI. Richard eventually joined the English forces in France during The Hundred Years' War, desperately attempting to recover their losses to little success. Meanwhile, Jacquetta successfully escorted Margaret of Anjou, Henry VI's bride, to England in 1444, eventually becoming a close companion of the new queen. These events likely culminated in Richard's appointment as Baron Rivers in 1448, and later Earl Rivers in 1466.[117]

Richard and Jacquetta may have produced as many as fifteen children during their nearly thirty-two-year marriage, and, of them, Elizabeth Woodville was undoubtedly the eldest. She probably spent her early years with her family in Grafton Regis in Northamptonshire, then a mid-sized village, along with her numerous siblings. Sometime after her seventh birthday, Elizabeth's parents sent her away for fostering as per custom, probably to the nearby estate of Groby in Leicestershire occupied by Sir Edward Grey, a knight who had also married above to his rank, to Lady Elizabeth Ferrers, Baroness Ferrers.[118] Shortly before her departure, or not long thereafter, Elizabeth's parents also

[117] The title Earl Rivers does not refer to a geographic region, but rather to the de Redver family, an old, and by then extinct, English noble family. It is unknown why Richard Woodville received this title, especially since it is unclear, if not improbable, that he shared any common ancestry with the family. Richard may have believed that he did descend from them, or at least he wanted to give the impression that he did so, as he quartered the arms of the de Redver family on his own shield. Perhaps Richard wished to act on the fundability that was medieval ancestry and give the common Woodville name a noble heritage, thus equalizing his marriage and setting himself on similar footing with his noble wife. For more information, see Baldwin, 2-3.

[118] Fostering was a common medieval practice. After leaving the nursey, children would be sent to other estates to continue their education learn and various skills.

negotiated her marriage to John Grey, the son and heir of Edward Grey and Elizabeth Ferrers.[119]

Elizabeth may have married John as early as 1450, and perhaps had born her first child by 1451. However, a bride at thirteen and a mother at fourteen is quite young, even for her time and place.[120] Alternatively, Elizabeth Woodville may have married a few years later, giving birth to her first child in 1454, at age seventeen. It is also possible that she married John in 1450, but, given her young age, the marriage was not consummated until Elizabeth reached a more appropriate age. In any case, she was certainly mother to Thomas Grey by 1455, with another son, Richard Grey, following a few years later.[121] Few primary sources on Elizabeth's life during this time have survived, which may indicate that her life was probably blissfully uneventful, and not altogether dissimilar from other women of her rank; in short, Elizabeth's early life and marriage to John was perhaps delightfully ordinary. She probably lived modestly yet comfortably together with her husband and sons at their manor house at Astley, Warwickshire.[122] However, the end of the 1450s would see drastic change in both England and Elizabeth's life.

By the beginning of the 1460s, the English political framework had once more begun to fray. Political pressure began to build, and a crisis loomed on the horizon, that would soon envelop both Jacquetta and Elizabeth. Although England might have recovered from significant setback in The Hundred Years' War brought on by Jeanne

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[119] Baldwin, 2-3.
[120] Of course, one cannot forget Margaret Beaufort, a bride at twelve, and mother and widow at thirteen; however, her situation is comparatively different from that of Elizabeth Woodville's, primarily in the fact that Margaret was noble, and descended directly from the blood royal. For more on marriage patterns and the ages of brides and grooms at their wedding see Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 3rd ed, New Approaches to European History (Cambridge: University Printing House, 2008), 76-8.
[121] Baldwin, 5.
[122] Baldwin, 5-6.

d'Arc, Henry VI was proving a much weaker ruler than Henry V, and unable to rally his army to defend his French possessions. In the absence of regency council, which disbanded around 1437 when Henry VI reached his majority, he increasingly relied on the advice of Queen Margaret, especially after she bore him his only son, Prince Edward, Prince of Wales, in 1453.[123] After the Battle of Castillon in Gascony earlier that year, the French successfully drove the English from their shores, save for the city of Calais, which partially caused the already unstable Henry VI to suffer a complete mental breakdown.[124]

Eventually, two parties formed in response to the growing political crisis in England: the Lancastrian party, headed officially by Henry VI but de facto by Margaret and her allies, and the Yorkist party, led by Richard, 3rd Duke of York. Henry VI's second cousin once removed, Richard possessed a strong claim to the throne: via the patrilineal line, he descended from Edmund of Langley, the fourth son of Edward III, and, more significantly, via his mother, Anne Mortimer, he also counted Lionel of Antwerp, Duke of Clarence, Edward III's second son, among his ancestors.[125] If one allowed for women to pass on royal claims, this gave Richard a much more direct claim to the throne than Henry VI, who descended from Edward III's third son, John of Gaunt.[126] Contemporaries referred to the succeeding vies for power as The Cousins' War. Later historians gave it a more poetic name – the Wars of the Roses.[127]

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[123] Historians refer to him variably as either Edward of Westminster, for palace of his birth, or Edward of Lancaster, for his royal house.
[124] Baldwin, 6.
[125] See Appendix B: The House of Plantagenet and its Cadet Branches, the Houses of York and Lancaster.
[126] Okerlund, 52. See also Appendix C: The House of York.
[127] Okerlund, 53. The name 'Wars of the Roses' originated from William Shakespeare's play *Henry VI, Part 1*, Act 2 Scene 4, where a group of noble men pluck red and white roses as a symbolic declaration of their allegiance. The Yorkists supporters pick white roses, and Lancaster supporters pick red roses. Historically, supporters of Richard, 3rd Duke of York, sometimes used a white rose as their heraldic symbol, though more often the rose was made of gold. Conversely, the Lancaster red rose was not

Initially, both the Woodvilles and the Greys supported the Lancastrian regime, probably due to their close connections to Henry VI and Margaret. In early 1460, Yorkist armies captured both Elizabeth's father and her brother Anthony. Although neither would come to any physical harm, they both received verbal torments from the Duke of York's eldest son and heir, Edward, Earl of March. Most disastrous for Elizabeth, however, was the second battle at St. Albans in February of 1461, where her husband Sir John Grey perished fighting for Margaret in the Lancastrian army.[128]

Upon learning of her widowhood, Elizabeth probably returned to her mother's house together with her sons. In March that same year, the Earl of March, who by then had succeeded his father as Duke of York, declared himself King Edward IV in opposition to Henry VI. He then moved his forces against the Lancastrians, decisively defeating them at the Battle of Towton. The Lancastrian forces scattered; Henry VI, Margaret, and their son Edward fled to Scotland. Mother and son would later travel to France to seek refuge, and Edward IV would eventually capture Henry VI in 1464. Although some nobles still supported Henry VI, after Towton most of the nation cast their lot with Edward IV, who successfully established the House of York as the ruling dynasty. In time, Elizabeth Woodville proved she was no exception.[129]

After Elizabeth's husband's death, her son Thomas' paternal inheritance came into dispute in 1464 when his grandmother, Elizabeth Ferrers, remarried. Fearing that any children born from this match would precede Thomas in succession, Elizabeth Woodville appealed to William Hastings, Baron Hastings, Edward IV's close friend and effective

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introduced until the reign of Henry VII Tudor. For more on the symbolism of the two houses, see Michael Hicks, *The Wars of the Roses* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 12-14.

[128] Baldwin, 8.

[129] Baldwin, 9.

viceroy in the Midlands, to settle the dispute and guarantee Thomas' rights. Although William claimed he was willing to resolve the matter, his actions – or lack thereof – reveal his lack of enthusiasm towards the problem, perhaps because both the Woodvilles and the Greys had only recently accepted Edward IV and the Yorkist faction as the ruling party.[130] However, Elizabeth would soon prove just how devoted she was to the new king, when, eighteen days after meeting with the somewhat apathetic Baron Hastings, she married Edward IV.

How and when Elizabeth and Edward IV met is debatable. Tradition claims that Elizabeth, upon learning that Edward IV was hunting near her estate, decided to intercept him, and appeal to the king directly to secure Thomas' rights. Standing beneath a great oak tree in Whittleton Forest, clutching her two sons tightly in each hand, she threw herself at the feet of Edward IV. Known for his sexual appetite, Edward IV declared he would secure the boy's rights only if Elizabeth agreed to become his one-time mistress. She refused, even as he placed a dagger at her throat. Taken aback by her beauty, charm, and determination, Edward IV at once fell in love with her. Elizabeth apparently felt the same, and before riding father north to deal with a rising Lancastrian threat from Scotland, Edward IV and Elizabeth married in the presence of her mother, Jacquetta, a local priest, and two other ladies, sometime between 30 April and 1 May 1464.[131]

The newlyweds decided against immediately announcing their union, as Edward IV's councilors and friends likely hoped to secure a foreign match for him so he might integrate himself with the royals of Europe and secure an ally against the Lancasters. His

[130] Baldwin, 10.
[131] Depending on the time the wedding took place, either on the evening of 30 April, or the early hours of 1 May; see Baldwin, 11.

government worked continuously to do just that, and by September that year they proposed a match between him and Bona of Savoy, a sister-in-law of Louis IX of France. Only then did Edward IV admit that he was already married, and not to a foreign princess or noble woman either, but to a relatively common dame of little standing with two young children, and a history of supporting the recently ousted Lancastrian party besides.[132]

Since the couple celebrated their wedding privately – if not secretly – Edward IV decided to make his wife's declaration as queen consort a spectacular affair. Several days of festivities culminated in her coronation on 26 May 1465.[133] Afterwards, Elizabeth used her influence to secure high matches for her numerous siblings and her two young sons: her brother Anthony married Elizabeth de Scales, *suo jure* Baroness Scales, while her brother John wed the elderly Catherine Neville, Dowager Duchess of Norfolk, in a somewhat obvious move to gain control of the Dowager Duchess' wealth. Her sisters, Katherine and Anne, married Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, and William Bourchier, heir to the earldom of Essex, respectively. Her eldest son, Thomas, would later marry his stepfather's niece Anne Holland, the heiress to the dukedom of Exeter, and eventually be created Marquess of Dorset, while her younger son, Richard, would be

[132] While indeed an exciting tale, this part of the story is almost certainly apocryphal, conjured later by court gossip. The tale later spread across Europe, and has since found its way into many dramas that concern Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville. However, the story probably only indicates how contemporary Europe took the news of their meeting, not how it actually happened. If it were true, why did Edward IV wait so long to announce the match? Why did he allow his councilors to contract a foreign marriage if he knew he could not commit to it, thus risking handing an ally to the Lancasters? Furthermore, if Elizabeth expected to marry Edward IV, why entreat William Hastings to secure her son's rights at all? Edward IV certainly refused Bona of Savoy in September of 1464, so it is probable that he had married Elizabeth by then, or at least was on the verge of doing so. In any case, the time between engagement and marriage was probably very short, and certainly by that time he had already fallen in love with Elizabeth Woodville. See Baldwin, 11-2, and Okerlund, 25-30.

[133] Okerlund, 62-3.

knighted in 1475 and later nominated, several times, to The Most Noble Order of the Garter; later still, he would serve in Wales as part of the of the royal council of his half-brother, the Prince of Wales.[134]

Edward IV's reign appears well established by this point – he had a new queen, made powerful alliances via her family, and Henry VI, whom he had captured in 1465, was safely locked away in the Tower of London. However, England was far from politically unified, and many prominent courtiers, including the formidable Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, disapproved of Elizabeth, and began to question Edward IV's right to the Crown.[135] Indeed, Edward IV and Elizabeth had insulted Warwick on two accounts, the first being in their secret marriage. Warwick had been instrumental in establishing Edward IV and the House of York, and had been actively involved in securing the match between Edward IV and Bona of Savoy. Warwick undoubtedly felt betrayed in his king's marriage to the relatively common widowed Elizabeth Woodville. Secondly, he would have been humiliated when Elizabeth arranged for the match between her son Thomas and the heiress Anne Holland, who had been previously engaged to Warwick's nephew, George. Not only did Anne's parents accept the common Thomas over the noble George Neville, but they had done so for only 4,000 marks.[136] Now it was Thomas, not George, who married into Anne's valid claim to the throne; a Woodville had displaced a Neville, and a woman had outwitted Warwick.

These events led Warwick to renew The Cousins' War, and transfer his support to the deposed Henry VI in 1469. Although he managed to imprison Edward IV briefly,

[134] Okerlund, , 77-9.
[135] Baldwin, 21.
[136] Okerlund, 77.

widespread riots allowed Edward IV to escape. Warwick then formed an alliance with Henry IV's wife Margaret, who was then living in France with her son. As a declaration of his support for the Lancasters, Warwick arranged for his daughter to marry Margaret's son. By October of 1470, Warwick successfully reinstated the Lancastrian regime, forcing Edward IV to flee to Flanders. Elizabeth and her mother sought sanctuary at Westminster Abbey, along with her three daughters by Edward IV: Elizabeth (b. 1466), Cecily (b. 1469), and Mary (b. 1467).[137] The following month, she delivered her fourth child by Edward IV. With her husband abroad and herself surrounded by enemies, it is possible that Elizabeth might have surrendered herself to Henry VI and Warwick; her mother had been Henry VI's aunt-by-marriage, and Henry VI had previously held Jacquetta in high regard, as he forgave her for contracting her second marriage illegally. Elizabeth might claim that Edward IV fathered none of her children, leave sanctuary, and readily embrace her Lancastrian roots. However, in naming her newborn son, Elizabeth made clear both the child's paternity and by which king she still stood – Edward.

Indeed, it was unlikely that Elizabeth would capitulate to Warwick, who was by now puppeteering the English Crown via the still mentally unstable Henry VI. By this time, he had captured and executed both her father and her brother John. In addition, Warwick arranged to have Jacquetta accused of witchcraft. Much of this first accusation against Jacquetta is unclear, as Edward IV, upon his resumption of power, would find the charges baseless. Nonetheless, an unknown chronicler described the events:

> Thomas Wake…hath caused herto be brought in a common noise and disclander of witchcraft throughout a great part of [Warwick's] realm, surmising that [Jacquetta] should have used witchcraft and sorcery, insomuch as the said Wake caused to be brought to Warwick…to divers of the lords being there present, an image of lead made like a man-at-arms, containing the length of a man's finger,

[137] Okerlund, 117-8.

