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Making and Breaking Kings: Generational Kingship and the Masculinities of the Last Plantagenet Kings of England,1308–1399

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Abstract

In this project, I apply ideas on hegemonic and chivalric masculinity to four generations of Plantagenet kings of England during the fourteenth century—Edward II, Edward III, Edward the Black Prince, Richard II. My aim is to decenter men from their default position at the normative gender. I specifically recontextualize kingship form the canonical frameworks of patriarchal power and privilege and reconfigure it in terms of new research on masculinity studies to understand how masculine identities interact with ideas on the generational component of kingship. This project has implications for other fields of study such as chivalry and medieval masculinity. I examine the displays of the gendered royal body in terms of coronations, displays of chivalry, marriage, the narrative of kingship through their relationship to royal saints, their death, burial, and commemoration.

Key words: Edward II, Edward III, Edward the Black Prince, Richard II, Isabella of France, Generational Kingship, Kingship Studies, Medieval Kingship, fourteenth-century England

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I. Introduction: "Let's Talk About kings"

> King Richard: Let's talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs,
> Make dust our paper, and with rainy eyes
> Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth.
> Let's choose executors and talk of wills.
> And yet not so, for what can we bequeath
> Save our deposèd bodies to the ground?[1]

In 2013, David Tennant played Richard II in the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of the play about the king. His version of Richard wore long luxurious gowns and had beautifully flowing hair that created an otherworldly androgyny for the monarch. As I encountered this portrayal of a medieval king, I was struck with how different he was from my understanding of other kings of the time. Shakespeare's, and by extension Tennant's, Richard was not traditionally masculine, especially when contrasted with the knights and nobles that surrounded the monarch, such as John of Gaunt, Richard's uncle. This portrayal piqued my interest into the unconventional displays of gender by Richard II and how his image was interpreted throughout the years. Were there other people who were as taken with just how different Richard was from the masculine image of the king? Was this anomaly something that was true to real life or did Shakespeare take liberties in his depiction of a disgraced and deposed monarch?

I dove into secondary source materials to first understand Richard's true biography, beyond just what was focused on by Shakespeare. Richard II's biography by Nigel Saul led me to the story of the royal lineage that ended in his deposition.[2] The works of David Carpenter were

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[1] William Shakespeare, *Richard II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019). Act 3, Scene 2, lines 150-155.
[2] Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

insightful as a broad frame to understand the social circumstances of the time I was studying.[3] I expanded my scope to look at the kings who came before Richard II and how they influenced him–Edward II, Edward III, and Edward the Black Prince. Mark Ormrod's work on Edward III[4] and Seymour Phillips work on Edward II led me to the understanding of constructions of monarchy, kingship and how being king was cumulative.[5] The kings before him, Edward II and Edward III had reigns that precipitated down to influence Richard's life in ways that I had not seen many other historians talk about. As I began comparing the different lives of these men this idea of kingship as a generational relationship that was both a family affair as well as a display of masculine power came into view as I began comparing the different lives of these men.[6] What compelled me further was the family dimension of these men's relationships. Yes, they were kings who inherited the throne from the men before them, but they were also fathers handing down their station to their sons. There was evidence that kings, by appointing mentors to their son's education, as well as bringing them along on to shadow them in realms of politics and war, were preparing their sons to inherent the throne.

The education of the kings led me to include Edward, the Black Prince, Edward III's son and Richard II's father, as a figure worth studying. The *Chronicles of the Black Prince* by Herald Chandos was illuminating to the chivalric standard of masculinity that seemed to be dominant at the time, whereas the language used to describe chivalric men such as Edward III and the Black

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[3] David Carpenter*, The Struggle for Mastery: Britain 1066-1284,* (London: Allen Lane, 2003).
[4] Mark Ormrod, *Edward III* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).
[5] Seymour Philips, *Edward II*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).
[6] Theresa Earenfight, "A Lifetime of Power: Beyond Binaries of Gender: Moving beyond the Exceptionalist Debate," in Heather J. Tanner, ed., *Medieval Elite Women and the Exercise of Power, 1100–1400* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 271-293.

Prince was absent from descriptions of Richard II and Edward II.[7] My attempts to understand the reasons for Richard's deposition led me to question if Richard's history was a tragedy due to his inability to perform as his grandfather and father before him did. Further examination into chronicles displayed noticeable semantic similarities between descriptions of Edward II and Richard II. Patterns began to emerge in the different ways to describe chivalric men compared to non-chivalric men. Richard and Edward II's biographies were complimentary to one another, with noticeable shadows of the events in the 1320s present in Richard's reign in the 1380s. It was commonly believed in England that a less able king would often come between two great monarchs.[8] Both Richard and Edward II found themselves at the bottom of the wheel of fortune. Contemporary chroniclers, as well as modern historians were ready to draw parallels to the failures in the reigns of both Edward II and Richard II. They fit into the unfortunate pattern of a weak king following a powerful king. But on what grounds were Edward and Richard found to be unable to rule? What were the charges of their depositions, what transgressions accrued that would validate the removal of a king? For that matter, what does it mean to be a king? What is kingship?

A king is above all others in his domain. For those anointed, he was chosen by God to act as his manifestation on earth. How then, can anyone challenge a king? What does it take to break down the veneer of a divinely favored king to reveal the man beneath? Why deposition? Why humiliate a king privately and publicly? Once a deposition comes, what comes next? Once one king is deposed the precedent is set and all subsequent kings become vulnerable to dissent and

[7] Herald Chandos, *Life of the Black Prince*, edited by Mildred K. Pope, and Eleanor Constance Lodge, (Breinigsville: Nabu Press, 2014).
[8] Saul, *Richard II*, 6.

usurpation. The deposition of King Edward II, though not the first deposition in England’s history, marked an important shift for kingship. There was a new feeling of vulnerability for kings. To counteract burgeoning anxieties, some questions needed to be answered: where did Edward II go wrong and how does a lineage survive an upset like this?

Following the signing of the Magna Carta in 1215, there was growing tension between king and nobles concerning the amount of power both hold respective to one another. In many ways, this political shift also gave way to what could be called slippages in masculinity. A battle for political power, between hegemony and democracy, occurred in the personal presentations and masculinity of men. The king’s personal identity could come into conflict with the political agenda of his kingdom. Furthermore, entering into the fourteenth century came a greater number of voices all claiming the authority of the crown to push their own agendas. This was an especially prominent battle in the court of Richard’s minority. Though king in name from the age of 10, Richard’s regents at court played stage for a struggle over power between the noble and knightly class for a decade. Richard’s uncles, John of Gaunt and Thomas of Woodstock, were a threatening presence to the knights of the Black Prince. Not only a tension between two classes of men but all backdropped by Richard’s coming-of-age, had the crown pulled in several different directions. The slippage of masculine identities led to the conflicts that pervaded Richard’s reign.

Edward III’s reign was a conventional late medieval model of monarchy, one where the king was a chivalric and masculine military leader with a merciful maternal wife to balance him. However, it seems that his grandson Richard was either unable or merely disinterested in doing the same. Whereas Edward II’s deposition is treated by historians as a tragic eventuality for an obliviously tyrannical king, it is more difficult to know why Richard II was deposed. Was it

Richard's inability to meet the chivalric standard of masculinity of the time because he was a pacifist or was there another transgression Richard was guilty of? Was he deposed for a perceived weakness around his gender presentation, or should we blame the treacherous and power-hungry players surrounding Richard's reign? Is it possible that Richard simply created an image for himself that was too large to justify? My argument moves from the personal to the political.[9] To understand the demise of the Plantagenet line, I will look at these three kings' relationship to one another and how a referential relationship was paramount to justifying generational kingship. I will look at the coronations, warfare, marriages, and burials of these kings to understand this generational relationship. Furthermore, I will attempt to understand the personal displays of the kings' gendered bodies through their veneration for Christian saints and deceased family members.

II. Historiography and Methods

Kingship is a highly rich but frankly outdated realm of study. The available sources related to kingship are seemingly infinite, however most date from the 1940s and '50s.[10] The scholarship that surrounds this subject is predicated on biographies and informed by Great-man theories, both of which underpin the stories as they are conventionally written. These are heavily theological, philosophical, political works centered on the personalities of kings and political theory. The political realm where these modern historians centered the stories cause anachronisms related to their interpretations of the fourteenth century. The stories of kings were

[9] Janet Coleman, *A History of Political Thought: from Ancient Greece to Early Christianity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), p. 134.
[10] Henry Allen Myers, *Medieval Kingship* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1982).

written during a context of widespread unrest and colonialism in Africa, Asia, and South America. These historians were entrenched in a mindset of power in a time when their own was being challenged. Their interest in the lives of fourteenth century kings was directly related to how those events reflected in contemporary issues. This is all to say, these sources are a bit antiquated, especially for my purposes of folding in the burgeoning discipline of masculinity studies. Mark Ormrod's work with masculinity and kingship was important for developing my perspectives on these kings' understanding and expressions of masculinity. His article, "Monarchy Martyrdom and Masculinity: England in the Later Middle Ages," framed kingship within the context of masculinity.[11] The article added depth to my understanding of gender constructions at the time, especially in relationship to Christianity. Katherine Lewis's essay, "Becoming a Virgin King: Richard II and Edward the Confessor" illuminated and brought more dimension to my understanding of Richard II.[12] She notes that Richard's participation in the veneration of Old English saints likely influenced personal identity. His connection and emulation of Edward the Confessor (b. ca. 1003, r. 1042–66) revealed an idea of a unified kingly identity that stretched beyond lifetimes and manifested in different areas of Richard's life. These similarities are seen in the lives of Richard and his great-grandfather Edward II.

Ernst Kantorowicz articulated the complex idea of a mortal and immortal image of king in *The King's Two Bodies* and the ways kings use memory and history to build upon their predecessor.[13] Kantorowicz's distinction between the representations of king as man versus the

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[11] W. M. Ormrod, *Edward III* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).
[12] Katherine J. Lewis, "Becoming a Virgin King: Richard II and Edward the Confessor," in *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women and Saints in Late Medieval Europe* (London: Routledge, 2002), 86–100.
[13]Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study of Medieval Political Theology.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

king as a government office brings greater clarity to the king's reign and the symbolism he vested into it as the continuation of the Plantagenet line. His theory of the political masculinity of royal lordship highlighted a contentious element of kingship that affected the relationships of Richard and his knights, his nobles, and other men under his rule. His work makes the personal political by splitting the physical body of a king and the political office of kingship. But his work is oddly genderless. To Kantorowicz, the king—the monarch—is always a man and is always presumed to be heterosexual. By adding gender to the conversation, my work challenges this assumption of the cis-normative and male-dominant gender of a king. It also brings greater dimension and clarity to the field of kingship to augment the possibilities of what a king could be. Paul Strohm's study of the transition from Plantagenet to Lancastrian rule after Richard's deposition further solidified the idea of a referential relationship between kings, especially as they justified their own power.[14]

My focus shifted toward studying Richard in the context of his dynasty to better understand that the unconventional behaviors of Richard II and Edward II set them apart from other kings. What can the masculine outliers of a society reveal about the predominant constructions of gender in their time? What was it about Edward and Richard that their contemporaries could not abide? Why was it so important to their subjects to both defame these kings as well as preserve them as inexplicable touchstones in the progression of medieval monarchy?

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[14] Paul Strohm, "The Trouble with Richard: The Reburial of Richard II and Lancastrian Symbolic Strategy," *Speculum* 71, no. 1 (1996): 87-111. doi:10.2307/2865202; and idem, *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399-1422* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press. 1998).