> and broken in the middle, and made fast with wire, saying that it was made by your said oratrice, to use with the said witchcraft and sorcery; where she, nor none of [her servents]…ever saw it, God knoweth.[138]

The purpose of this image, Wake claims, was to procure the union between Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville. It would explain, then, why Edward IV refused Bona of Savoy and insulted Warwick. It would also discredit the legitimacy of Edward IV. How Wake, a retainer in the service of Warwick, came to possess such an object is never revealed, as Wake never came into Jacquetta's service. While no such image or doll was ever found, the accusation clearly struck a nerve with Jacquetta, probably remembering the fate of Eleanor Cobham. She later wrote to her son-in-law once he was back in power, professing her innocence in this matter. Edward IV immediately pardoned her.[139]

It is no coincidence that Warwick, via Wake, named Jacquetta a witch while her family was out of power and Edward IV was in Flanders. It reveals that the source of the charge was both to discredit Edward IV and an attempt to unify England under the Lancasters. Although Jacquetta, at the time, was safe in Westminster Abbey and far from Warwick's control, the purpose was clearly to demean Jacquetta, her daughter, and her grandchildren. Elizabeth was visibly pregnant at the time; if she managed to deliver a male heir to Edward IV, then the infant could serve as a calling card for all York loyalists to rally behind, should their king die abroad or in fighting Warwick's armies. In naming Jacquetta a witch, Warwick probably hoped to diminish the support for Edward IV, leaving the Woodville family and the House York with fewer allies, and make the goal of reestablishing of the House of Lancaster easier to obtain. While Warwick might have

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[138] John Lingard, *The History of England: From The First Invasion By The Romans To The Accession Of William And Mary In 1688*, 6th ed., vol. 4 (London: Charles Dolman 61 New Bond Street and 22 Paternoster Row, 1854), 80-1.
[139] Lingard, 80-1.

accused Elizabeth directly – by now there was certainly precedent for it under both Joan of Navarre and Eleanor Cobham – the idea might have been farfetched, even for him. A pregnant Elizabeth could easily conjurer compassion, as a woman who had lost both a father and a brother, whose husband fled a kingdom, and whose mother now stood accused of contriving her marriage using dark sorcery. These facts might have sparked sympathy, not animosity. If Warwick meant to exterminate the entire Woodville family, he would have to do so carefully, starting with Jacquetta.

In the end, however, Elizabeth's fidelity and steadfastness proved successful. By April of 1471, Edward IV once more deposed Henry VI, and Warwick died in the mass confusion at the Battle of Barnet. Edward IV reestablished himself as king. Elizabeth came out of sanctuary along with her daughters and newborn son, whom Edward IV created Prince of Wales the following June. Although Jacquetta's death in 1472 undoubtedly brought sorrow to Elizabeth, she would find solace in the six more children she had with her husband: Margaret (b. 1472), Richard, Duke of York (b. 1473)[140], Anne (b. 1475), George (b. 1477), Katherine (b. 1479), and Bridget (b. 1480). Edward IV's second reign brought political unity to England; Warwick was dead, and both Henry VI and his son would die in early 1471, virtually extinguishing the opposing House of Lancaster. Any discussion of Jacquetta's sorcery or the circumstances surrounding Edward IV's marriage was, albeit temporarily, silenced.

Unfortunately, England would not stay as unified as it was after 1471. After a nearly twenty-two-year reign, Edward IV died on 9 April 1483, his twelve-year-old son Prince Edward, Prince of Wales, ascending the throne as Edward V. As with Henry VI,

[140] Not to be confused with his maternal half-brother, Richard Grey, with whom he shared a name, nor his paternal grandfather, with whom he shared both a name and a title.

the young Edward V would need a regent for the remainder of his minority, a role the young king's paternal uncle, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, claimed as Lord Protector. As Edward V was still at Ludlow Castle in Wales under the supervision of his uncle Anthony Woodville, 2nd Earl Rivers, and his half-brother Richard Grey, transporting the boy safely to London would be critical. This was a pivotal moment; whoever managed to gain control of the king would rule the realm.

Gloucester and his allies, including Elizabeth's brother-in-law the Duke of Buckingham, met with Anthony and Richard Grey at Stony Stratford, the town nearest Elizabeth Woodville's childhood estate where she had married Edward IV. The trio of lords had previously been cordial with one another, and dinned together the evening of 29 April, probably discussing how best to proceed in this delicate situation. Whatever plan they created, however, fell to pieces the following morning, when Gloucester arrested both Anthony and Richard. Bringing them before Edward V, Gloucester declared that they had attempted treason against the Crown. The young king professed that he trusted his uncle and brother, as they were his family, and trusted his father and mother, the queen, besides. Upon the mention of Elizabeth, Buckingham declared that men, not women, should govern kingdoms; Edward V was then arrested along with his family members.[141] Having captured the king – the day before his parents' nineteenth wedding anniversary nonetheless – Gloucester proceeded to London.[142]

[141] Dominic Mancini, *De Occupatione Regni Anglie per Riccardum Tercium* (1483), 77-79, quoted in Okerlund, 205-6.
[142] Okerlund, 205-6.

Distrustful of her brother-in-law, Elizabeth and her remaining children sought sanctuary at Westminster Abbey.[143] Realizing that Gloucester momentarily had the upper hand, Elizabeth reluctantly agreed to surrender custody of Edward V, and to, keep the boy company, to allow his younger brother Richard, Duke of York, to leave the Abbey and join Edward V. The decision was undoubtedly a difficult one; however, there was perhaps no real reason to fear for the safety of her sons, who were by now the only viable male heirs to the English throne since the extinction of the House of Lancaster. Although Henry Tudor was the next feasible Lancastrian heir, the English Channel lay between him and the Crown, and his own connection to the royal house was a stretch besides.[144] Gloucester placed his two nephews in the Tower of London, the traditional place for monarchs to reside until their coronation; no one would ever see the two young boys again.[145] By then, whatever government had formed in the name of Edward V collapsed. By June of 1483, Elizabeth and the Woodville family were officially out of power, and Gloucester ascended the throne as King Richard III.[146]

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[143] The source of the animosity between Elizabeth and her brother-in-law is unknown; Gloucester had previously supported his brother when he decided to marry Elizabeth, and continued to support him as king when Edward IV fled into exile, unlike their youngest brother George, Duke of Clarence, who had cast his lot with Warwick. Indeed, Edward IV and Elizabeth probably named their second son in partial honor of Gloucester, a recognition of his fidelity. Why then he would suddenly turn against his sister-in-law, whom he had supported for so long, remains undetermined; perhaps it remains a classic case of absolute power corrupting absolutely. See Baldwin, 94-6.

[144] His mother, Margaret Beaufort, was a great-granddaughter of John of Gaunt, the founder of the House of Lancaster. However, the House of Beaufort descended from his marriage to Katherine Swynford, with all their children being born while she was still only his mistress, bringing in to question the legitimacy of the line's claim to the Crown. Henry Tudor was more closely related to the French royal family via his grandmother Catherine of Valois, late of wife of Henry V and mother of Henry VI, who had possibly remarried to Owen Tudor and given birth their son Edmund Tudor, Earl of Richmond, who married Margaret Beaufort and fathered of Henry Tudor. See Appendix E: The House of Tudor.

[145] Over 500 years later, no one has ever fully solved the infamous case of the Princes in the Tower. See Okerlund, 216-20.

[146] Okerlund, 101.

The new king soon proved unable to keep England as unified as his brother had. By January of 1484, Buckingham had changed allegiances from Richard III to Henry Tudor, who began parading himself in France as an alternative to Richard III, going so far as to promise to marry Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville's eldest daughter, Elizabeth of York.[147] After a failed rebellion, which resulted in Buckingham's execution, Richard III decided to formalize his kingship and had parliament issue the Titulus Regius, oft translated as "Royal Title" or "Title of the King." One of the most significant documents in Elizabeth Woodville's life, the act's primary purpose was to invalidate her marriage to Edward IV, thus bastardizing their children including their two sons, in which case after Edward IV's death, the Crown would pass to his nearest living male relative, Richard III himself.[148]

It was not an easy process to nullify a marriage was not an easy process, especially one as long and famous as a king's – Henry VIII would experience these same difficulties some years later when attempting to divorce Katharine of Aragon. In Richard The Titulus Regius pointed to two reasons why the marriage was void:

> …at the tyme of contract of the…Mariage [between Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville]…the seid *King Edward was and stode maryed…to oone Dame [Eleanor Talbot]*…with whom the same King Edward had made a precontracte of Matrimonie, longe tyyme bifore he made the said pretensed Mariage with the said Elizabeth. Which premisses being true…it appearreth and foloweth evidently, that the said *King Edward duryng his lif, and the seid Elizabeth, lived together sinfully* and dampnably in adultery, against the Lawe of God and of his Church…[a]lso it

[147] Hicks, 227, 273-4.

[148] George, Duke of Clarence, was a brother between Edward IV and Richard III. He had predeceased his brothers in 1478, leaving behind several children, including a son also called Edward, who was not yet ten when his uncle Richard III came to the throne – based on laws of primogeniture, the young Edward might have had a greater claim than his uncle. However, George had been attained at the time of his death, leaving his children's claim to the throne dubious at best. Furthermore, Richard III had already shown apathy his two other young nephews, Edward V and Richard, Duke of York, so it was unlikely either the young Edward or his supporters would attempt to declare him king at this time. In any case, the Titulus Regius named Richard III directly as the new king after Edward IV. See Appendix C: The House of York.

> appeareth evidently and followeth, that *all th'Issue and Children of the seid King Edward, been Bastards, and unable to inherite or to clayme any thing by Inheritance*, by the Lawe and Custome of Englond.[149]

Eleanor Talbot, daughter of the highly celebrated war hero John Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, had been one of Edward IV's well-known mistresses, before her sudden death in June of 1468. If, indeed, Edward IV had a marriage contract with Eleanor at the time of his marriage to Elizabeth, it would have made Edward IV and Elizabeth's union illegal under both English and Church law, even though Edward V and his brother were born after Eleanor's death.

The claim that such a contract existed, however, is quite dubious. First, no such document was ever produced before parliament or any court; rather, its existence seems to have been common knowledge. If everyone knew that Edward IV stood contracted to Eleanor, why would Edward IV's councilors, who included Richard III, have aided Warwick in attempting to match Edward IV with Bona of Savoy all those years ago? Secondly, Eleanor Talbot was alive and well by the time Edward IV's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville was made public, and it is not improbable that she witnessed Elizabeth's coronation festivities in 1465. If Eleanor believed herself wed – or at least partially wed – to Edward IV, why did she not make her concerns known, especially to Edward IV's councilors who so hoped for a foreign match? Warwick, still in the king's good graces then, would have been easy to approach – Warwick's wife was the half-sister of Eleanor's mother. Warwick might have used Eleanor's contract to invalidate Edward

[149] Untitled, 1 Rich III, Records created, acquired, and inherited by Chancery, and also of the Wardrobe, Royal Household, Exchequer and various commissions, Records of the Enrolment Office, Chancery: Parliament Rolls, 65/114, The National Archives, Kew, London. My emphasis. For a more complete version, see Chris Given-Wilson, ed., *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England 1275-1504*, ed. Rosemary Horrox. Vol. 15, *Richard III: 1484-1485; Henry VII: 1485-1487* (London: The National Archives, 2005), 13-18.

IV's union with Elizabeth Woodville, found the king a way out of his contract with Eleanor, and secured a foreign match after all. These facts cast serious doubts on the validity of Edward IV's contract to Eleanor.[150] In any case, the story of Eleanor Talbot and Edward IV satisfied Richard III, at least temporarily. The tale would have been shocking and effectively offended contemporary morality.[151]

However, the Titulus Regius went one-step further than a simple contract tale that clearly had several inconsistences. After all, marriage was under Church law, not secular, and an ecclesiastical court was unlikely to rule against a nearly nineteen year royal marriage that the public generally accepted as valid. Even though English law never fully accepted canon law on illegitimacy, leaving parliament well within its rights to bastardize royal children, it could still leave Edward V and his siblings with a valid claim.[152] Bastardy had not prevented William the Conqueror from taking the English Crown in 1066, nor would it prevent Mary I and Elizabeth I from succeeding in 1553 and 1558, respectively. Rumors of King Arthur's parentage in the legends did not prevent him from taking power, nor would it prevent Henry VII's ascension in 1485.[153] All had been

[150] John Ashdown-Hill is one of the few historians who believe that Edward IV had indeed married Eleanor Talbot, and gives a precise date for the union: 8 June 1461. Ashdown-Hill believes that their relationship deteriorated in part to Eleanor's lack of fertility, never showings of pregnancy, and Edward IV's sexual relationship with her cousin, Henry Beaufort, 3rd Duke of Somerset. Ashdown-Hill claims that Eleanor did not come forward about her union out of fear of Edward IV's wrath, and instead joined a Carmelite order in Norwich. Ashdown-Hill goes so far as to claim that Elizabeth Woodville murdered Eleanor via arsenic to protect the legitimacy of her own children. While these claims are interesting, they are based primarily in speculation. See John Ashdown-Hill, *The Secret Queen, Eleanor Talbot: The Woman who put Richard III on the Throne* (Stroud: The History Press, 2016), 126-8, 172.
[151] Hicks, 222-3.
[152] Hicks, 222-3.
[153] In the legends, Igraine, Arthur's mother, is unsure if the father of her child was her first husband Goloris, Duke of Cornwall, or second, Uther Pendragon, High King of Britain. She claims that the night Arthur was conceived she went to bed with a man she assumed was Goloris, but is elated to learn later it was Uther in disguise. This would mean that Arthur was conceived out of wedlock, which could cast doubts on his legitimacy. See Malory, 71-2. Similarly, Henry VII, during his lifetime, purposefully cast doubts on his paternity. While most probably the son of Edmund Tudor, Earl of Richmond, Henry VII claimed at several points throughout his life to be the son of Henry VI, to emphasize his claim to the throne. What his mother, Margaret Beaufort, who outlived her son, thought of these claims is unknown. If

successfully crowned and reigned with few interruptions without setting their illegitimate or uncertain status aside. Therefore, Richard III needed to go to the extreme, if he meant to make himself the one true king.

To eradicate any idea that Edward V belonged on the English throne, the Titulus Regius proclaimed:

> And here also we considre, howe that the seid pretensed Mariage bitwixt…King Edward and Elizabeth [Woodville], was made of grete presumption, without the knowyng and assent of the Lords of this Lond, *and also by Sorcerie and Wichecrafte, committed by the said Elizabeth, and her [mother] Jaquett[a] Duchesse of Bedford*…And here also we consider, howe that said pretensed Mariage was made privaly and secretely…and not openly in the face of the Church, aftre the Lawe of Godds Churche, bot contrarie thereunto, and the laudable Custome of the Church of Englond.[154]

If the pre-contract story was not convincing enough that Edward IV and Elizabeth's marriage was illegal, the act also asserted that the union itself had not been made in a holy manner, nor by Edward IV's free will. This undoubtedly recalled memories of Eleanor Cobham's annulment from Prince Humphrey years earlier for the same reasons. The charges themselves would certainly have seemed plausible to contemporaries; after all, this was not the first time their marriage and sorcery had come up in the same conversation.[155] Sorcery would explain why Edward IV had married so far beneath his rank, to a Lancastrian supporter, why he had done so in secret, and why he waited so long to announce the union.