There is a wealth of new information and work being done in the realm of masculinity studies, especially those that pertained to similar medieval men. Herald Chandos and Jean Froissart's chronicles reveal the pervasive presence of chivalry in the construction of masculinity.[15] It also showed how deeply chivalry affected the lives of men who embraced the social order. Chivalry became more than just a code of honor; it was an organization of a military society and a social hierarchy that was in need of constant maintenance. Ruth Karras's book, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe,* revealed the lives of men participating in chivalry in fourteenth century.[16] Karras reveals that the code of chivalry that had knights devoted to the church, the state, and the weak was intended to protect the image and body of the king. Furthermore, an unwavering bravery in the face of hostility and the promise not to lie or break an oath were the key components of a well-constructed image of medieval masculinity. Chivalric men were entrenched in a system of belief and a code of conduct that was reliant on warfare and unequal power dynamics for their significance. The idea of protecting the weak, a criterion that is up to individual interpretation, is not only patronizing to the groups considered weak, but this adherence to a code of conduct seemingly elevated knights to a level of entitlement that placed them in the pursuit of undermining others to strengthen their own identity. Furthermore, looking into knights proved insightful in understanding "hegemonic masculinity," a term, coined by gender studies theorist Raewyn Connell, used to describe the hierarchical relationship opposing masculine identities take on in a patriarchal society.[17] This theory, reinforced by D. H. J. Morgan, C. J. Pascoe, and Tristan Bridges, recognizes the

[15] Herald Chandos, *Life of the Black Prince*.
[16] Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).
[17] Raewyn Connell, *Masculinities,* 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

existence of multiple alternative masculine identities wherein one subjugates all others and gains power from this strict hierarchy between himself, other men and women.[18] It was further used in understanding chivalry's effects on gender and sexuality of the time. Judith Butler's influential work on gender performativity serves as a basis for queer gender theory.[19]

This project is a theoretical analysis of four extremely well documented royal men that relies on modern studies instead of primary source documents. I examine recorded displays of the gendered body of these men in coronations, displays of chivalry, marriage, the king's patron saints, their deaths, and ceremonies of burial and commemoration. I engaged with the information about these kings in a comparative way, often times recontextualizing already well-established facts. The broad aim of this project is to use masculinity studies and theory of generational kingship to illuminate the gender norms of fourteenth-century England to examine the gender performativity of these kings, and provide a new way for other scholars to consider the study of kingship.

III. The Boys

It may seem inappropriate to refer to four highly dignified historical figures as "boys," especially when looking at the full span of their lives. However, I chose to use the term boys as a means to position these figures in the pivotal moment of their childhood, where I feel a great deal of structure in one's identity is derived. Especially in considering the generational relationship of

[18] C. J. Pascoe and Tristan Bridges, *Exploring Masculinities: Identity, Inequality, Continuity and Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
[19] Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

these men, it is important to emphasize their formative years. Childhood and adolescence are where I found the ideology, structure, and practice of a masculine identity take root.

Edward II (b. 1284, r. 1308-1327)

Edward was born in 1284 at Caernarfon castle in northern Wales and he had an upbringing that followed the convention of royal children being raised separate from their parents. While he spent his childhood in the castle where he was born, his parents were in Gascony. Edward's mentors and servants were responsible for his tutelage and upbringing. It is unclear how educated Edward II was, but we know that his father placed an ally of his in charge of the young prince's studies.[20] Prince Edward showed a particular kindness toward most of the servants in his household and the laborers of the castle, especially Alice de Leygrave, who became a foster mother to the prince. Edward had interests in riding and animal breeding, rather conventional interests for nobility at the time. However, he showed no interest in hunting nor falconry, some of the more masculine and conventional recreations for boys of the time. Furthermore, his interest in rowing, hedging, and ditching attracted some criticism as being hobbies unfit for a young prince. That, and his insistence to associate with laborers and low status workers had many contemporaries regard Edward as anomalous.[21]

He spent his young adulthood living indulgently, with access to money, wine, and close friends whenever he wanted. At the same time as Prince Edward took on more responsibility from his father, he spent his free time hosting tournaments for his knightly friends.[22]Despite the

[20] Guy Ferre was assigned his magister. Philips, *Edward II*, 38.
[21] Phillips, *Edward II*, 44.
[22] J. R. S Phillips, "The Place of the Reign of Edward II," in Gwilym Dodd and Anthony Musson eds., *The Reign of Edward II: New Perspectives* (York: York Medieval Press, 2006), 22-47.

seemingly chivalric tone of this event, it was all performative. Edward's involvement in knightly tournaments was less about his own engagement in chivalric culture, and more about getting drunk with his friends on his father's dime. When Edward came of age in 1301, his father granted him the title of prince of Wales and expected the Welsh to pay tribute to the prince.[23] Not only was this gesture an important step in defining the Welsh as subservient to the dominant English rule, and by extension elevating young Edward's status, but also it was an indication that Edward I wished for his son to carry on his legacy as a war-oriented and expansionist king. In tandem with this allocation of royal titles, Edward began to accompany his father on military campaigns into Scotland. Edward responded well to military leadership though he didn't show much genuine interest. This disinterest in conventional displays of male power caused a rift in the relationship between the king and his son. Edward I harnessed his military accomplishments as his main access to power as king. Military prowess was one of the most direct displays of power a man, but more importantly, a king can have.[24] In 1307, at the age of 23, Edward was preparing to join his father once again at a military camp up in Scotland when he learned of his father's death. Edward first went to London to receive his crown and title before riding north to his father's military camp. Once there, he accepted homage from his Scottish supporters before abandoning the campaign to attend to personal matters.[25] Edward's first official act as king was to repeal the banishment his father had placed on a close personal friend, Piers Gaveston, became a contentious favorite to the newly crowned King Edward II.

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[23] Phillips, *Edward II*, 30-37.
[24] Steven Bruso, "Bodies Hardened for War: Knighthood in Fifteenth-Century England," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 47, no. 2 (2017), 255–77. https://doi.org/10.1215/10829636-3846323.
[25] Phillips, *Edward II*, 125.

The following year, Edward and Isabella of France were married, an arrangement struck by Edward's father to help alleviate tensions with the French. In addition to the political aspects of their marriage, in the Middle Ages, marriage was an important step in the coming of age for a man. Until marriage, a man is locked into the nebulous area where his age and life experience might reflect an adult's life, but he would still be grouped with bachelors, a disproportionately young demographic.[26] This strange status afforded to marriage was partially due to the perceived sexual maturity of a man. Sexual prowess is a defining aspect to masculine identities, linked to the same physical prowess that was praised in chivalric warfare. Sexuality is often times imbued with a power dynamic, especially in heterosexual contexts.[27] In a conventional configuration, the man is meant to be a dominant force while the woman takes on a submissive role. There was an emphasis on romance in chivalry for this exact reason, that the subjugation of a woman will elevate the status of a man. Adding on to the power dynamics within the relationship, it was also an external display to other men. The amount of sex a man had was another way for him to engage in masculine competition with other men.[28] A man's role in his marriage was highly telling of how he engaged with larger hierarchies of masculinity.

Following Edward and Isabella's wedding and coronation, the nobles of Parliament felt Gaveston held too prominent a position in Edward's government. Furthermore, Gaveston's relationship to the king compromised England's relationship with France because it alienated the king from his queen. To say that Edward had issues in his marriage would be an understatement. From its conception, Edward showed a resistance to the match. At their wedding and first proper

[26] Karras, *From Boys to Men,* 97.
[27] Butler, *Undoing Gender,* 102-130.
[28] Connell, *Masculinities,* 103.

meeting, Edward showed little to no interest in Isabella nor her entourage of French nobles. Instead, his attention was focused on Gaveston, who not only sat next to the king at the banquet following the wedding, dressed in the royal purple, but Edward gave Gaveston the necklace that was meant to be Isabella's wedding gift.[29] This overt display of disrespect was felt so deeply by the French nobles that they left the event in a huff. Edward's displays of affection toward Gaveston were not in themselves the transgression that was made. The problem was that Edward was acting outside of his station as monarch and dismissing an integral element of his monarchy and masculinity: his queen. The situation was further strained because Isabella was only 12 at the time of the wedding while Edward was 24, an age difference that would lead to a delay in the couple's consummation of the marriage until Isabella was of age. This is perhaps the most overt instance of Edward's perceived deviant sexual behavior.

Isabella, Parliament, and even French officials all demanded that Gaveston be sent back into exile following this offense. Edward bitterly refused this demand until the Archbishop of Canterbury threatened excommunication if Gaveston did not leave England. The king and his favorite conceded and Gaveston was once again sent into exile before the end of 1308. Edward spent the next two years solely focused on getting Gaveston back, going so far as to petition the pope to revoke the threats of excommunication. He succeeded and Gaveston returned to a great deal of enmity from the nobles at court. Parliaments became tense, to the point that some officials refused to attend due to Gaveston's antagonistic, cocky, and disrespectful treatment towards high-status political figures.[30]

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[29] Lisa Hilton, *Queens Consort, England's Medieval Queens* (London: Weidenfeld & Nichelson, 2008), 47.
[30] Phillips, *Edward II*, 73, 150, 160.

Edward continued to face challenges—military failures in Scotland, powerful nobles' resentment toward favorites, and a deteriorating marriage. The Ordinances of 1311 were drawn up by Parliament to limit the king's right to go to war and to grant land without Parliament's approval in response to these issues. However, it was not enough to neutralize the disdain many nobles felt about Gaveston's position as the center of Edward's focus, they wanted Gaveston gone for good. However, even as nobles mobilized personal armies against the king in late 1311, Edward revoked the Ordinances. The Archbishop of Canterbury retaliated to this act of tyranny and excommunicated Gaveston. Parliament made plans soon after to have Gaveston captured. Edward, Gaveston, and Isabella feared capture and all fled north, pursued by baronial armies. The royal party managed to get to Scarborough, but Edward had to address the threats towards his power directly. Isabella and Edward attempted to return to York, leaving Gaveston in Scarborough where he was ultimately captured, promptly tried, declared guilty of treason, and executed June 19, 1312.[31]

Edward was, unsurprisingly, furious over the murder of his closest confident. Furthermore, amongst the members of Parliament, there was not a unified acceptance over the actions taken against the king and his favorite. Some members of the opposition felt embarrassed due to how rash the decision was made to execute Gaveston. It seemed that there was enough backing for Edward's fury that civil war threatened to erupt. Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, was able to step in to act as a mediator to achieve peace between the king and Parliament. Edward's need for revenge and war was soothed in exchange for Parliament's consent to send a new campaign into Scotland.[32] Despite Edward's continued indifference

[31] Phillips, *Edward II,* 180, 190.
[32] Phillips, *Edward II,* 211.

towards Isabella, she filled her role as queen well. She was remarked as both charming and diplomatic, often times having to play the role of reconciliatory in Edward's affairs both domestically and internationally. Furthermore, she provided four viable heirs to Edward's throne, effectively checking the boxes of requirements for a queen. Where the marriage drew notable attention was how Isabella exercised authority. It was remarked that she was a highly intelligent person who had an innate ability to get people to do as she said.[33] It was during these moments of high tension that a queen is most needed, as they were understood to be the merciful balance to the brash violence kings were expected to engage in. However, no matter Isabella's strength as queen, Edward's continual dismissal of her presence would cause the peace found in this moment to be short lived.

Military failures in Scotland, a famine, declines in trade, and skyrocketing prices of food all made tensions worse in England. Nevertheless, Edward once again showed unfair treatment towards more royal favorites. Notably he gave a large inheritance to two new favorites, Hugh Audley and Roger Damory. These men, along with Hugh Despenser the Older and Younger, were gifted titles and land that made them threateningly powerful at court.[34] The seemingly tone-deaf nature and disregard for the realm turned many moderate nobles irreversibly hostile toward Edward.