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true, this would make Henry VII illegitimate by any account. At least Arthur's parents married before his birth; both Henry VI and Margaret were married to other persons at the time of Henry VII's birth, and never openly proclaimed their relationship. See Hicks, 228-30.

[154] Untitled, 1 Rich III, Records created, acquired, and inherited by Chancery, and also of the Wardrobe, Royal Household, Exchequer and various commissions, Records of the Enrolment Office, Chancery: Parliament Rolls, 65/114, The National Archives, Kew, London. My emphasis. For a more complete version, see Chris Given-Wilson, ed., *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England 1275-1504*, ed. Rosemary Horrox. Vol. 15, *Richard III: 1484-1485; Henry VII: 1485-1487* (London: The National Archives, 2005), 13-18.

[155] Lingard, 80-1; Baldwin, 153.

The exact nature of when and where Edward IV and Elizabeth married only added to confusion. By this time, it is likely that Elizabeth Woodville was the only person still living who could attest that a valid marriage had taken place sometime after 13 April 1464, when she first addressed William Hastings to secure her son Thomas' inheritance rights, and before 26 May 1465, when Edward IV crowned her his queen consort. With this new story added to the mix, Richard III was effectively changing the narrative. While he had previously been the power-hungry uncle imprisoning his nephews for a Crown and Elizabeth the innocent mother fleeing to the Church for safety, now the roles were reversed. Elizabeth Woodville became the villain: a Lancastrian supporter, she had bewitched the wedded Yorkist king and forced him to make her his queen, and sought to gain complete power in England by making her ill-begotten bastard son the next king. In turn, this made Richard III not a usurper, but a savior. Between the pre-contract story and the tale of witchcraft, the Titulus Regius successfully ended the marriage between Edward IV and Elizabeth; or, rather, it decided that the union had simply never been.

Following Titulus Regius, Elizabeth's hope began to dwindle. While she had successfully contacted with Henry Tudor via his mother Margaret Beaufort and consented to his engagement to her daughter Elizabeth of York, the failed rebellion under Buckingham meant that Henry probably would not attempt to cross the Channel for at least a few more years. Facing limited options, she decided to capitulate to the new government, surrendering herself and her daughters to Richard III. In March 1484, Elizabeth Woodville and her children officially came out of sanctuary and returned to court.[156] Life for the family probably returned to relative normalcy during this time, and

[156] Baldwin, 104.

no records exist of any disputes between the ex-queen and Richard III. If Elizabeth ever did try to seek revenge for her murdered family members, the slanders against herself and her mother, or attempt to uncover the fate of her two sons, she apparently did so quietly. While she still had an understanding with Margaret Beaufort and Henry Tudor that he would marry her eldest daughter if he ever managed to depose Richard III, Elizabeth was, in the meantime, probably attempting to live as quietly as she could.

In August 1485, Henry Tudor and Margaret Beaufort successfully crossed the Channel with their army, landing in Milford Haven. Members of the Woodville and Grey families cast their lot with the invaders and joined their forces with Henry's armies. Thanks to Margaret's agency and connections, many nobles of England abandoned Richard III, and on 22 August Henry won the Battle of Bosworth Field. After the death of Richard III in that battle, Henry claimed England by the ancient right of conquest, as William the Conqueror had done nearly half a millennium ago, declaring himself Henry VII and establishing the House of Tudor as the ruling house.[157]

Although their relationship appears to have improved over the last year, Elizabeth Woodville probably did not long mourn Richard III, if she mourned him at all; one cannot forget that he imprisoned her sons, probably murdered them, executed members of her family, bastardized her daughters, and accused her of witchcraft. Consequently, Elizabeth readily accepted Henry VII as her new king. In parliament on 7 November 1485, Henry VII officially revoked the Titulus Regius, recognizing the validity of Edward IV's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville, thus reinstating both her own status as queen dowager, the legitimacy of all her children, and absolving her of the charge of

[157] Baldwin, 107-108.

witchcraft. Apparently, Henry VII also ordered the government to recognize Edward V as his true predecessor – evidence of this lies in the eventual ascension of his grandson in 1547 as King Edward VI. Finally, on 18 January 1486, Henry VII made good on his oath and married Elizabeth of York in Westminster Abbey. On 20 September, she gave birth to their first child, a son named Arthur. Elizabeth Woodville was probably present at the birth of her grandchild, and certainly stood as godmother to him at his christening four days later.[158] Elizabeth Woodville probably remained with her daughter after the birth, and later joined her at court, perhaps helping to secure matches for her remaining children.

In February of 1487, Perkin Warbeck became the face of a rebellion against Henry VII, claiming that he was Elizabeth's second son Richard, Duke of York.[159] Shortly after Henry VII managed to crush the revolt, Elizabeth Woodville retired from court to Bermondsey Abbey. While there is some evidence to indicate that Henry VII forced his mother-in-law into retirement, believing that she supported Warbeck, it is probable that he only hastened her retirement, and that she was already planning to leave court.[160] It is unlikely that Elizabeth would have supported a revolt against the man who restored her title, legitimacy to her children, married her daughter, and fathered her grandson. By early spring, she peacefully surrendered the majority of her property to her daughter, and officially retired to the abbey where she received all due honor and respect as a queen dowager and mother to the queen consort.[161]

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[158] Baldwin, 110.
[159] He also claimed to be the son George, Duke of Clarence.
[160] Baldwin, 115.
[161] Baldwin, , 122.

Elizabeth remained at the abbey until her death on 8 June 1492, probably of natural causes. In her Last Will, referring to herself as a queen of England, she requested a small funeral and to be buried beside Edward IV, whom she repeatedly refers to as her lord husband.[162] Henry VII honored his mother-in-law's wishes; attended by members of her close family, including her daughters – save Elizabeth of York who was heavily pregnant at the time – he interred her next to Edward IV in St. George's Chapel.[163] She remains there today.

Conclusion

From the stories of Joan of Navarre, Eleanor Cobham, Jacquetta of Luxembourg, and Elizabeth Woodville, a distinct pattern arises. Questions over kingship and rights to a regency led to political disharmony and occasionally civil war, which resulted in witchcraft accusations. Their powerful male adversaries used them as scapegoats both to lead England back to political harmony and relieve political pressure. Henry V accused Joan to obtain her fortune, Eleanor Cobham's accusers used her to do away with her husband's influence, and Warwick and Gloucester's accusations against Jacquetta and Elizabeth were attempts by them to discredit Edward IV. From Henry V's expensive war feats to the mental instability of Henry VI, it is no coincidence that England saw its first witches during this period. People needed something to explain the ongoing conflicts, and those in power needed a reason to stay in power and legitimize their authority. By vilifying these women, contemporaries such as Henry V, Henry, Cardinal Beaufort, and Richard III were able to achieve both ends. In the end, we see that that they accused these

[162] Elizabeth Woodville, "Elizabeth, wife of Edward IV," in *A Collection of All the Wills*, edited by Nichols, 350-1.
[163] Elizabeth of York would give birth to a short-lived daughter named Elizabeth, probably in honor of Elizabeth Woodville.

noble women – their political enemies – for three reasons: because these women were wealthy, because they exerted too much influence, and because they were powerful symbols of resistance and political disunity to those who would claim their right to the English Crown itself or to those would profess to control the person wearing the Crown.

CHAPTER 2: "IT WAS NOT THE BUSINESS OF WOMEN…TO GOVERN KINGDOMS:" GENDER, POWER, AND WITCHCRAFT

"The king is dead! Long live the king!" With these words, England proclaimed a new sovereign, and the twelve-year-old son of Elizabeth Woodville and Edward IV ascended the throne as King Edward V on 9 April 1483. A new era was born, full of hope and promise. The dark days, perhaps, were done at last. The Lancasters were defeated. Henry Tudor, the only person who might present a valid counter claim, remained only a minor pretender, a nuisance at best. There was virtually no one left to challenge the supremacy of the House of York, the authority of Edward V, or the power of his mother, Elizabeth Woodville, the queen. All that remained was to bury the old king, transport the new one from Ludlow to London, and settle the regency.[164] Towards these ends, Edward IV's brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester and now also Lord Protector, swiftly took custody of his nephew. Under a façade of unity, Gloucester joined forces with Anthony Woodville and Richard Grey, both of whom continued to act in Elizabeth Woodville's competing interest. Together with the new king in tow, the trio began the 155-mile journey back to London.

Were the three men now truly at peace? Would the Woodville and York families at last be allies in both grief and jubilation? It certainly seemed so, even as they stopped to rest at Stony Stratford near Grafton Regis, where Edward IV had married Elizabeth Woodville almost nineteen years ago. However, if there were any mutual feelings of

[164] Edward IV mentions in his Last Will that Gloucester would become Lord Protector during his son's minority, but does not outline the specific powers and limits of the office. See Edward IV of England, "King Edward IV," in *A Collection of All the Wills, Now Known to be Extant, of the Kings and Queens of England, Princes and Princesses of Wales, and Every Branch of the Blood Royal, From the Reign of William the Conqueror, to that of Henry the Seventh Exclusive: With Explanatory Notes, and a Glossary*, edited by John Nichols (London: [illegible], 1780), 345-349.

fraternity or fidelity, they quickly dissipated, and the situation soon turned violent. In the early hours of 30 April 1483, Gloucester and his old ally Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, had their armies surround the inn where the company resided, and drug Anthony Woodville and Richard Grey from their beds. Throwing them at the feet of Edward V, Buckingham and Gloucester proclaimed that the pair conspired to arrest the young king and take control of England for themselves. Taken aback by such accusations, Edward V pondered the charges for a moment before decreeing that they were baseless. The king's late father had confidence in them, Edward V explained, and therefore so did he. Surely, Gloucester and Buckingham were mistaken. Anthony Woodville and Richard Grey were his maternal uncle and half-brother, and had for many years wisely counselled his father. Besides, they were still well-trusted by his mother, the queen. Upon the king's mention of Elizabeth Woodville and her authority, Buckingham retorted that "it was not the business of women but of men to govern kingdoms, so if [the king] cherished any confidence in [Elizabeth Woodville] he had better relinquish it, [and] place all his hope in his barons, who excelled in nobility and power."[165] With that, Edward V joined Anthony Woodville and Richard Grey in their imprisonment, and Gloucester proceeded with the ride to London, now marching unopposed.

Buckingham's implication is clear: a woman was not fit to rule, even as regent – the right to govern belonged exclusively to men. Evidently, he was not alone in this belief. Gloucester made no remark to the contrary, and history seemed to be on their side. Tales of lords who willed their lands to their female children, stories of women controlling crowns via husbands and sons, and histories of kings who sought to make

[165] Dominic Mancini, *De Occupatione Regni Anglie per Riccardum Tercium* (1483), 77-79, quoted in Arlene Okerlund, *Elizabeth: England's Slandered Queen* (Stroud: The History Press, 2009), 205-6.

their daughters principal heir littered English folklore. They all ended the same way: tragically. As we explored in the previous chapter, Elizabeth Woodville's story was no exception. A little more than a week after Buckingham spoke these words, Gloucester deposed her son, toppled whatever government she had managed to form in the name of Edward V, crowned himself King Richard III, and accused Elizabeth Woodville of sorcery.

While the previous chapter uncovered the political and economic factors that led to the accusations against a series of royal women, one critical influence still necessitates discussion: gender. To obtain a fortune, Henry V attacked Joan of Navarre, not his brothers or cousins. When Eleanor Cobham and Prince Humphrey attempted to secure the regency of Henry VI, it was Eleanor whom courts convicted of sorcery, while Humphrey emerged unscathed. In the story of Elizabeth Woodville and Edward IV, it is always Elizabeth and her mother who cast a love spell upon the king. No contemporary ever dared to reverse the roles and think that Edward IV, knowing he was married, turned to the supernatural to seduce the virtuous widow Elizabeth after she refused to become his mistress.

In this chapter, I argue that in fifteenth and sixteenth century England, accusing women in positions of power of witchcraft was a tool actively and repeatedly utilized by her political enemies to delegitimize her hegemony and undermine her authority. To begin, it is necessary to examine the English Crown's relationship with female claimants. Mary Tudor was the first woman to establish herself successfully as queen regnant in July 1553. However, she was not the first woman to claim the Crown. By her time, England

had centuries of women attempting to establish their rule or exert their influence on government.

On 25 November 1120, the English *White Ship* sank off the coast of Barfleur, Normandy. A large, newly refurbished vessel, the wreck symbolized both a financial loss for the Crown and a personal one for King Henry I of England. His only legitimate son, William Adelin, was among those who perished. Now without legitimate male issue, the aging Henry I married Adeliza of Louvain, hoping that they would produce a new male heir. Unfortunately, the marriage remained childless, and the nation faced a problematic succession.[166]

Simultaneously, Matilda, Henry I's eldest living child, returned to Normandy after the death of her husband, Heinrich V, King of Germany and Italy and Holy Roman Emperor.[167] Although father and daughter had been separated for nearly twelve years, the reunion was apparently joyous. Shortly afterwards, Henry I decided to forgo a male heir and proclaimed Matilda as his successor. After instructing his nobles to swear an oath of allegiance acknowledging Matilda as the rightful successor to both the kingdom of England and the duchy of Normandy, Henry I negotiated her marriage to Geoffrey, called Plantagenet, heir to the county of Anjou.[168] With this, all was ready for Matilda to take over after her father's passing.

Henry I's choice of Matilda was surprising, but was not inappropriate. She was the eldest of all her siblings, and after the *White Ship* incident her father's only living

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[166] For more on the sinking of the *White Ship*, see Marjorie Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda: Queen Consort, Queen Mother, and Lady of the English* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 47-53.
[167] At the time, Henry I of England ruled both the kingdom of England and the duchy of Normandy, having succeeded to the latter in 1106 after the death of his brother, Robert Curthose. See Helen Castor, *She-Wolves: Women who Ruled England Before Elizabeth* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011), 43-4.
[168] Catherine Hanley, *Matilda: Empress, Queen, Warrior* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 64-6.

legitimate child. Given the fluidity of Norman succession and the relative newness of Anglo-Norman inheritance, it was not impossible, legally speaking, for a woman to inherit her father's lands. The precedent simply did not yet exist. After all, Henry I's father, William the Conqueror, managed to take and rule England and inherit Normandy despite his illegitimate status. If a bastard could inherit, why not a woman? Furthermore, no one seemed to have taken seriously the claims of Henry I's considerable pool of bastard children, a fact that only strengthened Matilda's claim. Even his eldest bastard son, Robert FitzRoy whom Henry I created Earl of Gloucester, believed Matilda's claim was above his own, as he went on to become one of her closest advisors and military commanders.[169] Furthermore, Matilda had real experience in government. Not only had she been her first husband's effective co-regent in Germany, Henrich V later created her regent of newly conquered Italy, a position she acted in for about two years, presumably effectively, as the few surviving sources indicate a lack of scandal or other disturbance under her direct rule.[170] While Matilda's lack of fertility might have been cause for concern – the royal line required security and her first marriage was childless – Matilda did her critics one better, giving birth to two sons before Henry I's death, at which point she was pregnant with her third.

Therefore, the only real impediment left was her gender. While the nobility clambered to be the first to swear fealty to Matilda as heir, there was a distinct difference between a woman being heir and a woman being king.[171] Norman-England was used to both powerful women and stories of powerful women. Matilda's mother, Matilda Edith

[169] Castor, 84-90.
[170] Hanley, 27-9.
[171] For the oath of fealty, see Chibnall, 51-2. For the problems of female rule, see Castor, 102-3, 110-11.

of Scotland, presided over council meetings in her husband's absence, and the court still regaled in tales of Agnes of Aquitaine valiantly acting as regent for her son Heinrich IV in Germany.[172]

However, there was a difference between what these women were and what Matilda stood to become. Matilda Edith and Agnes ruled only because their marriages gave them royal authority or because their sons were too young to act for themselves. Queenship, therefore, was not an act of independent agency, but rested entirely on its association with a male king. Even the Anglo-Saxon word, *cwén,* meant "wife of king," and did not signify a female equivalent. Conversely, and perhaps ironically, Latin offered more flexible and inclusive words for female authority: *regina* or *imperatrix,* meaning queen and empress respectively. However, these words still derived their feminine forms from their masculine counterparts: *rex* and *imperator*. While Matilda and her contemporaries repeatedly refer to her as Matilda *Imperatrix* – Empress Matilda – in association with her first husband, this only served to make her situation more unique. There was no word or adjective sufficient to describe what Matilda stood to become, a female king.[173]

It is perhaps for these reasons – lack of precedent, vocabulary, and male gender – that Matilda's cousin, Stephen of Blois, crowned himself king of England when Henry I died, on 1 December 1135, beginning the Anarchy. Similar to The Cousins' War (1455 – 1487) discussed in the previous chapter, the Anarchy originated from a similar problem: the ruling family could not determine which heir was correct and which was the usurper. However, the Anarchy posed a more significant question than just birth order and the

[172] Castor, 65-7.
[173] Castor, 67-8.

legality of coups: could a woman inherit and rule England? If, as we have seen, there was no word to describe a female king, then could there be a female king? As the armies of Matilda and Stephen of Blois clashed, each attempting to declare themselves as the true sovereign and answer those burning questions, the tide of war changed several times. Matilda at one point managed to capture Stephen and march on London, only to have Stephen escape captivity and drive his cousin across the Channel back to Normandy. In the end, the answer to whether a woman could rule was, resoundingly, no – not yet, anyway. Despite his setbacks, Stephen managed to hold his position as king. Matilda, by comparison, never managed to put together a coronation ceremony.

The Anarchy set the precedent of the Crown's relationship with gender for the next several centuries: a man must always come first. However, not all was lost for Matilda and her legacy. A woman might not be able to rule, but she could pass down her claim to her children. After all, Stephen himself could only claim inheritance via his mother, Henry I's sister Adela of Normandy. Furthermore, while Stephen attempted several times to see his son Eustace crowned co-ruler and successor, both the nobility and the populace of England preferred Matilda's eldest son, named Henry after his royal grandfather, as the next heir. Stephen may have been king over Matilda, but it was her line that carried the blood royal.[174] Eustace's death in 1153, a year before his father's, only strengthened the claim of Matilda's son. What else could have killed the healthy young prince so quickly other than divine providence? The young Henry succeeded his cousin Stephen and became King Henry II of England. However, rather than acknowledging his immediate predecessor, Henry II made clear which person he derived

[174] Castor, 117.

his royal prerogative from by calling himself Henry FitzEmpress – meaning Henry, Son of the Empress – thus paying homage to his mother, who almost became king.

The story of Matilda and the precedent it set, of allowing women to bequeath royal claims to the throne, may have replayed itself in Henry VII's mind as he rallied his forces and sailed the Channel. It may explain why he was so eager to revoke the Titulus Regius and clear Elizabeth Woodville, his prospective mother-in-law, of the witchcraft accusations. He was adamant about ending The Cousins' War, promising several times to use his status as quasi-head of the House of Lancaster to wed the heir to the House of York. He publicly took an oath before his supporters on Christmas Day 1483 at the Rennes Cathedral, promising to marry Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville's eldest daughter, Elizabeth of York.[175] However, the situation would have been too delicate to solve with a mere wedding ceremony. It would require not only Elizabeth of York's establishment as an heir, but also as a 'lesser' one than Henry VII. Elizabeth had been born a princess, and descended via several lines, including an all-male one, from Edward III of England.[176] She was Edward IV's eldest living legitimate child, and, after the disappearance of her two younger brothers, possibly the most senior Yorkist heir. Henry VII, by comparison, was a relatively lowborn upstart with a serious case of entitlement who drew his claim from his mother, herself belonging to a line of questionable legitimacy.[177]

Therefore, in comparison to Henry VII, Elizabeth of York was already an heir, capable at the very least of passing on her claim. But while Henry VII might have fretted

[175] Michael Hicks, *The Wars of the Roses* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 227, 273-4.
[176] See Appendix B: The House of Plantagenet and its Cadet Branches, the Houses of York and Lancaster.
[177] See Appendix D: The House of Lancaster.

over how to establish her as a lesser one than himself, his fiancée had two impediments working against her: her sex and sorcery. Although he revoked the Titulus Regius and destroyed all copies of the document, the legacy it left behind still suited the new king's needs.[178] It may have only declared Elizabeth of York illegitimate, not directly accusing her of witchcraft, but the implication remained. Her mother and maternal grandmother had dabbled in sorcery. Elizabeth was, therefore, a product of magic, having been both born and reared beside it. The death of her two younger brothers may have placed her in a senior position as heir and closer to the throne than Henry VII – if, of course, one accepted the validity of Edward IV's coup against Henry VI – but her association with magic and her gender was enough to keep Yorkist and other Edward IV sympathizers from rallying behind her as their queen regnant.[179] Elizabeth might have done what Matilda could not, and overcome conventions surrounding gender and taken the throne for herself, just as her granddaughter, Mary I, would do a little over a century later – she was perfectly positioned to do so.[180] Her association with magic, however, rendered that chance nearly impossible. Elizabeth may not have practiced magic and become a witch, but who was to say that she would not pass on her knowledge of the craft to her eventual children, if she were to become queen in her own right? Mothers, even elite ones, raised their children and indoctrinated them with their values. It was not impossible to think that Elizabeth would do the same with sorcery.[181] Therefore, Elizabeth might still be the most senior Yorkist heir and able to pass on her proximity to the Crown to her children, just as

[178] Henry VII would later issue his own Titulus Regius, which declared that he was king because he was king. Despite his best efforts, copies of Richard III's version still survive. For more on the destruction of the document and its legacy, see Hicks, 221-3.
[179] For more on Elizabeth of York's claims and potential succession, see Hicks, 227, 273-4.
[180] Hicks, 236.
[181] Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), 67-70.

Henry II was heir over his cousin Eustace, but her sex and association with witchcraft made her a less preferable one to Henry VII.

Once the pair married, Elizabeth of York would go on to become one of the most iconic English queen consorts. Elegant, composed, devout, generous, and kind, she became the pinnacle of virtue in the new Tudor England, a manifestation of the ideal noble woman.[182] If there was any fear that she would pass on knowledge of sorcery to her children, the nobility and populace of England could breathe a sigh of relief. Surely, Elizabeth was no witch. But what made a woman – especially a noble woman – a witch? What attributes did they exhibit? Historians have employed various methods to answer this question, and, in the end, it appears that witches were old, full of wrinkles, physically deformed, had pale skin, were ill humored, harsh, argumentative, inclined to swearing, suffered from melancholy and bouts of madness or insanity, were especially envious and wrathful, and had a general un-neighborliness aspect about them, disrupting the rituals and traditions of their respective community.[183] In short, they were nonconformists.

The surviving accounts of Elizabeth of York reveal that she did not align with the characteristics of a stereotypical witch. However, nor do any of the other 'witches' we have seen thus far. Joan of Navarre seems to have acquired a lavish taste – one cannot forget her orders of miniver fur, Tartarin silk, and Flemish linen, a girdle and rosary both

[182] Thomas Penn, *Winter King: Henry VII and the Dawn of Tudor England* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 97-100.
[183] Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 3rd ed. (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2006), 137-60, 162; Peter Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-hunting, and Politics in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 253-4; Edward Bever, "Popular Witch Beliefs and Magical Practices," in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, 50-68, edited by Brian P. Levack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 53-4; Annabel Gregory, "Witchcraft, Politics, and "Good Neighbourhood" in Early Seventeenth-Century Rye," in *New Perspectives on Witchcraft, Magic, and Demonology*, vol. 3, *Witchcraft in the British Isles and New England*, 99-172, edited by Brian P. Levack (New York: Routledge, 200), 99-103.

made of gold, an ewer, bucket, pendant, and table knives of silver-gilt, the repair of a silver-gilt clock, a harp, a birdcage for one of her "jays," and the various quantities of foreign wine, including Gascon, Rochelle, and Rhenish.[184] However, there is nothing to indicate that she made herself in any way disagreeable. The details of the visitors she received would suggest the opposite.[185] While one might argue that the socially ambitious Eleanor Cobham exhibited these disagreeable attributes, supporting evidence is scant. Even Elizabeth Woodville, arguably the greatest social climber of them all, did not exhibit these characteristics. Anonymous poems composed in her honor, even after her death, refer to her variously as "ever [a] good lady, for the love of [Jesus]," and a "blessed creature," who wept of "grett [pity]" while she sought sanctuary in Westminster Abby after Warwick's temporary deposition of Edward IV.[186] Indeed, of the royal women discussed here, only one appears to match the stereotypical witch – England's most famous and controversial queen consort, Anne Boleyn.

Next to Elizabeth of York, Anne remains one the most recognizable and influential queen consorts. Yet, the two could not be more different. Elizabeth of York was royal by birth. Anne and the Boleyn family began life as middle-class mercers.[187]

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[184] Account Book of the household of Joan of Navarre, Manuscripts, Notebooks, Latin MS 238, John Rylands Library (The University of Manchester Library), Manchester, United Kingdom.
[185] Her visitors included the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Winchester, a Baron de Camoys (either the father or the son), and her stepson Prince Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester. See Alec Reginald Myers, "The Captivity of a Royal Witch: The Household Accounts of Queen Joan of Navarre, 1419-21," *The John Rylands Library* 24, no. 2 (1940): 269, accessed August 27, 2017, https://luna.manchester.ac.uk/luna/servlet/detail/Manchester~25~25~1073~196989.
[186] For complete poems, see Baldwin, 128-9.
[187] The family first rose to prominence in the mid-fifteenth century, when Anne's great-grandfather Geoffrey Boleyn II served as Lord Mayor of London between 1457 and 1458; Henry VI later knighted him. Soon after, Geoffrey purchased Hever Castle and converted the fortress into a manor, promoting his family to landed gentry. Having achieved wealth and property, the family next yearned for a title, which Geoffrey attempted to obtain by marrying his son William to Lady Margaret Butler, co-heiress to earldom of Ormond. Unfortunately, the title ultimately fell to her distant cousin, Piers Butler, much to the Boleyn family's dismay. See Eric Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn: 'The Most Happy'* (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 3-5.

Elizabeth, finding herself caught in the power struggles of others, created a kingdom at peace and founded a new dynasty. Anne and her family fought mercilessly for a position of influence, with Anne, perhaps inadvertently, nearly ending the peace Elizabeth forged.[188] Elizabeth was famous for all the right reasons. Anne was famous for all the wrong ones. Legends served only to further the witchcraft rumors that would later surround her, apparently detailing Anne's nonconformity.

In his posthumous 1585 book *The Rise and Growth of the Anglican Schism*, Nicolas Sander, who lived later in the sixteenth century than Anne Boleyn, highlights her unconventionality and emphasizes her common birth.[189] He refers regularly to her sexual vulgarity, contending that Thomas Boleyn, Anne's father, sent his daughter to France after he discovered her in a *ménage à trois* with both his butler and his chaplain. Still, she could not be satisfied, as upon her arrival at the French court she became known as the "English Mare" and "royal mule" after taking up with several noble men and the unidentified French king.[190] While queen, Sander also maintains that Anne Boleyn was openly sexual with several court gentlemen: Henry Norris, Francis Weston, William Brereton, and Mark Smeaton.[191] He further argues that Anne committed incest with her brother George Boleyn, since she was "a woman excessively given to pride and to self-love, and so she would have the next king of England to be a Boleyn by both the father's

[188] Her father Thomas, William and Lady Margaret's son, secured for himself both the position of esquire of the body to Henry VII, and the hand of Lady Elizabeth Howard whose father Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey, was heir to the dukedom of Norfolk. Later, he achieved for Anne a position at the court of Margaret of Austria. See Ives, 3-5.
[189] The family name, Sander, is occasionally recorded as Sanders or Slanders. His book, originally in Latin, is also known as *De origine ac progressu schismatis Anglicani*.
[190] Nicolas Sander, *The Rise and Growth of the Anglican Schism* (1585; repr., Rockford, Ill: Tan Books and Publishers, 1988), 25.
[191] These were the same men that Anne had been accused of having a sexual relationship while married to Henry VIII – Sander is implying that the accusations were true.

and mother's side."[192] Incest was a common theme in Sander's book, who goes so far as to claim that Anne Boleyn was actually Henry VIII's own child, born shortly after he ended an affair with Anne's mother, Elizabeth Howard.[193] When told of this, Henry VIII sternly replied "be her father who he may, she shall be my wife."[194] Evidently Anne had Henry VIII so enamored with her he did not care if the match was incestuous.