In 1322 Charles IV was crowned King of France. Charles harbored a personal disdain for England and Edward specifically due to his mistreatment of his sister Isabella. Charles brought about a new war between France and England in 1324. In response, Edward had all Frenchmen

[33] Ian Mortimer, *The Greatest Traitor: The Life of Sir Roger Mortimer, Ruler of England 1327–1330* (London: Pimlico Press, 2004).
[34] Phillips, *Edward II,* 240.

in England arrested and seized any French held properties. These acts were extended towards his wife, Queen Isabella and the members of her household. In tehe same way Edward's displays towards his favorites turned nobles at court against him, this action was the final straw for Isabella. After years of humiliation, inattention, and disrespect, Isabella's own frustrations came out in 1325. She was expected to return to England after brokering peace between her husband and her brother. She was successful in neutralizing the war with France, but, Isabella showed no interest in returning. She was upset over the seizure of her lands, the need to run from armed forces, and her own distaste for Edward's replacement for Gaveston, Hugh Despenser the Younger, who regularly abused high-status women in Isabella's household. Isabella, along with her lover, Roger Mortimer, and backed by French forces led a deposition against Edward and the removal of the Despensers. Edward's unpopularity had reached such a height at this point that when he attempted to gather 2,000 men to repel his wife's invasion from the southern coast, only 55 men answered the summons.[35]

Isabella used her charisma, significant familial connections, and superior intelligence to plan, gather support, and effectively execute her plan of invasion. On November 16, 1326, after months of pursuit, Isabella and Roger Mortimer captured Edward and Hugh Despenser the Younger. Edward was held in custody in Berkley Castle. Despenser was put on trial a week after his capture, where he was declared a traitor and sentenced to a gruesome death. The earls of Winchester and Lincoln met privately with Edward at Berkley. They informed Edward that if he were to abdicate the throne willingly, his son, Prince Edward, would succeed him; however, if he refused, his son would be disinherited, and the crown would pass to an alternative candidate.

[35] Phillips, *Edward II,* 307, 316, 504.

Edward begrudgingly agreed to abdicate so his son could succeed him. Edward continued to be held at Berkley Castle as his son became king.[36] Edward died in September 1327, though the exact date and cause of his death remains ambiguous. Several different causes of death are listed across various contemporary chronicles. Some state grief-induced illness as the cause, others suffocation, some merely mention that he died. The most infamous cause of death though was that Edward died from a red-hot piece of metal inserted into his anus. Though this cause appears in multiple different chronicles, most were written far after the event and have an antagonistic angle.[37]

Edward III (b. 1312, (r. 1327–1377)

Edward, born and raised in Windsor Castle, had a childhood similar to his father's. He, too, was raised by loyal tutors and house staff. Edward was taught to speak the Anglo-Norman French found at English court and could speak, read, and write in Latin, making him the first English ruler to leave examples of his handwriting. We also know that Edward had a stronger education than his father had, in large part due to the involvement of his mother, who bolstered the typical curriculum for an English monarch with her own choice in literature to meet the French standards of education.[38] However, Edward's personal interest came from studying the Nine Worthies, nine men from antiquity, from Jewish tradition, and Christian kingdoms who were considered to be the paradigms of leadership. These men–Alexander the Great, King David, King Arthur–were meant to be models for male leaders and would become role models for

[36] Phillips, *Edward II,* 422, 447, 488.
[37] Ian Mortimer, "Sermons of Sodomy: A Reconsideration of Edward II's Sodomitical Reputation," in Dodd and Musson, eds., *The Reign of Edward II,* 22-47.
[38] Ormrod, *Edward III,* 44, 46.

Edward. From a young age he showed a veneration towards them and attempted to model himself after these successful leaders from the past.

In 1325, at the age of 13, Edward accompanied Isabella as she went to negotiate peace between France and England in his father's place. This trip saw Edward used as a political bargaining chip by both his parents. King Edward II granted his son the title of Duke of Aquitaine in much the same way his own father had given him a title to strengthen claims to contentious territory. Isabella, on the other hand, conspired to depose the king on this trip. To garner greater support for her cause she arranged a marriage between Prince Edward and Phillippa of Hainault. Upon returning to England, Isabella deposed Edward II and Prince Edward was crowned king at age 14. However, Mortimer and Isabella held all real authority in the realm as Edward III was still considered too young to rule.

Before turning 18, Edward married Phillipa and fathered his first son, and he claimed the full authority of king. His marriage and birth of his first born signaled Edward had come of age, both acting as significant milestones on the road to manhood. In 1330, Edward captured Mortimer, charged him with treason, and executed him. Isabella avoided execution and lived another 30 years in relative prosperity. This action can be seen as Edward's first true act as king. Following his coup Edward reiterated the oaths he made at his coronation to rule "according to right and reason, as befits his royal dignity."[39]

Edward went on to reign as unquestioned king for 50 years. His long and illustrious reign seemed to show divine favor for Edward's authority. Until the final years of his life, Edward reigned as an authoritative and militaristic king whose power was seldom challenged. Perhaps

[39] Ormrod, *Edward III,* 28, 30, 35, 58, 91.

the most notable landmark in Edward's reign was his assertion towards the French throne. He traced a right to rule in France from his mother's status as a French princess. This action brought England into the Hundred Years' War that would define England's military landscape for generations. Edward involved his eldest son, Edward the Black Prince, in the beginnings of these conflicts as a way to begin delegating leadership. The more active role England took in military ventures, compared to the reign of Edward II, redefined chivalry of the time. Edward III stressed the role of chivalry in his own life as well as his military exploits as he formed the Order of the Garter in 1348.[40] Edward employed this chivalric order as a way of recognizing and rewarding acts of national contribution, public service, or personal service to the sovereign. This was a more effective and positively regarded means of rewarding court members loyal to him than the use of favorites employed by Edward II.

The longevity of Edward's reign brought decades of stability to England and bolstered its reputation on the international stage. However, Edward's abnormally long life led him to outlive many loved ones. His wife, siblings, and five of his 12 children predeceased him. Edward's health seriously declined in 1375 and led to widespread anxieties about the perceived weakness of the throne.[41] This, coupled with the death in 1376 of the heir apparent, Edward's eldest son, Edward, furthered these anxieties. Edward III died from a stroke in 1377 and left an unstable throne for his grandson, Richard to inherit.

[40] Ormrod, *Edward III,* 19-130, 299.
[41] Ormrod, *Edward III,* 550.

Edward, the Black Prince (1330–1376)

Edward the Black Prince never sat on the throne. Nevertheless, he was key to shaping the political and militaristic landscape of the fourteenth century. Furthermore, he profoundly affected the lives of Edward III and Richard II, acting as a link to the starkly different reigns of both kings. Edward's birth in 1330 inspired Edward III to assert his claim to the French throne leading to the beginning of the Hundred Years' War. Father and son had a strong relationship throughout Prince Edward's developmental years. Edward III relegated 500 marks a year to his wife Phillippa for Prince Edward's care.[42] In 1338, at the age of 8, Prince Edward was appointed guardian of the kingdom as his father travelled abroad for meetings with the King of France. This is a clear display on the part of Edward III to situate his son as the expectant heir to the throne. Prince Edward was placed into the same office again in 1340 and 1342.[43]

Prince Edward received the newly made of title Prince of Wales from his father in 1343 at a parliament at Westminster. Edward III gave him a circlet, gold ring, and silver rod, mirroring the proceedings of a coronation.[44] In 1346, in La Hogue, Prince Edward was knighted by his father and allowed to lead a portion of the army into the battle of Crécy. The prince's first opportunity to lead a force into battle allowed him to "win his spurs" in his father's eyes. Following the battle, Herald Chandos reported that the prince rejoined his father, embraced him, and bowed low to pay reverence to his father.[45] Not only was Prince Edward proving himself as a similarly militaristic leader as his father, but he was also appropriately deferential to his father.

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[42] William Hunt, "Edward the Black Prince," in *Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by Leslie Stephen, (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1889), 91.
[43] Jean Froissart, *Chronicles of England, France, Spain and the Adjoining Countries,* translated by Thomas Johnes (New York: The Colonial Press, 1901) 20.
[44] Hunt, "Edward the Black Prince," 108, 112
[45] Chandos Herald, *Life of the Black Prince,* 28, 41.

This was seemingly the perfect arrangement to affirm both king and prince as successful men and leaders. With age came more opportunities for Prince Edward to take on more significant roles in military leadership alongside his father. The Black Prince's competence in battle and continued deference to his father brought the prince renown that was commented on by English and French chroniclers alike.[46] Breaks between military campaigns allowed the prince and his knightly friends to participate in tournaments such as one held in May 1359.

Unconventionally, Edward the Black Prince married rather late in his life. He got married at the age of 31 to Joan of Kent. Though heir to the throne, the Black Prince was able to choose his wife unlike Edward II, Edward III and Richard. His choice in wife too was utterly striking. Firstly, Joan was related to Edward in the second degree, the two were second half-cousins. Their marriage violated the civil law that prohibited marriages within four degrees of consanguinity. Secondly, Joan had been previously married. Her first husband was Thomas Holland, a man who had been a knight under the Black Prince's direction and a close personal friend to the prince. Thomas and Joan had three children together by the time of Thomas's death in 1360. Despite these factors, Edward was taken with the woman's exceptional beauty and supposedly was rather open with his affections towards Joan while she was still married to Holland. The enthusiasm shown by the prince to marry this woman led Edward III to seek out a pardon from the pope to the issue of the pair being blood related.[47]

It is perhaps the romantic in me that hopes that the amount of enthusiasm shown by the Black Prince in his marriage to Joan was merely a display of authentic affection. However, I

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[46] See discussions of The Black Prince's campaigns in Calais in Froissart, *Chronicles of Froissart*, 40-55; and Chandos Herald, *Life of the Black Prince,* 32-44.
[47] Karl P. Wentersdorf, "The Clandestine Marriages of the Fair Maid of Kent," *Journal of Medieval History*, 5 no. 3, (1979), 203-231, DOI: 10.1016/0304-4181(79) 90037-X.

cannot help but think how this marriage related to Prince Edward's larger image as a chivalric man. For a chivalric man such as the Black Prince, marriage was a display of authority over and the subjugation of both men and women. It would have likely been controversial to marry a widow of a friend, and doubly so when that first marriage produced children as was the case here. However, Edward's decision to marry Joan could have been a gesture of support for his deceased friend, akin to the custom of a brother marrying his deceased brother's widow. Under this interpretation, Prince Edward was seemingly taking up a vow to protect the wife of a friend in his stead. Conversely though, the marriage could have been a display of claiming ownership over another man's possession. Following the death of her first husband, Joan would have inherited status, wealth and, property that in a new marriage would be absorbed into her new husband's wealth.

The year following Edward's marriage to Joan, Edward III granted his son the title Prince of Aquitaine that gave him full authority over Aquitaine and Gascony as prince. Edward along with his new wife created a home for themselves in La Rochelle. Well-practiced in positions of authority by this point, Herald Chandos recorded this time positively:

> He reigned seven years in Gascony, in joy, in peace, and in pleasantness, for all the princes and barons of all the country round about came to him to do homage; for a good lord, loyal and sage, they held him with one, accord, and rightly, if I dare say, for since the birth of God such fair state was never kept as his.[48]

Joan and Edward had their first son, Edward, in 1365 and in 1367, Joan gave birth to a second son, Richard.