As for Anne's appearance and personal character, Sander paints her almost monster-like and as a woman full of desire and drive. In his book, he describes Anne as being:

> …rather tall in stature, with black hair and oval face of sallow [yellowed] complexion, as if troubled with jaundice. She had a protruding tooth under the upper lip, and on her right hand six fingers. There was a large wen [mole or cyst] under her chin, and therefore to hide its ugliness she wore a high dress covering her throat…amusing in her ways, playing well the lute, and was a good dancer…she was always well dressed, and every day made some change in the fashion of her garments. But as to the disposition of her mind, she was full of pride, ambition, envy, and impurity.[195]

These descriptions certainly made it easy for others to believe Anne was a witch, adding fuel the contemporary whispers of her affinity for magic that later authors, like Sander, used to accuse her directly soon after her death. A yellow-faced woman with a protruding tooth, a large mole –likely referencing a witch's teat –who can wile and manipulate those around her build a solid foundation for such a legend.

Indeed, what a story Sander could tell. Shortly after its publication, *The Rise and Growth of the Anglican Schism* quickly spread throughout Europe. The book appeared in Cologne in 1585, and Rome between 1586 and 1588. A French translation became

[192] Sander, 133.
[193] There is no evidence suggesting that Henry VIII and Elizabeth Howard ever had a sexual relationship.
[194] Sander, 27.
[195] Sander, 25.

available in 1587, and a German one in 1594. Reprints in Latin appeared in 1610, with an Italian, Portuguese, Polish, and Spanish version, along with yet another Latin, all by 1628. An updated French translation was reissued in 1678 and 1715. English translations began to appear as early as 1596, but failed to find footing; it would not appear in English again until the nineteenth century.[196] Evidently, many took Sander's words at their face value. Adam Blackwood, a Mary, Queen of Scots, sympathizer, repeatedly cited Sander in his works. The Spanish Jesuit Pedro de Ribadeneira also used Sander's book in his *Historia Ecclesiastica del scisma del reyno de Inglaterra*.[197] Likewise, Robert Parsons's *A Christian Directorie* presented Sander's work as factual, regularly referencing and citing its stories. Europe grew so enamored with the book and cited it so frequently that at least one scholar noted that it became "the basis of every Roman Catholic history."[198] While certainly an exaggeration, it is not hard to see why the book took hold and spread as rapidly as it did. Anne's story was already a dramatic one – low born woman marries the king of England only for him to execute her a little under three years later – Sander merely breathed personality into it.

However, while these fanciful legends obviously proved both exciting and entertaining, there is probably little truth to them. Sander descended from a long line of Catholic priests, and faithfully upheld the family tradition. The family fled into exile shortly after the ascension of Anne Boleyn's daughter, Queen Elizabeth I, who overturned her predecessor's Catholic policies and transformed England into a Protestant

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[196] Retha M. Warnicke, *The Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn: Family Politics at the Court of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 246-7.
[197] Warnicke, 247; Christopher Highley, " "A Pestilent and Seditious Book": Nicholas Sander's Schismatis Anglicani and Catholic Histories of the Reformation," University of Pennsylvania Press 68, no. 1-2, (March 2005): 152-4, accessed 10 March 2020, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/hlq.2005.68.1-2.151.
[198] Highley, 151.

nation. The family found refuge near the University of Louvain, still a Catholic stronghold. At some point, Sander traveled to Ireland to help incite a Catholic rebellion. He failed, and died in the Spring of 1581, probably either of disease or starvation. Sander then clearly had no sympathy for Anne, nor would any of his followers who might have helped finish his work. Anne had replaced the Catholic Katharine of Aragon, and her daughter undid the Catholic policies of Mary I.

Furthermore, Sander could hardly be described as a contemporary witness to Anne's life. Born in 1527, he would have been at most nine at Anne's execution in 1536.[199] His evidence, too, is shaky at best, relying on stories told by others who had not witnessed Anne's life, such as works by Reginald Pole, and legends retold by those who probably only met Anne occasionally, including an unnamed nobleman who was apparently acquainted with her father, Thomas Boleyn, including the rumor that Anne miscarried a deformed fetus in January 1536.[200] These facts make it hard to believe that Sander would seek or be able to create an accurate representation of Anne. But if Sander's legends are unreliable, then what is true?

Unfortunately, no contemporary portrait of Anne Boleyn survives, so it is difficult to ascertain what the queen actually looked like. However, one of the few extant descriptions of Anne Boleyn comes from a Venetian ambassador, who wrote:

> Madam Anne is not one of the handsomest women in the world; she is of middling stature, swarthy [dark or tanned] complexion, long neck, wide mouth, bosom not much raised, and in fact has nothing but the English King's great

[199] Ives, 41-2.

[200] Reginald Pole also would have had no reason to sympathize with Anne, as Henry VIII attained and executed Reginald's mother Margaret of Clarence, *so jure* Countess of Salisbury, on suspicion of treason. Many believe that Margaret's Catholic faith played a heavy role in the charges, as well as her close connection to the Crown: Margaret's father was Elizabeth of York's uncle, making Margaret and Henry VIII first cousins once removed. For more on Anne's miscarriage, see Ives, 296-7. See also Appendix E: The House of Tudor.

> appetite, and her eyes, which are black and beautiful, and take great effect on those who served the Queen [Katharine of Aragon] when she was on the throne.[201]

Not quite the monster Sander described. From this description arises an average woman of moderate beauty. There was nothing extraordinary about Anne's appearance or anything to suggest that she dabbled in the supernatural. Anne was apparently swarthy not sallow; had a wide mouth with no protruding tooth; and if she had any obvious abnormality or deformity – such as a large wen or sixth finger – the Venetian emissary would probably have referenced it in his description.

What then of her personality? Could Anne have been ill humored, harsh, argumentative, or inclined to swearing? Was she a prideful woman, prone to self-love and ambition? Did she suffer from melancholy and bouts of madness or insanity? Was she especially envious and wrathful? From the outside, it might have appeared that way, and Sander certainly thought so. Anne clearly caused a disruption to her community by carrying on with Henry VIII. While the king was known for his sexual promiscuity, the fact that he carried on with Anne Boleyn, who was of a peerless middle-class family, and meant to marry her made that disruption significant. Furthermore, despite her remarkable life, much about Anne's early years remains shrouded, a fact that probably aided in the creation of the numerous legends surrounding her and made Sander's tales that much more believable.

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[201] "Venice: October 1532," in *Calendar of State Papers Relating To English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, Volume 4, 1527-1533*, edited by Rawdon Brown (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1871), 355-368. *British History Online*, accessed 22 November 2019, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/venice/vol4/pp355-368.

For example, even the year of Anne's birth is up for debate. While some historians have placed it at or around 1507, making her a bride, mother, and queen around twenty-six, and a corpse by twenty-eight, others believe that Anne was born much earlier, around 1501, making her thirty-five at the time of her death.[202] One of the few remaining remnants from her early life that may reveal her birthdate is a letter, which she sent to her father after learning that she would be presented to "the Queen" and expected to converse with her in French.[203] The letter, now dated between 1513-1514, is littered with misspelled words (mostly phonetically), apologies for subpar penmanship, and an explanation that this was the first message she was composing by herself. These might suggest that the author was indeed a child of six. However, at six or seven years old, Anne would only have been just old enough to leave the nursery. It is hard to imagine that she would have been in any condition to be presented to royal authority. Most girls entered into royal service around their early teen years, making 1501 (or there about) the most likely year of her birth, with Anne composing her letter around twelve or thirteen. The numerous mistakes are probably a combination of her writing in French rather than her native English, and sixteenth-century Europe's lack of standardized spelling.[204]

However, while her birth year is speculative, there is no room to doubt the power that Anne had over the English court and Henry VIII. Here, Sander may be more

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[202] Warnicke, 35; Ives, 14-5.

[203] Which queen Anne is referring to – Katharine of Aragon, Anne of Brittany, or Henry VIII's sister Mary Tudor – is unknown. Given that Anne Boleyn expresses uncertainty in her ability to communicate in French, it seems unlikely that she would be referring to Katharine of Aragon. While Anne of Brittany is perhaps a more promising candidate, her death on 9 January 1514 renders the meeting between the two unlikely. Therefore, the queen in question is most probably Mary Tudor, whom Anne Boleyn met shortly before the former's marriage to Louis XII of France. If this is true, the letter could then be more accurately dated to between August 1514, when Anne left the service of Margaret of Austria, and 5 November, when Mary Tudor was crowned queen of France.

[204] For the complete letter, see Ives, plate 14.

accurate. Even before her marriage, exchanges between Anne and Henry VIII showcase her growing authority. For example, sometime on or around 30 November 1529, Henry VIII confronted his first wife, Katharine of Aragon, probably over her refusal to either consent to a divorce or retire to a nunnery and allow Henry VIII the opportunity to remarry. In any case, Katharine quickly gained the upper hand and Henry VIII left the room, having been soundly defeated in the battle of wits.

When Anne caught wind of the story, she publicly berated Henry VIII for losing:

> Did I not tell you that whenever you disputed with the queen that she was sure to have the upper hand? I see that some fine morning you will succumb to her reasoning and cast me off. I have been waiting long and might in the meanwhile have contracted some advantageous marriage, out of which I might have had issue [children], which is the greatest consolation in this word. But, alas! Farwell to my time and youth spent to no purpose at all.[205]

Dripping with sarcasm and mockery, Anne's anger was apparently genuine and her words struck a nerve with the king. The following Christmas, Anne declined to appear at the court banquet and festivities, despite Henry VIII's hopes that they might spend the season together. In an attempt to placate Anne, on 31 December he gifted her £110 and then abandoned the court, which was preparing to move from Greenwich to Richmond, and joined Anne at the Palace of Whitehall.[206] Reconciled, the couple remained there at least until February.[207] Anne clearly had a hold on Henry VIII, and the outburst in 1529

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[205] *Calendar of Letters, Despatches, and State Papers relating to the negotiations between England and Spain*, edited by G.A. Bergenroth et al. (1862-1954), 446, quoted in Ives, 128. The "advantageous marriage" Anne references may refer either to her early betrothal to her cousin James Butler, 9th Earl of Ormond and 2nd Earl of Ossory, or her brief engagement to Henry Percy, 6th Earl of Northumberland, both of which ended – more or less – to keep Anne free to marry Henry VIII.

[206] Some sources may refer to Whitehall by its more traditional name, York Place. The name gradually changed to Whitehall (occasionally written as White Hall) around 1532.

[207] Ives, 128.

and the subsequent reunion at Whitehall serves as a prime example. From here, Anne's authority would only grow.

Eventually, foreign powers noticed Anne's growing influence and made moves to placate her. In 1531, almost two years before her marriage to Henry VIII and coronation, the Milanese ambassador Augustino Scarpinello wrote to Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan, who was sending another officer to England:

> The [emissary] sent should not fail to pay his respects to some of the lords here who have influence with the king, *and to propitiate [appease] the most illustrious and beloved Anne [Boleyn]* with some trifles, preferably something brave and novel from [Milan] which she may know to be worth from 1,200 to 1,300 crowns to be divided among two or three visits. [208]

The quote is significant for several reasons. First, that the duke of Milan's representatives should meet with Anne Boleyn at all, who had no formal role in any international diplomatic relations. At this point, she was still a prospective bride to the still married Henry VIII who had yet to create Anne as the marquess of Pembroke. Secondly, it reveals the influence and power than Anne already had. Clearly, if Anne was not impressed with the emissary, then neither Henry VIII nor England would be doing business with the Milanese.

Even when Henry VIII and Anne were at odds with one another, ambassadors still felt the need to entreat Anne and earn her good favor. In 1535, a French diplomat returning from England remarked that a lovers' quarrel a Venetian representative had reported a fortnight ago was over, and that "All business passes through the hands

[208] "Milan: 1531," in *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts in the Archives and Collections of Milan 1385-1618*, edited by Allen B. Hinds (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1912), 533-548. *British History Online*, accessed 21 November 2019, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/milan/1385-1618/pp533-548. My emphasis. The conversion rates from crowns equates to about 300 to 325 pounds.

of…[Anne Boleyn], and must therefore be settled according to her purpose."[209] By this point, Anne had been married and crowned, with her power increasing as one would expect. However, it was to a much more significant degree than anyone could anticipate. That all business – which is to say all business that mattered – should pass through the hands of Anne Boleyn clearly shows her growing hegemony over Henry VIII and England.

By 1532, Henry VIII was making serious strides towards annulling his marriage to Katharine of Aragon, primarily by separating the Church of England from Roman Catholicism. His choice of a second wife decidedly fell to Anne Boleyn. However, despite her connections to the dukedom of Norfolk via her mother Elizabeth Howard, Anne was – royally speaking – too lowly ranked in the peerage of England. To remedy the situation and give her a station more appropriate for a prospective queen consort, on 1 September 1532 Henry VIII created Anne the Marquess of Pembroke.[210] Whether the idea was originally hers or not, Anne obviously played her part well. A witness to the ceremony at Windsor Castle wrote:

> Anne was conveyed by noblemen and the officers of arms…to the King, who was accompanied by the dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk… and the ambassador of France. Mr. Garter bore her patent of creation; and lady Mary, daughter to the duke of Norfolk, her mantle of crimson velvet, furred with ermines, and a coronet. [Anne] was…dressed in a surcoat of crimson velvet, furred with ermines, with strait sleeves, was led by Elizabeth countess of Rutland, and Dorothy countess of

[209] "Henry VIII: June 1535, 22-30," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 8, January-July 1535*, edited by James Gairdner (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1885), 356-379. *British History Online*, accessed 21 November 2019, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol8/pp356-379.

[210] Letters patent relating to Pembrokeshire: inspeximus of letters patent for Anne [Boleyn], 1 September 1532, Records of the Exchequer, and its related bodies, with those of the Office of First Fruits and Tenths, and the Court of Augmentations, Records of the King's Remembrancer, 156/43/2, The National Archives, Kew, London. The Letters describe Anne as both the 'Marquess' and the 'Marchioness' of Pembroke. While 'marquess' is ordinarily the male form of the title, its usage here is probably to indicate that Anne held the marquessate in her own right rather than by marriage. Historians sometimes employ a French alternate spelling, 'marquis.' Here I have elected to use the British variation.

> Sussex. While she kneeled before the King, Garter delivered her patent, which was read by the bishop of Winchester.[211]

Additionally, the Venetian ambassador noted that Anne was "completely covered with the most costly jewels."[212] In these descriptions, her investiture as a marquess – a rank above an earl and just below a duke – reveals her growing authority. Anne was neither married to Henry VIII nor crowned queen. Yet this powerful, public symbol of her authority demonstrates her growing influence. It was the first time in British history that the Crown granted a hereditary peerage to a woman.[213]

To further highlight her power and position, following the ceremony, Anne and Henry VIII sailed to Calais to meet with François I of France, hoping to gain his support for the impending marriage.[214] The pair returned to England shortly afterwards, having achieved their goal. At some point, Anne – still only a prospective bride – slept with Henry VIII, and by February she was pregnant. Just before Anne revealed her pregnancy, the couple married in secret, most likely in January. But the validity of their match was

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[211] "Henry VIII: September 1532, 1-15," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 5, 1531-1532*, edited by James Gairdner (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1880), 552-571. *British History Online*, accessed 22 November 2019, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol5/pp552-571.

[212] "Venice: September 1532," in *Calendar of State Papers Relating To English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, Volume 4, 1527-1533*, edited by Rawdon Brown (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1871), 350-355. *British History Online*, accessed 22 November 2019, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/venice/vol4/pp350-355.

[213] Margaret of Clarence, niece of Edward IV by his brother George, Duke of Clarence, may be the only exception. George was attainted at the time of his execution, meaning that his titles were legally forfeit and reverted to the Crown. However, Parliament in 1512 restored to Margaret the earldom of Salisbury – one of her father's subsidiary titles – which included its ability to pass to her descendants. Scholars debate whether by this act a woman had been granted a hereditary peerage, since the earldom was not created specifically for Margaret, as Pembroke was for Anne. Furthermore, rolls indicate that Margaret received the title only after making a large payment. Therefore, one could also argue she purchased the peerage from the Crown. Margaret's own attainment and execution in 1541 only adds to the confusion. The honour of Salisbury was not revived until 1789 by George III, first as an earldom then as a marquessate, granted to James Cecil; his descendants hold the title still today.

[214] François I's first wife and Anne's former employer, Queen Claude, Duchess of Brittany, died in 1524. His new wife, Archduchess Eleanor of Austria and Castile, did not attend the meeting, as she was Katharine of Aragon's niece by Juana I of Castile.

still dubious. Anne might be with child and the Marquess of Pembroke, but Katharine of Aragon was still at court living as queen. Eager to publicly recognize Anne and give legitimacy to their possibly male child, in March 1533 Henry VIII dismissed Katharine from court and reduced her to the rank of princess dowager.[215] The following June, Anne was crowned queen of England, the last queen consort to ever be crowned separately from her husband.[216]

After her coronation, there could be no doubt about the power and influence Anne exerted over Henry VIII and the royal court. Everything about Anne's life as queen showcased her authority, from her household and income, to the way foreign ambassadors treated her. In setting up her household, Anne apparently had one goal: to make it larger than any of her predecessors. Although many exact figures and numbers are no longer extant, historians have ascertained that she employed a "wide range of servants from ushers to pages to cooks and tailors [who] saw to personal needs and hauled her possessions from place to place during the royal progresses."[217] She also surrounded herself with numerous female attendants. In addition to her many ladies of both the privy chamber and the bedchamber and her no fewer than six maids of honor, Anne also brought to court several of her relatives, including her sister Mary Boleyn (albeit briefly); her cousin Jane Seymour, an act she would probably later regret; her sister-in-law Jane Parker, Viscountess Rochford; her cousin Mary Howard, later duchess of Richmond and Somerset after Anne aided in matching her to Henry VIII's illegitimate

[215] Katharine's new title, Princess Dowager of Wales, reflected her first marriage to Henry VIII's older brother Prince Arthur, Prince of Wales. In connection with him and their union, Katharine also held the titles of Dowager Duchess of Cornwall and Dowager Countess of Chester, and some sources may refer to her by them. Katharine and Henry VIII's child, Princess Mary, was declared illegitimate, and was referred to as Lady Mary.
[216] Ives, 165-72.
[217] Warnicke, 134.

son Henry FitzRoy; her aunt-by-marriage Elizabeth Wood, wife of James Boleyn; and her cousins Mary and Margaret 'Madge' Shelton.[218]

Of course, maintenance of such a substantial household necessitated an equally substantial income. As the Marquess of Pembroke, Anne could obviously draw on the incomes relating to her estates, which equated to roughly £1,000 annually.[219] Naturally, Anne's income increased after she became queen, once in late 1533, when lands held by Katharine in jointure transferred to Anne, then in early 1534, when parliament increased Anne's land and estate holdings to the value of £5,000, and once more later that year when Henry VIII transferred to her a manor in Hertfordshire. Around the same time he also authorized the customary statute that made Anne a *femme sole*, allowing her to conduct business transactions with regard to these holdings and incomes independently of her husband, Henry VIII.[220] Based on these figures, we can estimate Anne's yearly income to just over £6,000, approximately. While some previous queen consorts had higher incomes – between 1452 and 1453 the income of Margaret of Anjou, wife of Henry VI, totaled £7,563 – Anne's income was evidently greater than some of her

[218] There is some confusion as to whether Margaret and Mary Shelton were distinct individuals. It is possible that there was only one person, Margaret Shelton, who occasionally signed papers as 'Madge,' which later scholars misinterpreted to read 'Mary,' leading to the creation of the two women. However, the reverse may also be true: that Mary Shelton's signature has been misread as 'Madge,' leading to the creation of Margaret. For more on this debate, see Ives, 194-5, 211; and Warnicke, 151, 183, 212-13. For more on Anne's ladies, see ibid., 134.

[219] Letters patent relating to Pembrokeshire: inspeximus of letters patent for Anne [Boleyn], 1 September 1532, Records of the Exchequer, and its related bodies, with those of the Office of First Fruits and Tenths, and the Court of Augmentations, Records of the King's Remembrancer, 156/43/2, The National Archives, Kew, London; "Venice: September 1532," in *Calendar of State Papers Relating To English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, Volume 4, 1527-1533*, edited by Rawdon Brown (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1871), 350-355. *British History Online*, accessed 22 November 2019, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/venice/vol4/pp350-355.

[220] Warnicke, 132.

immediate predecessors. For example, Elizabeth Woodville's income between 1466 and 1467 was only £4,541.[221]

Anne's growing influence, seen by the way foreign dignitaries entreated her, her creation as a marquess, her enormous household and income certainly make it easy to believe Sander's comments, that Anne was "a woman excessively given to pride and to self-love," and "full of pride, ambition, envy, and impurity."[222] Her personality appears to align with the attributes of a witch. Anne had successfully disrupted the rituals and traditions of England. Her growing influence over Henry VIII had caused him to make her a marquess, break from the Catholic Church, divorce his wife, and make her a queen. Surely too, Anne must have been harsh and argumentative. Her public beratement of Henry VIII after losing a battle of wits to Katharine of Aragon proved those attributes. She must also have been envious and wrathful. She obviously pursued another woman's husband and the king of England no less. Looks can be deceiving. These facts coupled with Sander's words easily suggest the outrageous tale he told was true. While Anne Boleyn's personality will probably never fully emerge, there is another person who paints a very different portrait of Henry VIII's second wife: Thomas Wyatt.

Much of the relationship between Thomas and Anne remains controversial. They were undoubtedly acquainted with one another, but whether they were romantically involved is unknown. Thomas may have harbored feelings for Anne, but refrained from

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[221] For Elizabeth Woodville's accounts, see Account of John Forster, receiver general, for receipts, and for expenses of the household of Elizabeth Woodville, queen of Edward IV, 6-7 Edw IV (1466 to 1467), Records of the Exchequer, and its related bodies, with those of the Office of First Fruits and Tenths, and the Court of Augmentations, Records of the Treasury of the Receipt, Exchequer: Treasury of the Receipt: Miscellaneous Books, Wardrobe and Household, E 36/207, The National Archives, Kew, London. For Margaret of Anjou's records, see *The Household of Edward IV: The Black Book and the Ordinance of 1487*, edited by A.R. Myers (Manchester: University Press, 1959), quoted in in Arlene Okerlund, *Elizabeth: England's Slandered Queen* (Stroud: The History Press, 2009), 70.
[222] Sander, 27, 25.

pursuing her since he knew that Henry VIII desired her. However, Thomas' observance of the courtship between Anne and Henry VIII and his friendship with Anne Boleyn allow a unique insight into the couple's relationship and Anne's personality. In his poem "The Lover Despairing to Attain Unto His Lady's Grace Relinquisheth the Pursuit" Thomas writes:

> Whoso list to hunt, I know where is an hind,
> But as for me, hélas, I may no more.
> The vain travail hath wearied me so sore,
> I am of them that farthest cometh behind.
> Yet may I by no means my wearied mind
> Draw from the deer, but as she fleeth afore
> Fainting I follow. I leave off therefore,
> Sithens in a net I seek to hold the wind.
> Who list her hunt, I put him out of doubt,
> As well as I may spend his time in vain.
> And graven with diamonds in letters plain
> There is written, her fair neck round about:
> Noli me tangere, for Caesar's I am,
> And wild for to hold, though I seem tame.[223]

In the poem, the speaker – presumably Thomas himself – says that he cannot pursue a woman, for he must yield to another, greater authority than himself who also pursues the same woman. A perfect metaphor: Anne is the unnamed woman and Henry VIII the greater authority.

One of the most significant aspects of the poem is the imagery that it creates. The unnamed woman – Anne Boleyn – is portrayed as a deer being tracked and chased. Henry VIII is therefore no courtly lover seeking the hand of a beautiful young maiden, but a powerful hunter stalking his prey, ready to catch and kill at any moment. Hardly a love

[223] Thomas Wyatt, "The Lover Despairing to Attain Unto His Lady's Grace Relinquisheth the Pursuit," in *The Poetical Works of Sir Thomas Wyatt: with Memoir and Critical Dissertation*, edited by Charles Cowden Clarke (Oxford: Benediction Classics, 2011), 16. The poem's title is sometimes shortened to "Whoso list to hunt" and may be put into more modern terms "Who wishes to hunt her."

story. The deer runs but has nowhere to hide from the great authority that pursues it. As the speaker Thomas notes, the whole world knows to whom this deer belongs, since around its neck a collar reads "Noli me tangere, for Caesar's I am."[224] These last lines invoke a chilling and almost threatening sense – that no one could touch or save the deer, for it belonged to the same man it sought to escape.

Thomas' poem creates a very different picture than Sander. In the latter, Anne is some malevolent and deformed creature, purposely seducing Henry VIII in a clear bid for power. She forms a large household to cater to her every whim. She generates an enormous income because she is greedy. She publicly berates Henry VIII because she is harsh and cruel. Foreign dignitaries must bow and beseech her because Anne has Henry VIII ensnared in her charms and whoever displeases her also displeases the king. However, in Thomas' version, Anne is a victim, prey to a controlling predator she cannot escape. She runs yet she cannot hide and there is no one to protect her, for she has already been claimed. Maybe then she creates a large household and fills it with her relatives because she feels lonely, afraid, and her family gives her comfort. She generates an enormous income because Henry VIII thought it might please his new wife – tempt the deer to come to him. She berates Henry VIII because she feels the young years of her life have been spent with nothing to show for it. The ambassadors grant her gifts and put business deals before her not necessarily to please her, but to use her to get to the king. Anne's purpose therefore is neither malevolence nor power. Rather she becomes a

[224] Partially in Latin, the phrase translates to "Touch me not, for Caesar's I am" and recalls the words of Jesus of Nazareth supposedly spoken to Mary Magdalene when she recognized him after his resurrection as outlined in John 20:17.

woman trying to make the best of a situation Henry VIII placed her in against her own desires. A situation – as all the world knows – that turned deadly.

So which version of Anne is the correct one? Which author offers the more accurate insight into her? As we have already seen and discussed, Sander is not the most reliable source regarding her life. Born in in 1527, he was not a contemporary witness to Anne's life. A staunch Roman Catholic, he had every reason to despise Anne Boleyn: Henry VIII broke from Rome to marry her, Anne replaced the Catholic Katharine of Aragon, and Anne's daughter Elizabeth I created England a Protestant nation and forced the Sander family into exile. Furthermore, we have already seen how inaccurate Sander could be. He painted her a wretched and deformed creature; but an anonymous Venetian ambassador revealed Anne to be "of middling stature, [dark or tanned] complexion, long neck, wide mouth, bosom not much raised…and her eyes…black and beautiful."[225] Thomas Wyatt, by comparison, knew Anne personally. He was her friend before she met Henry VIII, an observer to both her rise in power and her tenure as queen, and probably a firsthand witness to her execution. While he may have had some bias – his poem does convey an aura of unattainable or lost love – this does nothing to suggest that his accounts are untrue or should be discarded.

There are two other reasons why Sander may have despised Anne Boleyn: her power and her gender. As we have seen, Anne clearly wielded much influence at court and over Henry VIII, whether she asked for it or not. One might even say that she ruled

[225] "Venice: October 1532," in *Calendar of State Papers Relating To English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, Volume 4, 1527-1533*, edited by Rawdon Brown (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1871), 355-368. *British History Online*, accessed 22 November 2019, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/venice/vol4/pp355-368. For more on Sander and his legacy, see Retha M. Warnicke, *The Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn: Family Politics at the Court of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 243-47.

over Henry VIII. At least one petitioner to the Crown in 1535 believed that she did, or at least exercised authority equal to his, describing Anne as "the name to be as mediatrix betwixt your Grace and high justice."[226] This was in direct contradiction to the precedent set by the story of Matilda and Stephen we examined in the beginning of the chapter. The right to rule belonged exclusively to men. So why was Anne Boleyn so powerful? What gave her the right to exercise such authority?

The answer may lie in the growing autonomy of the office of the queen consort. In England during the early middle ages, most queen consorts relied on their husbands to support themselves and their household financially, putting them entirely at their husband's mercy. However, in the mid-1200s Henry III broke from tradition by granting estates to his wife Eleanor of Provence valued at £4,000, giving her financial independence even after husband's death, as Eleanor retained control of them for her lifetime. This endowment set a precedent followed by future kings of England. In either their Last Wills or marriage contracts, kings would stipulate a set of dower lands and incomes – typically at £4,000 to £4,500 – which their queen consort would hold for life. We have already seen an example of this in the case of Joan of Navarre from the previous chapter, where Henry IV required in his Will that "the Quene [Joan] be endoyed of the Duche of [Lancaster]."[227] These incomes could be used to maintain both herself and her household, granting the office of the queen consort and its respective holder a certain amount of independence from her husband. However, at the core of this system remained

[226] "Henry VIII: August 1535, 1-10," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 9, August-December 1535,* edited by James Gairdner (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1886), 1-19. *British History Online,* accessed 21 November 2019, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol9/pp1-19.
[227] Henry VI of England, "Henry the Fourth," in *A Collection of All the Wills,* edited by Nichols, 204.

a gendered hierarchy. The queen consort and her treasurer were still answerable to the reigning king and his exchequer. At the end of her life, whatever lands and incomes a queen had held would revert to the Crown and its male holder. They were not hers to give away, either during her lifetime or after; as she could not bequeath them to a relative in her Last Will.[228] The queen was still beneath the king.