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[48] Chandos Herald, *Life of the Black Prince,*

In 1365 Prince Edward, while on campaign in Castile, contracted an unknown disease. As the Black Prince's health slowly deteriorated loyalties towards him began to wane.[49] Though he continued on military campaigns for years after first developing his illness, in 1370 the prince was unable to mount a horse rendering him incapable of service.[50] He was bedridden with illness until his death in 1376 at the age of 46.

Richard II (b. 1367, r.1377–1399, d. 1400)

Richard II did not really know a time before his kingship. He was only 10 when he was crowned 11 days after the death of Edward III. People were anxious to see such a young king, especially one who ruled without a regent. However, there was a sense of optimism that surrounded the beginning of Richard's reign. The Archbishop of Canterbury asserted Richard was similar to "the second coming."[51] Richard's youth and vitality was reframed in this moment as something positive. He was the breath of fresh air that would lead England away from the instability surrounding Edward III's death with a Christ-like masculinity.

Richard was king in name alone at this age, though. Between 1377 and 1380, it should be noted that actual power was primarily held in the hands of a series of councilors, mostly officials lingering from Edward III's reign. The chancellor and treasurer were responsible for the bulk of internal affairs while the king's uncle, John of Gaunt, the Earl of Lancaster, worked internationally.[52]

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[49] Froissart, *Chronicles of Froissart*, 194.
[50] David Green, "Masculinity and Medicine: Thomas Walsingham and the Death of the Black Prince," *Journal of Medieval History*, 35 no. 1, (2009), 34-51.
[51] Saul *Richard II*, 24, 34.
[52] Saul, *Richard II,* 48.

Negotiations for Richard's marriage began soon after his ascension to the throne. As a young monarch he was a highly desirable option for political marriage and had no shortage of offers from prospective father-in-laws. Michael de la Pole, a knightly friend from Richard's father, was the primary matchmaker for the young king. It was a highly selective process to find the most advantageous match for the realm, but, there was attention paid towards Richard's own desires. In the face of multiple potential and highly strategic matches, Richard chose to marry Anne of Bohemia, daughter of Charles IV, the Holy Roman Emperor. The marriage was unpopular among the nobles in England due to the unremarkable trade connections and diplomatic advantages offered by the marriage. Yet Richard and Anne showed a great deal of affection towards one another from their first meeting and continued their relationship as loyal and devoted spouses for over a decade. This marriage marked an important step in Richard's development. Opportunity for the young king to establish his own lineage was significant, especially considering the tension that had surrounded his own succession. The Plantagenet line very seldom had any sort of dynastical stress as ample boys had been provided in every generation before Richard. However, no evidence of Anne ever being with child or even Richard having a mistress raised eyebrows around the royal marriage and did not aid in its widely held disinterest.[53]

Nevertheless, after Richard's marriage, tensions between king and nobles arose for the first time in Richard's reign. The peasants of the realm liked Richard, perhaps because of what he represented as the youthful face of a new age in England, they, however, felt that the political officials in Richard's government were leading the young monarch astray. The Peasant's Revolt

[53] Saul, *Richard II*, 147-160.

erupted in 1381 to express this discontent. Only 14 at the time, Richard first went to his royal advisors for a strategy to deal with the public unrest. Due to the nature of the peasants’ complaints, the advisors gave no council. Richard pivoted and met personally with the rioting peasants to advocate for peace and reconciliation. Richard’s insistence on mercy kept public opinions of him high, though many members of Richard’s government disagreed with his pacifist approach. Though reconciliation worked to a point, the amorphous nature of the revolt led to peasants storming the Tower of London and killing the chancellor and treasurer. Richard attempted once again to meet with rebels to diffuse the threats to the realm, but the mayor of London killed the leader, circumventing Richard’s attempts for peace. The revolt ended and due to Richard’s insistence on mercy and peace, his public image remained well intact.

Richard begrudgingly participated in the Hundred Years’ War. Richard and the English populace were both disinterested in the war, however, in 1383 as another peace agreement with France fell through, Richard was willing to embark on a personal campaign into France in response. However, his chancellor, Michael de la Pole, continued to push for retreat and reconciliation. This weak display upset more conservative minds at court, such as Richard’s uncles, John of Gaunt and Thomas of Woodstock, the Duke of Gloucester. Gaunt threatened not to associate with Richard if he did not personally cross the channel. Richard was caught between the wishes of his paternal uncles, the strongest male presence in his life, and the wishes of a man who had been a close personal friend of his father. This was a manifestation of different masculine identities battling for hegemony. The defensive strategy of Richard’s advisors ultimately won out and in 1385 the Treaty of Tournai was signed. The treaty extinguished conflicts with France and disconnected England from continental affairs. However, three years after the treaty, the threat of French invasion was present once again. De la Pole requested an

unprecedentedly high and unfair tax to fund the defense of the English coast. Fearing public disapproval of the tax, Parliament ordered the removal Michael de la Pole from office. Richard refused until nobles made direct reference to Edward II's deposition to intimidate Richard into compliance. He gave in and removed de la Pole from office. [54]

Richard had been forced into a corner by Parliament. Though he objected to their infringement on royal power and his own masculine leadership, Richard, did not have the military or political support to contest it. In 1387, Richard went on a tour of the realm as he attempted to rally support for himself. He installed Robert de Vere as Justice of Chester in order to grow a loyal military base for his regime and secured a ruling that Parliament's earlier conduct had been unlawful and treasonous. However, Richard's attempts to build power would prove futile. At his return in 1388, Richard was met with a further unified opposition from a group that became known as the Lords Appellant. Richard's uncles and his cousin, Henry Bolingbroke, were some of the most vocal members of this group. The Lords Appellant opposed the loyalists in power. The Lords Appellant charged these men with "living in vice, deluding the said king, [and] embracing the mammon of iniquity for themselves." Despite Richard's attempt to stall the proceedings, he saw his supporters executed in an event that would come to be known as the Merciless Parliament. The Lords Appellant shifted their focus to weed out more members of Richard's household on counts of treason. All of these men were friends to Richard's father, war veterans, and father-figures to Richard. Tensions reached their peak when Richard's childhood mentor, Simon Burley, stood trial. Richard presided over his trial, where he and Queen Anne objected, with Anne resting on her knees to plead for the man's life. Thomas of Woodstock

[54] Saul, *Richard II,* 102, 123, 136, 145, 158, 160.

continued to advocate for Burley's guilt, and Richard apparently became so enraged the two men almost got into a physical fight. Richard conceded when Woodstock reminded Richard that if he wished to keep his crown, he should stop defending his friends. [55] Once again, a shadow of Edward II was used as a threat to force Richard into a place of submission. This was a belittling and emasculating gesture from Richard's uncle. Chronicles often record the men sent to execution as seductors to the king, not only hinting at a defaming sexual deviancy, but undermined Richard's authority as a man. The issue of unwise counsellors leading him astray was a pervasive criticism in Richard's reign expressly due to his young age at his ascension. The Lords Appellant suggested that Richard did not have the same strength of character to stand up to corrupt advisors. They saw themselves as protecting the same boy-king they had refused to counsel during the Peasant's Revolt, a patronizing stance to take.

Following the events of the Merciless Parliament, Richard held a banquet for all parties who had been in attendance. This was customary at the end of all parliaments but takes on a sharper meaning in this context. It was another testament to the spirit of reconciliation, a queenly rather than kingly characteristic, Richard seemed to devote his life to. Two days after, all parties attended a solemn mass in Westminster Abbey where Richard renewed his coronation oaths, and the Lords Appellant renewed their oaths of homage. The lords argued that the renewal was needed as Richard had ascended to the throne as a minor and this marked his coming of age at 21-years old. This was an underhanded exchange to delegitimize the past decade Richard had been in power. Furthermore, Richard would continue to be referred to as "boy" in sermons and

[55] Saul, *Richard II,* 167, 172-74, 180, 183, quote on p. 173.

chronicles after this point.[56] Richard's manhood was actively kept from him by this reputation of nonage. However, there was an unspoken acknowledgement to the treasonable offenses just carried out against the king. Richard was likely exhausted from the harrowing experience of watching his closest friends sent to their deaths. Richard withdrew from politics in the following months to rest at a hunting lodge in Beckley, leaving the business of government to the men who had been so devoted to wrenching the power from his hands. The Lords Appellant led England into a period of destructive and embarrassing foreign affairs in Scotland, France, and Spain until Richard ultimately resumed control of the government in May 1389.[57] This time saw Richard doing damage control for the time the Lords Appellant had been in power. He disengaged with conflicts in Scotland as well as in Spain at this time giving greater peace to the realm. His next focus was untangling England from longstanding conflicts with France.

Anne died in 1394 at a manor outside of London and marked a shift in Richard's government. Grief-stricken, Richard had the manor torn down, destroying the last place Anne had been alive. Though he would remarry in two years, Richard never truly moved on from Anne. Richard's second wife, Isabella of Valois, was only six at the time of her marriage to Richard. The choice to remarry a child brought up concerns around the childless nature of Richard's marriage.[58] He knew that Isabella would not be able to consummate the new marriage until she came of age. This was exactly the reason he agreed to the marriage. Ostensibly Isabella was acting as a placeholder, a way for Richard to satisfy the need for a queen while still remaining committed to Anne.

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[56] Sylvia Federico, "Queer Times: Richard II in the Poems and Chronicles of Late Fourteenth-century England," *Medium Ævum* 79, no. 1 (2010), 25-46.
[57] Saul, *Richard II,* 186, 190-195.
[58] Saul, *Richard II,* 158, 186.

Despite complaints over Richard's choice to marry Isabella, their marriage brought Richard the peace he wanted with France. It is striking, is that despite Richard's accomplishment of the peace with France, he then shifted to engage in the first major military endeavor of his reign. He brought the largest military party up to that date to Ireland in 1395 and achieved the submission of several Irish chieftains. It was an accomplishment no other English king could claim and brought support for Richard back home. This was an anomalous event compared to the pacifistic behavior Richard displayed earlier in his reign. Perhaps Richard was attempting to rectify the insecurity the Merciless Parliament had caused in his kingship as well as his masculinity. Successful military campaigns had been the most direct means kings before Richard had used to justify their authority as king. That along with the insistence from his uncles to be more militaristic likely lead Richard to prove his authority as a man through military displays as well. Richard needed more than anything to stabilize the foundation of his kingship, thus his conventional display of masculine power.[59]

Richard was a less trusting king at this point. He was insistent on a far more distant public image, no one was allowed to look the king in the eyes and he elevated the terms of address from "my lord" to "your royal majesty." That along with Richard employing personal bodyguards of archers and stationing public officials across the realm to monitor daily life of common people negatively impacted Richard's public opinion. He was constructing an omnipotent, omnipresent, quasi-divine identity for himself and his kingship, things that at this point in his life were inexplicably linked. Richard recognized the nobles of Parliament continued to pose a threat to his power as king. To amend this, he attempted to divide the House of Lords

[59] Saul, *Richard II,* 190, 207, 223.

and the House of Commons to neutralize threats to his authority. Richard leaned upon the good favor he held with the common people of England he'd possessed since the Peasant's revolt. He went further in 1397 to neutralize perceived threats to his power by having three members of the Lords Appellant, including his uncle Thomas of Woodstock, arrested. One Lord Appellant, Richard FitzAlan, Duke of Arundel, was promptly put on trial, found guilty, and executed for crimes against the king during the Merciless Parliament. Several more men were exiled or faced execution for their participation in the Lord's Appellant or harboring sympathies towards them.[60] Before the rest could stand trial though, the king's uncle, Thomas of Woodstock, was killed while in Richard's custody. To those who did not believe Richard himself was responsible for the murder, he was still held accountable for it as the sovereign. The death of the king's uncle brought about a fight between Richard's cousin, Henry Bolingbroke, and Thomas de Mowbray, a former Lord Appellant. According to Bolingbroke, Mowbray had claimed that the two, as former Lords Appellant, were next in line for royal retribution. Mowbray vehemently denied these charges, as such a claim would have amounted to treason. A parliamentary committee decided that the two should settle the matter by battle, but at the last moment Richard stepped in and exiled the two dukes instead, Mowbray for life and Bolingbroke for ten years. The death of John of Gaunt in February 1399 offered Bolingbroke a chance to inherit Gaunt's station and end his exile. Still, correctly, perceiving Bolingbroke as a threat, Richard quickly expropriated his uncle's properties and extended Bolingbroke's exile to a life sentence. Thinking himself safe from threats from all sides, Richard departed on another trip for Ireland. However, Bolingbroke ultimately returned from exile in June of 1399. He landed in England with the intent to depose

[60] Saul, *Richard II,* 303.