By granting so much authority to Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII effectively broke this system. The office of the queen consort was intended to remain subservient to the Crown, and as we have seen, Anne's increasing authority over Henry VIII threatened the stability of patriarchal England. The association of Anne Boleyn with magic and witchcraft was therefore a way to undermine her hegemony and vilify her memory. It was a way to delegitimize her authority. It transformed Anne from a woman "of middling stature, [dark or tanned] complexion, [and a] long neck [with] eyes…black and beautiful" into the monstrous creature Sander described. [229] It suppressed the idea of Anne as a deer seeking to escape her hunter, and turned her into a greedy, envious, and harsh woman who coveted another woman's husband, publicly berated him, and convinced him to break with all tradition by marrying and crowning her.

The same transformation that happened to Anne Boleyn also happened to Elizabeth Woodville. When, on 9 April 1483, her husband Edward IV died and left their twelve-year-old son as Edward V, Queen Elizabeth Woodville stood at a critical intersection. Her husband was dead, and her brother-in-law, Richard, Duke of Gloucester,

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[228] Anne Crawford, "The Queen's Council in the Middle Ages," *The English Historical Review* 116, no. 496 (November 2001): 1193-1195, accessed 28 July 2018. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1562291.
[229] "Venice: October 1532," in *Calendar of State Papers Relating To English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, Volume 4, 1527-1533*, edited by Rawdon Brown (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1871), 355-368. *British History Online*, accessed 22 November 2019, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/venice/vol4/pp355-368; Nicolas Sander, *The Rise and Growth of the Anglican Schism* (1585; repr., Rockford, Ill: Tan Books and Publishers, 1988), 25, 27.

was now Lord Protector.[230] She had been, as anonymous poets described her, "ever [a] good lady, for the love of [Jesus]," and a "blessed creature."[231] But now she was becoming something greater: the mother of the sovereign, Edward V who bore the Crown, and the only person who could check Gloucester's authority. This same situation subverted the gendered hierarchy described above. Elizabeth Woodville was the queen consort turned queen mother. Her office was legally inferior to both her son's as king and Gloucester's as Lord Protector. But Edward V was evidently prepared to grant his mother authority equal to his own. Gloucester and his ally Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, arrested Elizabeth Woodville's representatives Anthony Woodville and Richard Grey and attested to Edward V they meant to arrest the young king and take control of England for themselves. Edward V declared the charges baseless. He explained that his late father, Edward IV, had confidence in Anthony Woodville and Richard Grey, as did his mother, Elizabeth Woodville, the queen. It was only then that Buckingham proclaimed "it was not the business of women *but of men* to govern kingdoms."[232] No woman, Elizabeth Woodville included, could rule, even by proxy.

So how was Gloucester to ensure that Elizabeth Woodville remained powerless? By accusing her of witchcraft, a feat that he accomplished in the Titulus Regius we examined in the previous chapter:

> [T]he seid…Mariage bitwixt…King Edward and Elizabeth [Woodville], was made of grete presumption, without the knowyng and assent of the Lords of this Lond, *and also by Sorcerie and Wichecrafte, committed by the said Elizabeth*…And here also we consider, howe that said pretensed Mariage was made [privately] and secretely…and not openly in the face of the Church, aftre

[230] Edward IV of England, "King Edward IV," in *A Collection of All the Wills,* edited by Nichols, 345-349.
[231] For complete poems, see Baldwin, 128-9.
[232] Dominic Mancini, *De Occupatione Regni Anglie per Riccardum Tercium* (1483), 77-79, quoted in Okerlund, 205-6. My emphasis.

> the Lawe of Godds Churche, bot contrarie thereunto, and the laudable Custome of the Church of Englond.[233]

By this, he ensured Elizabeth Woodville would remain powerless and have no say in government. Whatever power she had upon her son's ascension was over.

Of course, there was only one way to ensure that women like Elizabeth Woodville and Anne Boleyn would never regain their authority. They both came from common backgrounds, they both rose through the ranks to become queen consorts, and both wielded great authority in their lifetime. For Henry VIII, the answer to the problem that Anne Boleyn posed was execution, a feat he accomplished on 19 May 1536. After several delays, Anne mounted a scaffold at the Tower Green. Henry VIII had annulled their marriage, bastardized their daughter, and now meant to take Jane Seymour as his wife.[234] Anne stood accused of sexual heresy: adultery with six men, including Thomas Wyatt, though he would later be declared innocent, and incest with her brother, George Boleyn. Her enemies called her a witch, claiming that her magic was the cause of all that had befallen England: the removal and later death of Katharine of Aragon, the destruction of the Catholic Church of England, and the apparent impotence of Henry VIII who had not conceived a male heir with his long desired second wife.[235] Facing the small crowd that had come to watch her final moments, Anne prayed God save the king, and beseeched the crowd to pray for her and "only judge the best" of her cause.[236] She dispensed the

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[233] Untitled, 1 Rich III, Records created, acquired, and inherited by Chancery, and also of the Wardrobe, Royal Household, Exchequer and various commissions, Records of the Enrolment Office, Chancery: Parliament Rolls, 65/114, The National Archives, Kew, London. My emphasis. For a more complete version, see Chris Given-Wilson, ed., *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England 1275-1504*, edited by Rosemary Horrox. Vol. 15, *Richard III: 1484-1485; Henry VII: 1485-1487* (London: The National Archives, 2005), 13-18.
[234] The same Jane Seymour that Anne Boleyn brought to court as part of her household.
[235] Sander, 24-8, 130-5. See also Warnicke, 230-232.
[236] Warnicke, 232.

customary alms. Her ladies blindfolded her and gently helped her to her knees as the crowd looked on silently. As Anne whispered to herself repeatedly "To Jesus Christ I commend my soule; Lord Jesu receive my soule," the executioner took his sword dispatched Anne's head with a single stroke.[237] It was over.

Yet, compared to Elizabeth Woodville, Anne's fate was an easy one. At least it was definitive. In June 1483, not long after he arrived in London with Edward V as his virtual prisoner, Gloucester officially deposed his nephew and crowned himself King Richard III. From this point on, Edward V and his brother Richard, Duke of York, disappear. Scholars have long since assumed that the two boys died and were probably murdered, their remains lying somewhere undiscovered in the Tower of London.[238] How Elizabeth Woodville reacted to this we will never know. If she ever did attempt to uncover the fate of her two sons, she apparently did so quietly, carefully leaving no trace of her investigation. Still, it easy to imagine that their unresolved fate haunted her until the end of her days.

The hegemony of the women we discussed fed into the stereotypes of a typical witch. Their power interrupted the customs and traditions of England. Women and queen consorts were intended to be subservient to the male-dominated Crown. When these women managed to disrupt that system, their enemies readily accused them of witchcraft, thus delegitimizing their authority and vilifying their memory. How else could one explain a woman's power other than that she obtained it from supernatural forces? It was,

[237] Warnicke, 233-4.
[238] Several skeletons matching the boys' description have been found over the centuries, though no one has positively identified any remains as being those of Elizabeth and Edward IV's missing sons. Current efforts are underway to excavate the Tower in search of the princes. For more on the fate of the two "princes in the tower," see Baldwin, 167-72.

as Buckingham said, not the business of women to govern kingdoms – at least not yet. An independent woman in a position of authority was certainly cause to accuse her of sorcery. In fifteenth and sixteenth century England, there was no woman more independent, more autonomous than a queen consort. Queenship was not supposed to exist outside of kingship, and when it did the answer was sorcery and the result was a woman on trial for witchcraft. It was a feat that resulted in death, either for herself or those she loved dearly.

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E/36: Exchequer: Treasury of the Receipt: Miscellaneous Books.

E/156: Exchequer: King's Remembrancer: Original Letters Patent.

KB/8: Court of King's Bench: Crown Side: Baga de Secretis.

KB/9: Court of King's Bench: Crown Side: Indictments Files, Oyer and Terminer Files and Informations Files.

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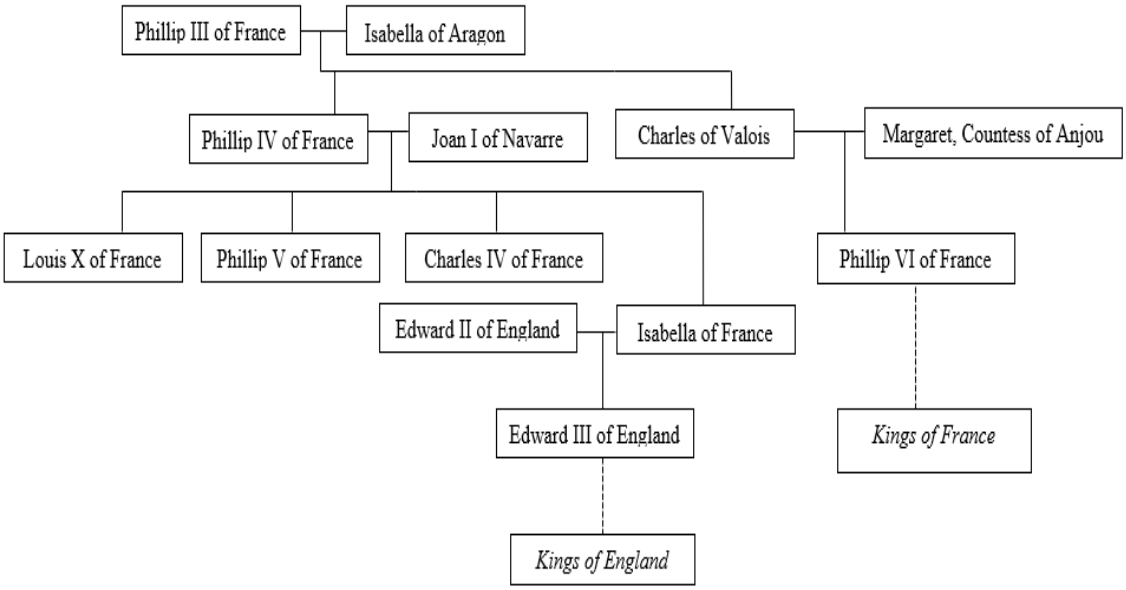
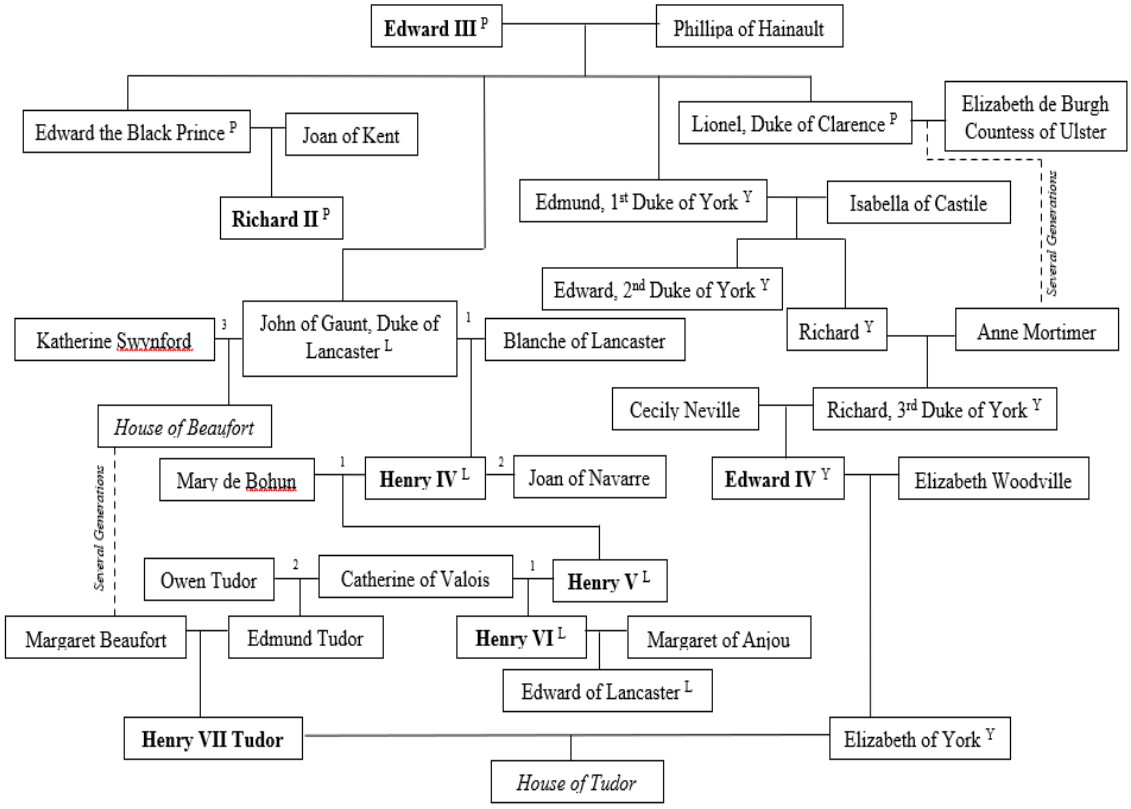
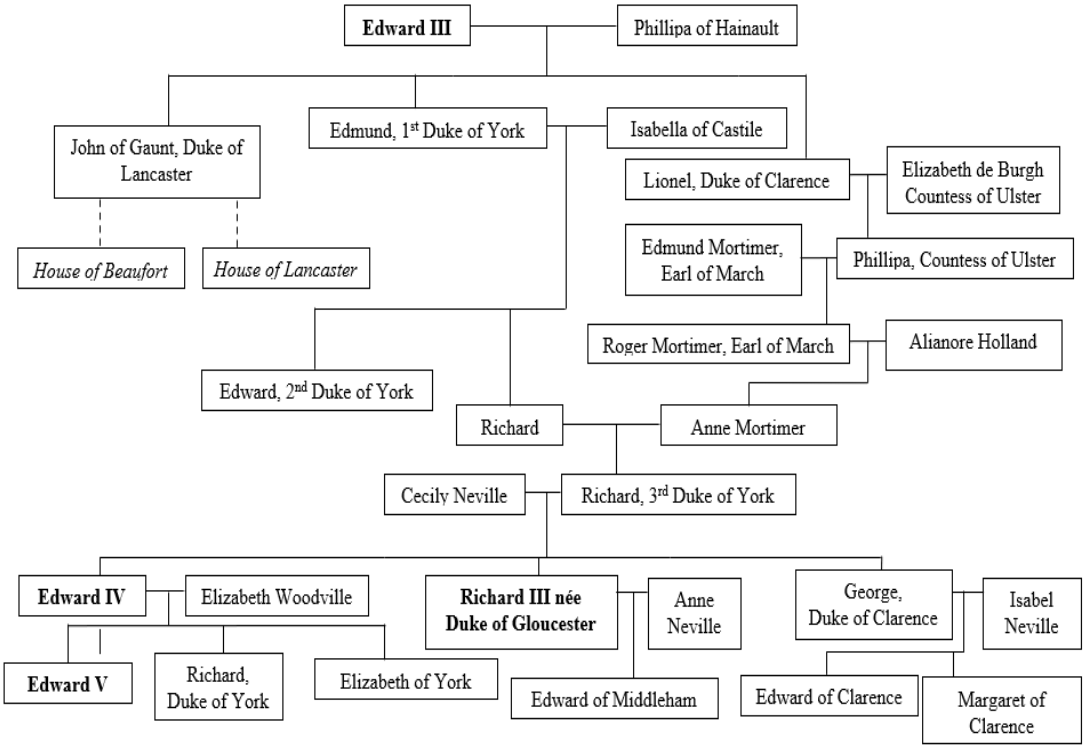
APPENDIX A: ENGLISH CLAIM TO THE FRENCH CROWN