Richard. Richard was forced to sail back to England and meet the deposition party for negotiations. He heard the charges of deposition and agreed to abdicate the throne to Bolingbroke if he would be allowed to live. Initially Richard's wishes were met, as an act of familial kindness, however, there were still people loyal to Richard in the realm who hoped to reinstall him as king. Bolingbroke could not permit this possibility. Richard was imprisoned in Pontefract Castle. Richard supposedly starved to death in mid-February 1400.[61]

Seeing these three kings across the span of a century, striking similarities are clear. Both Edward II and Richard were punished by their contemporaries for earthly connections as divine beings. These accusations undermined the monarchical masculinity both of these men were attempting to assert. In both cases, these men justified their station as heads of state by stressing their significance as anointed rulers. This elevation of a monarch as mediator between God and common mortals placed a special significance onto a ruler not found in the kingship of comparably powerful warlord kings.[62] These kings accessed their authority by performing acts of military and physical might. They justified their power with the actions of their body. Edward III's emphasis on his military during his reign could be seen as a means of reverting back to a stable configuration of kingship following a time of instability. However, Edward II and Richard did not employ this justification. Their elevated status as monarchs put them in a semi-divine light. While this granted them unfettered access to power and authority as specially chosen by God, it was a restrictive and precarious identity to present. A divine being was meant to be isolated away from lesser beings, and furthermore, would not have the same needs for human

[61] Saul, *Richard II,* 240, 303, 308, 312-24, 333, 340-367.
[62] Myers, *Medieval* Kingship, 245-299.

connection. Richard and Edward were men all the same beneath this veneer of divinity. They could not have it both ways, they could not be distant and set above the subjects they rule while still maintaining human connections. Here lies the issue of an individual representing the entirety of a government–the problem of hereditary monarchy. When given the power of a priest-like king, why should a king have to share his power with Parliament, a governmental body made up of mere mortals? Where Richard could neutralize threats to his power by breaking up groups of antagonists within Parliament, if Parliament wished to subdue Richard’s threats to their prerogatives, they would not be breaking a political body, instead they would break a man.

Edward II was punished for having earthly connections and relationships as a quasi-divine individual and he was deposed because he could not correct this disconnect. Richard was punished for having earthly connections as a quasi-divine individual and he chose to over correct in the opposite direction. Richard’s persona shifted in the latter half of his reign as he grappled with the challenges made to his authority. Richard’s solution was to more fully embrace his divine status. Richard found a stage to represent himself through public displays of his gendered body. I will follow the life cycle of each man to understand how they each presented their gender to the public.

Displays of the Gendered Body

Coronation

Coronations saw kings crowned, granted access to the tools of kingship, and vested with the power to enact them. The transference of power, especially in the lives of each of these men was stress-inducing, however, the reverie and intricate ceremony of a coronation is meant to start a king’s reign with grandeur and respect. Coronation was an ancient service where the monarch

is set above his people spiritually through the act of anointment—the application of Holy Oil by a clergyman—imbuing the sovereign with quasi-spiritual power. In the medieval mind, the coronation confirmed the king's status as ruler: it bequeathed him the right to sit above them and govern his kingdom legitimately.[63] Its inexplicable connection to a king's power makes coronation a gendered affair, especially in regards to the material culture of the proceedings and the way the king's masculine gender identity intersects with the other men engaging in the ceremony.

Before Edward II could be crowned there was an assembly of the nobles of the realm. These men were tasked to recognize the heir before his ascension into power. Their recognition to the monarch's ascension was essential because it allowed the new ruler to rule by the consent of his subjects.[64] However, this meeting caused a slight postponement to Edward II's coronation, which began on a holy day, February 18, 1308, the Feast of St. Matthias. However, this was four months from the originally planned date of the event. Edward II's coronation was meant to be held on the feast of St. Edward the Confessor, the royal saint of his family, on October 13.[65] The nobles refused to recognize Edward as heir to the throne in the months between these dates because of their concern over the presence of Piers Gaveston in Edward's government. Edward's first matter of business after his father's death was to repeal the banishment Gaveston was serving in France. Not only was this an issue of disrespect to his father's memory, but the nobles saw it as a destabilizing gesture. Following the illustrious reign of Edward I, the lawmaking king, Edward II's direct disregard for the actions of his father was an alarming gesture. The

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[63] Roy C. Strong, *Coronation: from the 8th to the 21st Century* (London: Harper Collins, 2006), 82-107.
[64] Strong, *Coronation,* 104.
[65] Phillips, *Edward II,* 27.

postponement of the coronation away from the feast of St. Edward the Confessor, the saint both men were named for, could have been a way of separating Edward II from the memory of Edward I. If this was the intention of the postponement, Edward II was understood from the very beginning to not be the same kind of king as his father.

Eventually this impasse was resolved and the ceremony could proceed. The day before the coronation, the monarch was meant to ride "bare-headed" to the Palace of Westminster, "to be seen by the people." This display was a humble beginning to a procession that was anything but humble. Before the events of the coronation, the king was meant to be bathed until he glistens and clothed in "spotless apparel." The bathing was done in the palace, before Edward made his way to Westminster Abbey for the formal ceremony. All members of the government accompanied the king on his journey to the abbey. The order of people was incredibly significant and key to understanding the social hierarchy under the new monarch. Edward was situated at the back of this long train of people and walked without shoes, only wearing socks. It was likely that this was another display of humility by the monarch. He was led by the hand by the bishops of Durham and Bath "in accordance with ancient custom."[66] Immediately before the king the chancellor, with the chalice of St. Edward. Ahead of the chancellor was the treasurer, bearing the paten, the silver platter that serves the eucharist. After the chalice and paten followed the earls, "especially who by kingship are nearly related to the king," who bear the scepter with the cross and the golden rod with the dove. The Earl of Arundel carried the vestments of the king along with Hugh Despenser the Elder and Roger Mortimer. After the regalia came Edward's cousin, the Earl of Lancaster, carrying Curtana, the dull sword of justice presented to all English kings

[66] Phillips, *Edward II,* 33.

when crowned. Gaveston was granted the highest honor of carrying the crown of St. Edward the Confessor into the Abbey, immediately before the king, which gave him precedence over all other nobles in the ceremony. Many different people held Edward's tools of kingship as a visual display of the checks on royal power these people offered, a detail that was added to the proceedings following the signing of the Magna Carta.[67] Each member of the procession was meant to willingly give Edward the power by which he would rule. It was a willful submission on the part of each man, all dressed in their most formal attire, to the most stripped-down version of the king. Edward as well as the members of the procession were sacrificing elements of conventional masculine identity to ratify a larger governmental power. Each member of the processions' strengthened the king with the tools at their disposal. It was only with the consent of the other members in the government that Edward, and any king after him, would achieve their full power as monarch.

Once inside the abbey, Edward took his place upon a throne covered in gold cloth and raised up on a platform.[68] The position and presentation of the throne was meant to put distance between the monarch and the rest of the populace–it made him a more distant and divinely sanctioned king. What was being presented was an image of a monarch who would glisten while in his beautiful vestments in order to create an ethereal image. Edward at this point was clean of the sins and blemishes that marred mortal men. This tied with the staging of the coronation that put the king on a throne on an elevated platform for all to see made Edward II comparable to the sun–omnipresent, radiant, yet distant.

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[67] Strong, *Coronation.* 278-303.
[68] Strong, *Coronation,* 266.

The Archbishop of Canterbury then addressed the people assembled and called for their will and consent to see the king crowned. Following their response, the king was then laid down upon carpets and cushions under the alter to have the Bishop pray over him. Then, the archbishop presented the king's coronation oath. It is notable to say that Edward gave his coronation oaths in French rather than Latin for the first time. This difference in the ancient proceedings of the coronation led many historians of the nineteenth and early twentieth century to remark that he was lazy, ignorant, and uneducated.[69] The change was likely made to be more accessible to all in attendance who spoke French as their vernacular language.[70] The oaths had Edward swear to uphold the laws, customs, and liberties granted by their ancestors, preserve and protect the Holy Church, and render justice to the people of the kingdom. He was to be a conventionally masculine ruler, acting as the protector of the realm, his family, and the church. Additionally, there was a new clause added for Edward II's procession. The fourth clause, bound Edward to "uphold the rightful laws and customs which the community of the realm have chosen." This was once again a means to restrict unlimited royal authority. The new clause was added directly in response to Edward's father's inability to follow checks to his power offered by nobles.[71] There again is the tension between the different masculine forces of government vying for hegemony. The king had up until this point in history been the unchallenged word of law, but the rising prominence of parliament would led to the power of king being diminished. Not only is his station as king different from all other English kings before him, but Edward's masculine

[69] Michael Prestwich, "The Court of Edward II," in Dodd and Musson, eds, *The Reign of Edward II New Perspectives,* 61-70.
[70] Phillips, *Edward II.* 42.
[71] Phillips, *Edward II,* 47.

identity was compromised by this infringement to his power made by the other men in his government.

Following the coronation oaths and another set of prostrating beneath the alter for prayers, came the anointing. Edward was taken to the alter with his back to the crowd before he removed his clothes, save his tunic. The king knelt before the archbishop as he was touched on his chest, hands, shoulders, and head with holy oil. This was an indispensable step in the construction of a monarch. The anointment of the monarch, more than any other step during the coronation, separated the monarch from mortals and set him above as chosen by God.[72] King was set above all other men with this sacerdotal form of masculinity. It is the same authority that is evoked by priest and offers an unquestionable access to power. The only one above a sacerdotal man was God. Where other points of the coronation were meant to put caps on the amount of royal authority afforded to Edward, anointment gave Edward seemingly boundless access to the authority of God. It was a more nuanced form of power than what was wielded by warlord kings of Old English Past. Instead of authority coming from sheer physical domination, this was a less conventionally masculine route to power, though still highly effective. It would ultimately be Edward II's status as an anointed king that kept his deposition at bay for so long. To challenge an anointed monarch was to challenge the authority of God.

Next came the vesting of the king. The clergyman refastened all the silver clasps on the king's tunic. Edward was then given his socks, shoes, and spurs, an object connected directly to chivalric masculinity, each by separate members of the procession. Charles of Valois, the future king of France, Aymer de Valence, earl of Pembroke, and Piers Gaveston each took a role in this

[72] Strong, *Coronation,* 289-293.

step.[73] Not only had Gaveston taken the role of a well-established noble to be included in the ceremony, but Gaveston was conflated to the future king of France, an act that was seen as a social upset by all those in attendance.

Moving forward the king was granted the sword of his kingship, Curtana. The sword was taken off the altar and presented to the king by the highest-ranking official. A display such as this acknowledged the ability for nobles of the government to themselves enact the power of the king's authority. However, this job was again given to Gaveston further angering the nobles in attendance as it emphasized Gaveston's undeserved station in the king's monarchy.[74] Furthermore, Curtana could be read as a phallic symbol. Curtana was a dull sword, meaning it was not a symbol for war. It was instead a tool of kingship, the sword held a specific authority given to men for the express reason of them being men. It is an evocation of the idea that monarchy was understood as being an inherently masculine prerogative. Within the context of Gaveston granting the sword to Edward, there are hints to the sexual nature of their relationship.

The king then kisses the bishops and together with the nobles of the realm, he is led back up the steps to the throne on stage. At this point, "the peers of the realm shall stand around the king and stretch forth their hands as a sign of fealty and offer themselves to support the king and the crown." The nobles often cited this moment as their justification for their opposition to the king.[75] By upholding the traditional rights of the crown, they were obligated to protect the crown and realm against perceived abuses, especially in the form of royal favorites. The coronation for

[73] Phillips, *Edward II,* 52.
[74] Phillips, *Edward II,* 63.
[75] Prestwich, "The Court of Edward II," 61-76

Edward II offered promises for his kingship that he would ultimately fail to deliver upon. His son, conversely, was given a less theatrical coronation.

Edward III's coronation was rather rushed due to worries of legitimacy following his father's deposition.[76] The same spectacle of the events given to Edward II could not be afforded to his son who needed to be crowned as fast as possible. Concerns around the stability of royal authority took precedence over the theatrics of it all. Edward III followed his father's precedence of delivering his oaths in the vernacular French rather than Latin. The less critical analysis afforded to Edward III's use of French was likely in response to the less formal nature of his coronation. What was seen in Edward II's reign as lazy and uneducated was reflected in Edward III's as an accessible and humanizing aspect of the coronation. Edward followed his father's model and delivered the same coronation oaths. The additional fourth verse of the oath to "uphold the rightful laws and customs which the community of the realm have chosen," carried over into the new generation of monarchy and was perhaps felt more profoundly following Edward II's deposition. Edward III was likewise anointed and bestowed with the special rights of a divinely sanctioned king. One might think that a rushed procession would mean that Edward III would have a harder time accessing royal authority compared to his father. However, the militaristic displays he performed early in his reign did a similar job of legitimizing Edward's reign as the coronation had done for his father.

Richard's coronation came as an optimistic distraction from the anxiety of leadership in the realm. For the past few years, the king had been ill enough to be largely removed from most everyday circumstances. Ideally, this time would have been a time for Edward III's son to begin

[76] Ormrod, *Edward III,* 44.

to transition into the primary leadership role. However, that ideal circumstance did not come to pass. The rush to have Richard crowned was due to the need to present a consistent leader on the throne of England and would suggest an air of stability in the realm. Richard's coronation was the first coronation in 50 years and attracted far-reaching popular interest. People traveled from all around England to see the new boy-king crowned. [77]

The coronation began with a display of military power: a marching procession of the knights of Bayeux followed by significant nobles and knights–war veterans and allies to the Black Prince. I see this as a reflection in the way kingship changed between Edward II and Richard II's reign. Edward III's reign had been so deeply entrenched in warfare that this transition of power needed the militaristic presence for purposes of legitimacy. Not only could the presence of these knights have been read as a continuation to the militaristic elements of Edward III's reign, but it was also a means of preserving the memory of Richard's father. The knights of Bayeux were meant to represent the men responsible for the safety of the realm, a means of harkening back to the conquest of England by William the Conqueror. These knights were both an offensive and defensive display. It was defensive to position a potentially vulnerable young monarch in a legacy of power that stretched back hundreds of years. The knights were offensive as they offered an unspoken promise to honor and defend Richard's throne and lineage.

All members of the procession were dressed in white to represent the new king's purity. This was a new step not just in Richard's life but seen as a new beginning for the realm of England. Richard was positioned at the back of the procession and leading the young king was

[77] Saul, *Richard II*, 24-30.

close friend of the Black Prince and Richard's personal mentor, Simon Burley.[78] Compare this to the position of Piers Gaveston, Simon Burley's significance young Richard's life is clear. Burley was acting as the most important man in the new monarchy as someone who was training Richard in what it meant to be king. Richard received the bulk of his political ideologies from Burley and the literature he gave the young monarch as his mentor.[79]

After delivering his coronation oaths, Richard was presented with the tools of his kingship. First was the sword, Curtana, to protect the kingdom. The sword as it was presented to all the monarchs before Richard was symbolic of the monarch's right to military power. If the sheathed sword was read as a concealed phallus it could have been a symbol for Richard's own status as not yet a man. Though he was a king and thus never experienced nonage, his status a boy was undeniable. With both a dull and a sharp side, the sword was meant to represent the ability to enact justice while still having the ability to show mercy. Richard was presented with a sheathed sword, perhaps evocative of the king's young age and the nature of his military still being largely led by councilors. Then came the scepter, a long rod with a sphere at its peak to represent the globe, the scepter was a metaphor for the king's worldly power. The scepter gave Richard authority to rule the everyday actions and provide justice for the people of his realm. Finally, Richard was given the ring with "the seal of holy faith." It was meant to represent Richard's commitment to his pastoral duties, symbolic in the same way a wedding ring is. There was an even deeper concept of infinity and immortality associated with the ring. In the same vein that God was everlasting, so too was the status of king. There lies an eternal commitment for the

[78] Gordon Kipling, "Richard II's 'Sumptuous Pageants' and the Idea of the Civic Triumph," in D. M. Bergeron, ed., *Pageantry in the Shakespearean Theatre* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 83-103.
[79] Saul, *Richard II,* 25.

monarchy to uphold and defend the needs of the church. They were pillars that leaned on one another for mutual support.[80] All of this was a means of positioning the king as a protector, an undeniably masculine station, to the different parts of civilization, even in Richard's young age.

Significantly, Richard's coronation saw a change in the order of proceedings. Before, the oaths of office were given *after* the new king was presented to the assembly. In this orientation, the oaths showed that the king was chosen and elected by the people he ruled. However, Richard made his oaths *before* being presented to the public. With this new order, he was to be acknowledged by his people as the king de jure, a king who ruled based on his entitlement to the throne. Richard's status as a Plantagenet was the primary justification for his position as king. The rearrangement was meant to strengthen the loyalty felt towards a king who was ruling primarily as his birthright rather than as a king by election.[81] It emphasized tradition and stability in a time of great stress. After all, what other reason would the men of Richard's government have to acknowledge them as his leader when he was still just a child? Richard found his own justification from the process of anointment. Several historians have mentioned how much the symbolism of anointment influenced Richard's life and worldviews as a monarch.[82] Richard thought of himself as the bridge between God and humans. Throughout his life there were visible displays to make an even holier public image, behaving as if he were a monarch ruling by divine right, a form of monarchy centuries ahead of its time. His insistent on the use elevated terms of address and commissioning religious art containing his likeness could be seen as Richard's effort

[80] Kipling, "Richard II's 'Sumptuous Pageants."
[81] Saul, *Richard II*, 26.
[82] Katherine J. Lewis, "Becoming a Virgin King: Richard II and Edward the Confessor," in Sam Riches, and Sarah Salih, eds, *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women and Saints in Late Medieval Europe* (London: Routledge, 2002), 86–100.

to construct this holy image of kingship. For Richard, this divine status was the best way to justify himself on the throne and for his early kingship it did create compelling symbols of power which he continued to lean upon later in life.

The pageantry that went into Richard and Edward II’s coronation was needed in order to build a larger persona for the King. The goal of their coronation was to construct the office of King for the man who was king. An elevated image of King was necessary to inspire the deference expected to maintain the strict hierarchy necessary to justify monarchy. On the other hand Edward III needed less pageantry because the justification for his rule was derived from the militaristic displays of his kingship, starting with his coup against his father. When a king was more concerned with military action and rooting his authority in that, there was less need to build theatrical presentations of authority and legitimacy because military justified a masculine personal as well as political identity.

Displays of Chivalry

Chivalry as a term finds its roots in the French word for horse, *cheval*. At this base level it would seem that the only requirement to be chivalric was the possession of a horse. Already there exists a stratification between those of the knightly class and the rest of the population based on the ability to gather enough funds to purchase your own horse. There was a further distancing between chivalric men and the rest of the population due to its systems of belief. Chivalry became a part of elite men’s lives at particularly crucial points in their lifecycle: during

adolescence and young adulthood. It was a way for boys to come into manhood completely surrounded by men of similar circumstances to affirm their burgeoning knightly identities.[83]

Chivalry was primarily a code of conduct, a set of morals for men who describe themselves as chivalric must adhere to. The code of chivalry saw a knight devoted to the church, the state, and the weak as a service of protection. Furthermore, there was an emphasis of unwavering bravery in the face of hostility. This, in addition to the promise not to lie or break an oath, made a well-constructed image of medieval masculinity. It was a widely recognized code across Europe that granted men recognition on an international level as members of the chivalric community. Chivalric men were entrenched in a system of belief and a code of conduct that was reliant on warfare as well as unequal power dynamics for their significance. The idea of protecting the weak, a criterion that is up to individual interpretation, is not only patronizing to the groups considered weak, but this adherence to a code of conduct seemingly elevated knights to a level of entitlement that had them in the pursuit of undermining others to strengthen their own identity.[84] While chivalry was defined by the events on the battlefield, finding one's place in the social hierarchy of a chivalric society saw many social interactions acting as the stage for these men's displays of masculinity. While war was a primary stage for chivalry, this section will focus on the social arenas that chivalry manifested and how each king contended with it.

Hierarchies of masculinity, which seem so orderly and tidy, are not. Chivalry was a code of honor, a social hierarchy, a kind of warfare, and the organization of a military society. Those who followed it often held a great deal of sway in the politics of their country due to their

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[83] Karras, *From Boys to Men*, 17-20.
[84] Derek G. Neal, *The Masculine Self in Late Medieval England* (University of Chicago Press, 2008), 127-145.

privileged economic and social status. In many aspects, the men who follow the chivalric moral code had feelings of supremacy over those who did not. We can see this in the tensions that manifested between the different male identities in a royal court. It was often this knightly class that would act as a check on the power exercised by the crown in order to protect the realm from tyranny.[85] These two masculine identities, that of the king versus the knight operated in a dialectic exchange.

Edward II was chivalric only as far as a performative display. He was interested in engaging in chivalry as a means of participating in a homosocial setting, this was the setting that introduced Prince Edward to Piers Gaveston. His intimate relationships with men often were a direct result of their associations through chivalric displays such as tournaments. Piers Gaveston was often Prince Edward's champion for jousts. Edward himself never participated in jousting, perhaps because of a personal disinterest but it was also possible that Edward was banned from participating in order to protect himself.[86] This was not a unique practice for Edward—the desire to keep the heir to the throne out of harm's way. It underlined the difference in the masculine identities between royalty and chivalric men. After all knights were meant to protect their monarchs. Nevertheless, this still was read as Edward being less masculine than the knights he associated with. Not only did Edward's noninvolvement in even performative aspects of chivalry weaken his masculine identity, but his identity was further undermined with hints of his sexual deviancy. I want to emphasize that Edward did not face persecution for the sole reason of him being engaged in homosexual relationships. It was well understood that the likes of Achilles and Alexander the Great, men venerated in chivalric circles, likewise were openly committed to male

[85] Bruso, "Bodies Hardened for War, 255–77.
[86] Phillips, *Edward II,* 45.

lovers. It was within the homosocial setting of chivalry that his relationships were condemnable. For one, Gaveston taking on the role as Edward's jousting champion could have been seen as a hint towards the roles the two took on in their sexual relationship, that of Gaveston being active and Edward being passive. Taking on a passive role in intimate relationships with men was significantly stigmatized as it was seen as a man becoming closer to a woman in his submission to another man. This though wasn't the sole objection to the pair's relationship. Chivalric settings were by their very nature homosocial and highly emphasized the friendship between men. The appropriation of a setting like this for engaging in male-male intimacy broke a silent trust held by all knights.[87] The possibility of male friendship being mistaken for male intimacy was a new anxiety that plagued the minds of many knights. Despite his involvement in the performance of chivalry, it was this complication that kept Edward II from achieving a chivalric status.