APPENDIX B: THE HOUSE OF PLANTAGENET AND ITS CADET BRANCHES, THE HOUSES OF YORK AND LANCASTER



APPENDIX C: THE HOUSE OF YORK



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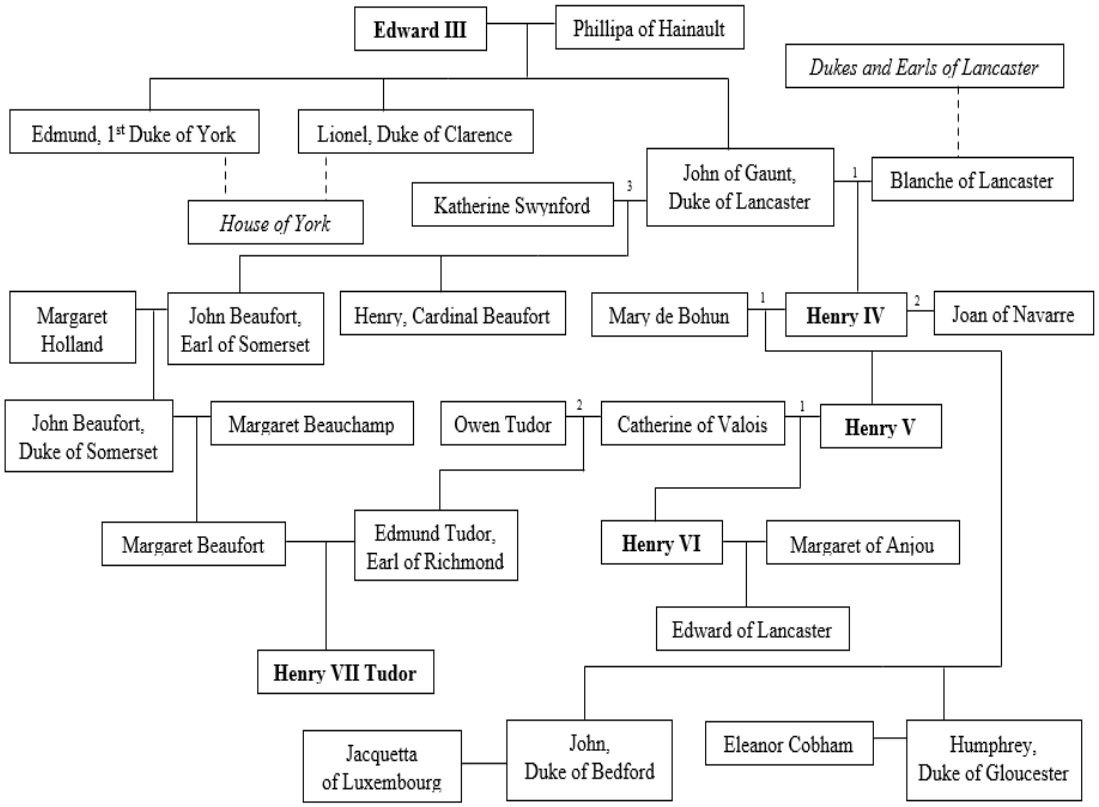
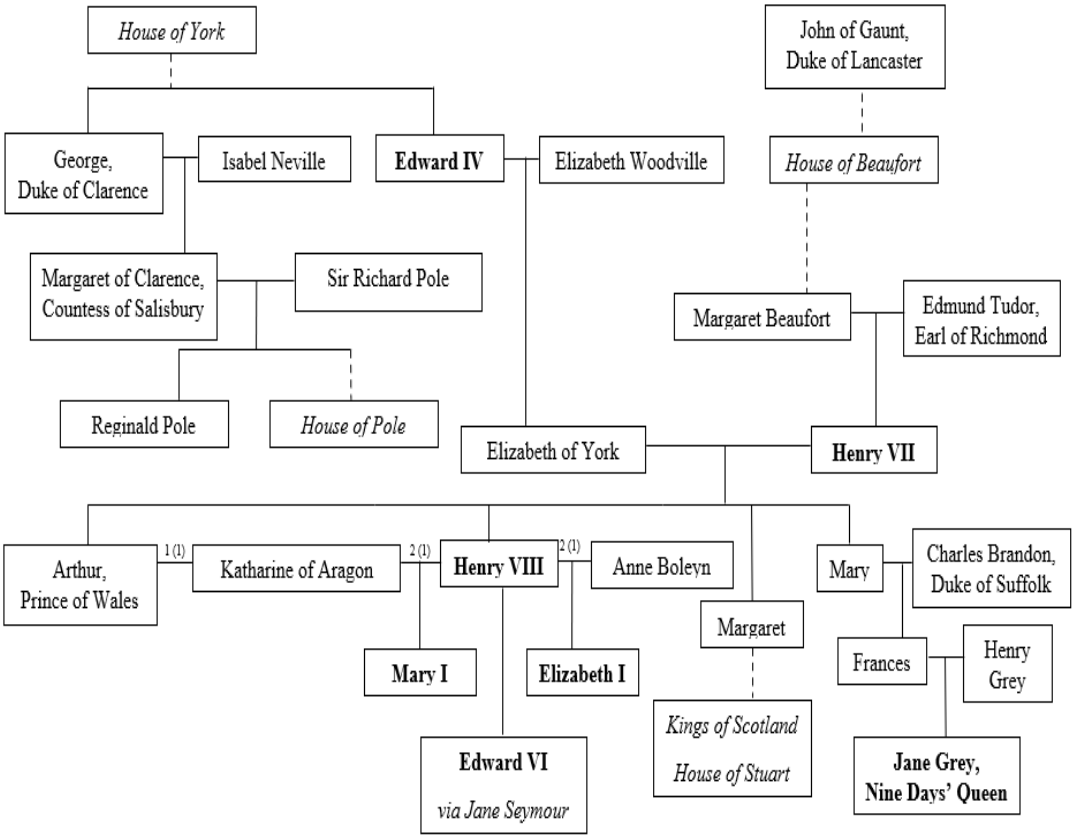
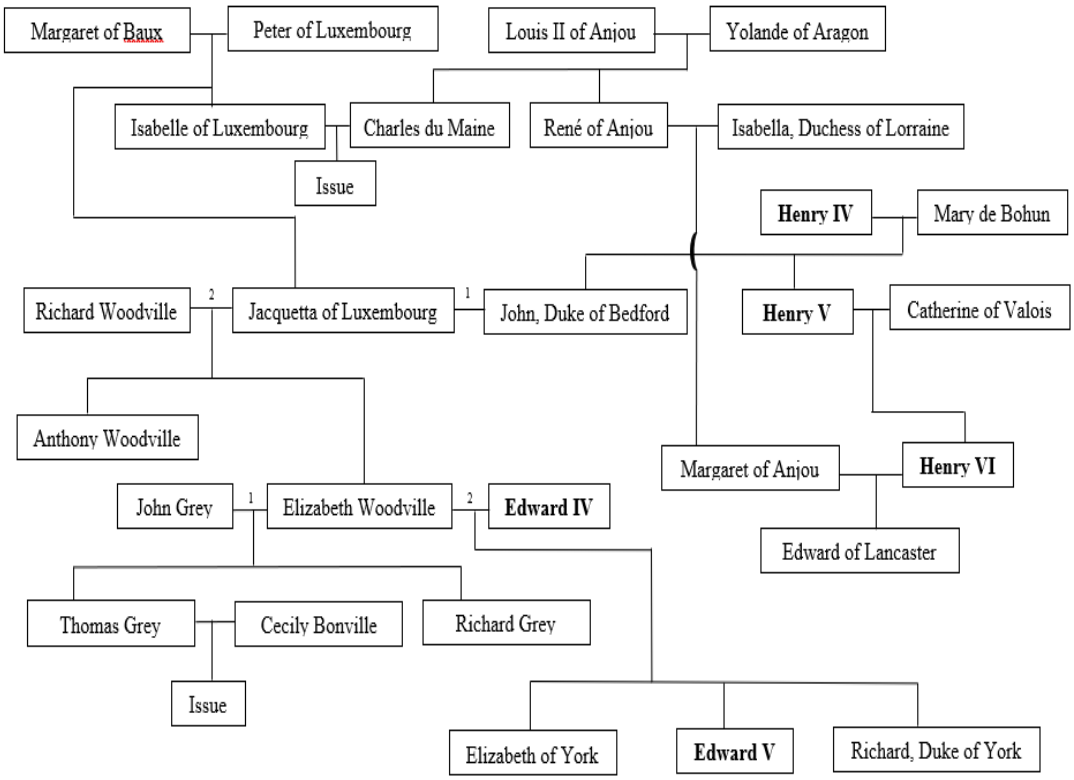


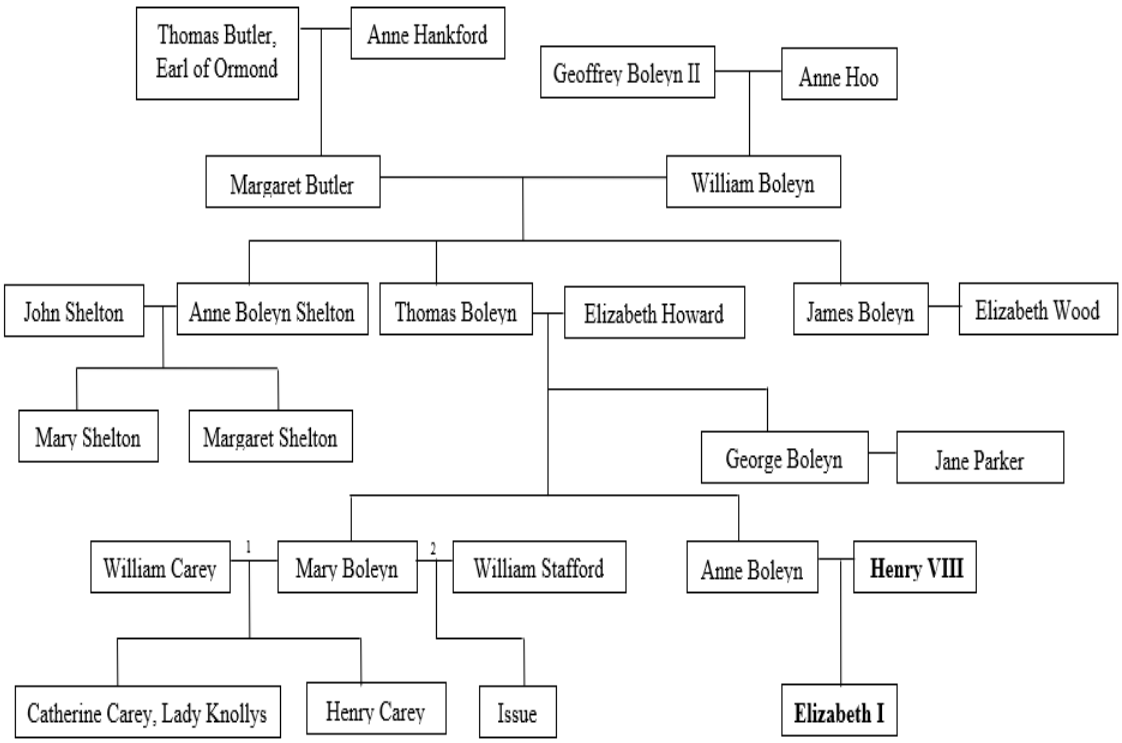
APPENDIX E: THE HOUSE OF TUDOR



APPENDIX F: THE WOODVILLE FAMILY TREE AND ITS ROYAL CONNECTIONS



APPENDIX G: THE BOLEYN FAMILY TREE



APPENDIX H: ENGLISH MONARCHS FROM 1377 TO 1603 IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

Monarch	House	Years Reigned	Reign Ended	Relationship to Predecessor
Richard II	Plantagenet	1377 – 1399	Overthrown by Henry IV	
Henry IV	Lancaster	1399-1413	Natural Death	First Cousin
Henry V	Lancaster	1413-1422	Natural Death	Son
Henry VI, First Reign	Lancaster	1422-1461	Overthrown by Edward IV	Son
Edward IV, First Reign	York	1461-1470	Overthrown by Henry VI's Supporters	Third Cousin
Henry VI, Second Reign	Lancaster	1470-1471	Overthrown by Edward IV	Third Cousin
Edward IV, Second Reign	York	1471-1483	Natural Death	Third Cousin
Edward V	York	1483	Overthrown by Richard III	Son
Richard III	York	1483-1485	Overthrown by Henry VII	Uncle
Henry VII	Tudor	1485-1509	Natural Death	Third Cousin Once Removed
Henry VIII	Tudor	1509-1547	Natural Death	Son
Edward VI	Tudor	1547-1553	Natural Death	Son
Jane I "Nine Days' Queen"	Grey	1553	Overthrown by Mary I	First Cousin Once Removed
Mary I	Tudor	1553-1558	Natural Death	First Cousin Once Removed
Elizabeth I	Tudor	1588-1603	Natural Death	Half-Sister