In addition, chivalry was employed by nobles to undermine his authority. Edward passed the Coming Armed to Parliament Act 1313 to keep members of Parliament from coming to meetings armed. Before the creation of this act, Edward had faced five discreet threats of military force from members of Parliament. Edward recognized his own weakness as a military leader and took strides to keep military uprising from fully erupting. He was using the law to protect himself. Edward employed Curtana, the dull sword of his kingship, to neutralize threats made to his authority. Similarly, Edward cancelled several chivalric tournaments throughout his reign out of fear that these tournaments would give his enemies a setting to conspire against him. It would seem that Edward's failure to perform militarily further diminished his masculine

[87] Mark Ormrod, "The Sexualities of Edward II," in Dodd and Musson, eds, *The Reign of Edward II New Perspectives*, 22-47.

identity. Furthermore, the poor opinions contemporaries expressed around Edward's gender and sexuality were manifesting in a more insecure and tyrannical construction of kingship.

Edward III on the other hand was able to engage fully and successfully in the social setting of chivalry. Edward had a long-standing fascination in conventional chivalric subjects. Not only did he show the conventional interest in the Nine Worthies that was expected of young princes, but also Edward surrounded himself with physical mementos and reminders of the legacies of his heroes and ancestors. Edward owned a relic of St George, the trappings of his knighthood. Edward even had an illustration made where he received the vestments directly from the saint. It was a means of connecting himself directly to the patron of chivalry. Still more arrestingly, the royal cabinet of curiosities included both the steel helmet thought to have been taken by Richard I from Saladin and the knife with which the Ismailian assassins had attempted to murder Edward I at Acre in 1272.[88] Part of chivalry was an amount of hero worshipping, a means to motivate young men to achieve the same success and acclaim of the heroes before them.

Edward created the Order of the Garter, an organization that was meant to replicate King Arthur's round table of knights. The circularity of a garter was meant to be evocative of the round table and act as a unifier for the many men who swore themselves to Edward III as his knights. Entering into the Order of the Garter saw the creation of a title and elevation in social standing as a royal knight. Edward used this organization to reward those who had served him loyally in war or had enacted significant actions on behalf of the sovereign. What, in another context would have seen as favoritism–the abominable crime both Edward II and Richard were

[88] Ormrod, *Edward III*, 15.

heavily persecuted for in their reigns–was seen as the proper acknowledgement for military service in Edward III's. It was acceptable due to the legitimacy these actions took on in the context of chivalry. There was still a proper masculine hierarchy enacted, same as there had been for the knights of King Arthur. It maintained the homosocial nature of knighthood, reinforced hierarchies, and further emphasized deference towards the king as both sovereign and military leader. More importantly though, the Order of the Garter was successful where other forms of patronage were not because Edward was able to successfully manipulate the existing concepts of masculinity, mediated through chivalric expressions and institutions, to keep nobles loyal to him.

Edward III's reign shifted the landscape of masculine identities. In response to the unrest of the 1320s, he was reverting back to a well-known route to power, that is military prowess. As he started the Hundred Years' War, for the first time since the Crusades, the knightly class was given an arena to prove their identities outside of just performative tournaments. Edward the Black Prince was just as successful in performing chivalric masculinity as his father was, in large part due to the mentorship that their relationship seemed to be. The delegation of military leadership was Edward III's greatest gift to his son as it created a strong image of a chivalric man any reasonable man would willingly follow.

The relationship between the Black Prince and his knights displays distinct elements of chivalric masculinity. This was masculinity derived from competition from other men; achieved through displays of physical aggression and prowess.[89] By marginalizing others, the hegemonic manifestation of masculinity is greater strengthened.[90] In a homosocial setting like the royal court and military camps of the Black Price, masculinity was not inherit but something earned.

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[89] Karras, *From Boys to Men*, 29–35.
[90] Connell, *Masculinities.* 832.

Masculinity was acquired through near constant competition between men. Especially in a time such as the Hundred Years' War where for the first time since the Crusades there were frequent large scale military campaigns. During the Hundred Years' War British masculinity was redefined, where knighthood and chivalry were finally being put back into a context as conflict instead of merely being a display of status. Chivalric masculinity was further structured with an unspoken hierarchy, but one informed by the people who are a part of it. One could argue that the Black Prince, by virtue of his birth, would have been at the pinnacle of this hierarchy no matter how proficient he was in conflict or war strategies. His title superseded his actions and guaranteed him a privileged position. However, despite this supremacy over others, he was a knight, and he was always meant to be beneath the leader of the realm, his own father. The Black Prince was properly reverent to his father and though this would perhaps undermine other masculine identities, it was the face that he was willfully submitting to his father that made him more masculine. He showed a security in his own masculinity in a way that continued to reaffirm it, like a feedback loop.

To Edward III, chivalry was a code of honor, a kind of warfare, and the organization of a military society.[91] Edward the Black Prince opened the door for chivalry to enter the political sphere. Many of the knights that served with him would join Richard in his monarchy and would shape his kingship.

Richard was mentored by his father's knightly peers yet he never developed any sort of interest in chivalric practices. Richard never showed any interest in the literary subjects of chivalry, he never participated in tournaments, he even went far enough to keep a trial by combat

[91] Karras, *From Boys to Men*, 67-70.

from going forward. Even Edward II would attend the festivities for tournaments. I argue that it was a combination of Richard’s personal disinterest in the affairs of chivalry and the manner in which he was introduced to chivalry that caused his striking noninvolvement. Simon Burley was Richard’s primary mentor and controlled the education of the young monarch. A knight who had served alongside the Black Prince, Burley’s mentorship shaped Richard’s most fundamental beliefs on both kingship as well as masculinity. Burley, as a chivalric man, would have likely taught Richard the codes of chivalry. For the purposes of educating a child, I could see the warfare of chivalry being omitted or minimized. The defense of the innocent, bravery in the face of hostility and service to the church and state were all components of a chivalric identity that made their way into Richard’s kingship. This may be where Richard’s insistence on mercy and reconciliation came from. Now this claim is speculative and could easily be dismissed since there is not much precedence for people of the Middle Ages sheltering children from brutal realities of life. It is fascinating to note how the incorporation of some chivalric qualities outside of the realms of warfare and competition are read as non-masculine.

Richard showed a great deal of respect for knights and soldiers alike, continuing to grant titles to chivalric men as his grandfather had, but that was as far as his involvement in chivalry went. Part of the answer for why Richard did not participate in such a core component of masculine life was he simply had interests in other things. He was a rather solitary person, bookish and deeply devoted to religion, meant he spent most of his free time alone. His identity was also inexplicably tied to his status as a monarch, leading to Richard’s increasingly distant demeanor. I would imagine that Richard saw involvement in the male competitions of chivalric socialization as beneath him. However, refusal to participate in chivalry severely limited chances of socialization, resulting in Richard lacking peers his own age for most of his developmental

years. Before the Merciless Parliament, Richard was mostly surrounded by men a generation older than him who advised his politics. After the Lords Appellant removed these men from Richard's life, he was left isolated. It was Richard's failure to perform chivalry that left himself and his monarchy isolated and vulnerable.

The King's Saints

Insight into the mental world of a medieval figure is incredibly hard to come by, but not only does devotion to a saint reveal the religious thoughts of the king to a degree but there is also some self-reflection apparent in these devotions. Looking at Edward III and Richard II, especially the latter, and their chosen saints will give us insights into one manner in which monarchs had to represent themselves. The veneration of saints gives us insight into the models offered for constructions of sacerdotal masculinity.

Edward III had a long-standing admiration for St George. He was a part of the cult of Saint George and during his reign would go on to venerate the saint at Windsor Castle, his childhood home.[92] St George was not only a model for chivalric military pursuits but was the patron saint of England. George served in the Roman military and his most widely known story consists of a young princess, dressed as a bride, getting saved by a valiant knight who subdued a monstrous dragon using the princess's girdle and making the sign of the cross. At first glance, George was the paradigm for a masculinely noble warrior. He pierced the dragon with a lance as well as beheading the beast. Both of these acts are deeply masculine actions. Lancing was an act of penetrating, a dominant and sexual act that suggests sexual violence. Then, severing the head

[92] Ormrod, *Edward III,* 78.

of the beast, what is considered one of the most emasculating ways to die, allowed a great man to dominate a monstrous beast. The mastery of a civilized force, a chivalric knight, over the monstrous, a threatening other that encroaches on the lives of those seen as helpless, the princess, was perhaps the most often replicated dynamic in chivalric storytelling. However, the story is about more than just a knight's triumph over a beast in the manliest way imaginable. How is a smaller, and by all accounts inferior, challenger able to best a mightier, brutish enemy? George relies on the powers of God, as kings do, to guide, protect, and make him great. St George making the sign of the cross as he barrels into the fight was a display of George putting complete and utter faith into God to protect him as he attempted to protect those he sees as smaller than him. Though not the most notable display of submission to God present in a hagiography, it is still illustrating a significant component in the constructions of Christian masculinity. This illuminates the paradoxical relationship that men are meant to be the active agents in all realms of their lives yet take on a submissive role in the eyes of God.[93]

Richard always had insecurity in his own position in power. Without the overt displays of military might he was in a precarious public position and his own young age, he had very little genuine foundation for his authority. The same attention to symbolism and public image paid during Richard's coronation was heavily present in how he navigated his kingship after the Merciless Parliament, as a "self-conscious manipulation of his public image."[94] The threats made to his authority by noble men in his court caused Richard to shift his public image from the merciful boyking presented during the Peasant's Revolt, to a mature, semi-divine, and distant

[93] Edward Christie, "Self-Mastery and Submission: Holiness and Masculinity in the Lives of Anglo-Saxon Martyr Kings," in Cullum and Lewis, eds, *Holiness and Masculinity in the Middle Ages,* 143–157.
[94] Saul, *Richard II,* 317.

king. One notable way he asserted this status as a distant, almost mythic ruler was through his commissioning of art. Richard is the first king that we know for sure what he looked like, in part because of his own conscious attempts to raise the personal place of the monarch, through the active use of imagery and artistic representation. Most monarchs at this point in history would commission the building of shrines to serve a similar end; it displayed a monarch's power while also honoring the saint. Richard however, was interested in manipulating his own image to more closely resemble these divine figures. Richard had a portrait of his coronation made that was later hung in Westminster Abbey.[95] Richard is shown as a young boy again seated on a throne and holding a sphere and scepter, a pretty literal representation of Richard at the time of his coronation. However, Nigel Saul compared the image of Richard's face–neutral, smooth, and young–as being close to likenesses painted of a young Jesus. This painting along with the Wilton Diptych, a piece Richard had commissioned for his personal worship, would continue to portray Richard in an elevated and divine way. The diptych, painted between 1395-99, shows Richard as a young man kneeling in front of three saints, Edward the Confessor, Edmund the Martyr, and John the Baptist. Once again Richard is painted in a youthful way, despite the fact that the piece being commissioned well into his adult life. Perhaps there is the same likeness attempting to be drawn here as there was in the earlier painting. To say Richard wanted to be seen as Jesus would have been blasphemy, however, the allusion had been made for him by the Archbishop of Cantebury at his coronation. Richard looks right, towards the other panel that shows the Virgin Mary holding the Christ Child with 11 angels surrounding them. The Christ Child makes an ambiguous gesture towards Richard that should be read as him blessing the monarch. The

[95] Saul, Richard II, 87-90. For the image, see https://www.westminster-abbey.org/media/10816/richard-ii-portrait.jpg?center=0.247777777.

meaning behind the piece is rather nebulous since it was primarily used for Richard's personal worship, something secretive and introspective.[96] The crux of the painting though is perhaps found in a relatively new discovery during restoration: an angel holds a banner with a circular top to it. On the top of this banner is a micro-painting of what seems to be an island and on this island is a castle. Some have interpreted this hidden image to be a representation of England.[97] It could be understood that as Richard kneels, being present to Mary and her child, Richard is offering England to Mary, some have said almost like a dowry, so that he may rule the island better with her aid. This meaning would emphasizes the elevated image Richard was trying to create.

The saints that present Richard to the Mother Mary are also significant to understanding Richard. Starting from the left is St Edmund the Martyr. His story was the well-worn tale of a Christian king having to sacrifice himself to save others from an abusively powerful enemy. In this case he was ultimately killed by the invading Norse army. The shaft of an arrow that killed him can be seen protruding from the man's side in Richard's diptych. Richard likely felt a connection to Edmund due to his own status as a boy-king, though he never made it to adulthood like Richard. Furthermore, Edmund was representative of a king taking on the role as protector of his people from exterior threats.[98] What is interesting is that the same interpretation given to St. George's dragon dying due to penetration, so too is Edmund. It is striking that Richard would want to include an image of a non-masculine king in his personal worship device. On the far

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[96] Anonymous, "The Wilton Diptych," egg on oak, 53 x 37 cm, ca.1395-99, London, The National Gallery, inv. no. NG4451. https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/english-or-french-the-wilton-diptych
[97] J. H. Harvey, "The Wilton Diptych-a Re-examination," *Archaeologia* 98 (1961), 1-28.
[98] Christie, "Self-Mastery and Submission," 143-157.

right is St John the Baptist, identifiable because of the lamb in his arms. His primary role in the painting is to present Richard to the holy mother and son. He holds a steadying hand behind Richard's back as he ingratiates the young monarch to the Madonna and child. Furthermore, there are strong connections often drawn between John the Baptist and English kings because of his indispensable place in Christian belief. In the middle is St Edward the Confessor. He was the last Anglo-Saxon king before the Norman invasion. Many English kings have likewise made reference to this saint in their own lives as a way to draw connections between themselves and the Old English Past. Furthermore, St. Edward was the saint after whom all King Edwards were named and he was the patron saint of the Plantagenet line.[99] Richard along with Edward II had a close kinship to this Anglo-Saxon saint-king. Perhaps what rang true to both was the Confessor's struggle with succession. There were many people who vied for the throne that Edward the Confessor sat upon, and his childless status left a huge gap in the line of succession that William the Conqueror would ultimately use to his own advantage. While this and his namesake are what Edward II used to align himself in customary fashion to the saint Richard took his devotion to Edward the Confessor further.

At different points in his life when Richard faced a daunting challenge, he would visit the shrine to St. Edward. He did so before leaving for his successful military campaign in Ireland. Richard siphoned approximately £200 a year towards the goal of rebuilding the nave of Westminster Abbey because he felt St. Edward's shrine should be surrounded by beautiful imagery.[100] Richard's fascination with the saint was in large part due to their shared childless status. Richard's marriage to his wife Anne, though personally fulfilling, faced scrutiny due to its

[99] Ormrod, "Monarchy Martyrdom and Masculinity," 174–191.
[100] Saul. *Richard II*, 351.

lack of children. However, Richard viewed Edward's childlessness not as a weakness of his character, as was being ascribed to himself, but it was a mark of the man's control over his impulses and passions. Richard spoke to this point: "By the conquest over fleshly lust well ought he [Edward] to be called a martyr; Nor do I know of any history which describes A king, who had so great a victory, conquered his flesh, the devil and the world, who are three powerful enemies."[101]

Richard did not just interpret Edward as childless but as chaste and regarded chastity as a notably positive attribute. Conventionally, chastity was a positive attribute for a religious individual to show but it is a heavily feminized display of devotion, typically associated with the Virgin Mary. Already, Richard's personal worship of the Mother Mary and his attention to his personal image pushed him outside of normatively masculine religious devotion. Richard's attention to St. Edward and St. Edmund alike are examples of a reimagining of emasculation. Richard actually incorporated this chaste status into his own personal identity. Some theorize that he began this personal commitment with his wife Anne, but it is difficult to say so with absolute certainty. We do, however, see this trait displayed in Richard's second marriage. Richard purposefully chose Isabella as his second wife as a way of neutralizing any outside scrutiny to remarry without the need to break his vow of chastity.[102] He would rather move ahead in his life with the absence of a queen and so he chose someone who would be largely uninvolved due to her age. As Isabella was still under the age of consent by the time of Richard's death in 1399, their marriage was never consummated, and it is well established that Richard had no mistresses at the time. He was clearly showing that he too had a mastery over his earthly desires.

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[101] Lewis, "Becoming a Virgin King."
[102] Lewis, "Becoming a Virgin King."

Richard's relationship to St. Edward does not stop there, however. In addition to the visits, Richard also made overt gifts to the shrine as well as those who maintained it. Expensive vestments and altar pieces were given without any sort of regard for price. What was compelling though was a rather small gift, a ring of a simple gold band and an observably expensive ruby set in it. Richard detailed in the charter that officiated the gift that while it remained his personal ring which he would keep for the entirety of his life, he would leave the ring at the shrine any time he would leave the realm. Upon his return from England each time he would come to claim the ring. Already there are remarks to the relationship Richard had with the saint-king as being similar to a marriage. In art pieces made for the shrine there is a fusing of Richard and St Edward's arms that is usually only seen in marriages.[103] The increase in devotion Richard paid to the saint after his wife's death is compelling in this regard. It is close to impossible to assuredly make the claim that Richard was in a spiritual marriage with Edward the Confessor, in the same way nuns are the "brides of Christ," due to a lack of Richard's personal reflections on the subject. However, these public displays made draw strong connections between the two monarchs. Perhaps it was done solely for Richard to better link himself to notable figures of England's past and better assert his claim to the throne. Perhaps he did truly feel an amount of personal connection to the saint or maybe there was a hope that he too would achieve that status as a saint-king after his own death. Whatever was his motivation, these actions are compelling due to how anomalous they were compared to other contemporary displays of devotion. His refashioning of typically emasculating traits may not have caused any sort of personal anxieties

[103] Saul, *Richard II,* 320, 322, 324.

around his identity, but they did not aid in presenting a conventionally masculine persona to the public.

Death

Edward II, though a deposed king, was not treated as a villain in his death. Hugh Despenser the Younger for example, faced a much worse fate because of the great deal of malcontent felt towards Despenser's involvement with the king. Not only was he seen as a tyrannical man by association with Edward, but also the manipulative way that he got to his position in power made people resent him further. Despenser and Edward seemed to have made a monarchy for themselves, his punishment compared to Edward II's shows that the two men were not both punished as if they were monarchs. Following his capture by Isabella, Despenser faced vicious persecution and brutal punishment for the crimes he committed against the realm and crown.

> [a]s a thief therefore you shall be hanged; as a traitor [. . .] you shall be drawn and quartered, and your quarters dispersed throughout the kingdom; and as you were outlawed, by our Lord the King and by general consent, and have come back to the court [. . .] you shall be beheaded; and because at all times you have been disloyal and a formenter of strife between our Lord the King and our most noble Lady the Queen [. . .] you shall be disemboweled, and after that you bowels shall be burned. Confess yourself a traitor and a renegade! And so go to meet your doom. Traitor! Evildoer!! and Convicted!!![104]

[104] M. E. Lewis, "A Traitor's Death? The Identity of a Drawn, Hanged and Quartered Man from Hulton Abbey, Staffordshire," *Antiquity* 82, no. 315 (2008), 113-124.

As a traitor, Despenser was meant to die multiple deaths. Hence, on the 16th of November 1326, Despenser was publicly humiliated by being stripped and dressed in reversed arms, with a crown of nettles placed on his head. The reverse arms were meant to dismiss and shame Despenser's own coat of arms and name. In other contexts, reversed arms were brandished in rebellion against an unpopular monarch. After the humiliating dress, Despenser was then roped to four horses, an addition to the conventional two horses, and dragged through Hereford, where he was hanged, or rather choked, on gallows 50 feet above the ground with his body supported by a ladder. Froissart reported that a man climbed the ladder where Hugh was hanged and publicly castrated him.[105] His scrotum was thrown into the fire below. This was a way to punish his perceived heresy and the 'unnatural' practices performed with the king. Still conscious, Despenser was dragged from the gallows and a knife was plunged into his abdomen. They cut from his intestines up to his heart. His entrails and heart were cut out and burned. Afterwards, the corpse was lowered to the ground and decapitated. On 4th December 1326 his head was displayed on London Bridge. His body was cut into four parts and the quarters of his body were sent to be displayed above the gates of Newcastle, York, Dover and Bristol, seemingly the four corners of the kingdom.[106] After his death it is unclear where the man's remains ultimately ended up.

All the aggression felt towards Edward II was taken out on his royal favorite because the image of the king needed to be preserved. That would explain the disproportionate harshness in the man's punishment. Maybe worse was the idea of an undeserving man wielding the powers of the royal crown. Despenser's castration was an explicit reference to the nature of Edward and his

[105] Froissart. *The Chronicles of Froissart,* 110.
[106] Lewis, "A Traitor's Death?"

relationship, or at least how it was understood from the exterior. Despenser's castration paired with the widely circulated rumor of Edward's death from a red-hot poker inserted into his anus paint an image for what respective roles these men had in a relationship and what each was being punished for. Despenser was punished for making the king weak. This was a way of reinforcing hegemonically strong masculinity by undermining and feminizing all alternative masculinities. This ostracization of gay men, especially those who took on a submissive role in a homosexual relationship, was one of the most abundant iterations of this practice.[107] Perhaps if the roles were reversed and Despenser was not viewed as the more dominant member of the relationship, the punishment would not have been so harsh.[108] But as it stood, Hugh Despenser was seen as a threatening presence, a seducer of the king and an instigator of unrest in the realm. The man's death was treated with the utmost hostility in order to put the public's anxieties to rest that the evil was gone from the kingdom and it was heavily discouraged from returning. [109]

Whereas the death of Edward and his favorites' deaths came with a great deal of buzz, the details surrounding the death of the Black Prince were seldom talked about. The Black Prince predeceased his father by almost a year exactly. Froissart documented the grief felt about the prince's death in France, "There was also a sense of poignancy such as might be felt in the death of any royal prince who had shown such promise but had not had the opportunity to come into his inheritance. The death of a leader with such a glittering military reputation, given the failing

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[107] Vern L. Bullough, "On Being a Male in the Middle Ages," in Jo Ann MacNamara, Clare A. Lees, and Thelma Fenster, eds, *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 31-46.
[108] Mortimer, "Sermons of Sodomy," 22-47.
[109] Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* translated by Alan Sheridan, (New York: Random House Inc, 1995), 3-32.

English position in France, only intensified the sense of loss."[110] Froissart even cited that after the news of the Black Prince's death reached France, King Charles V said prayers for him in Sainte-Chapelle, meaning that even foreign opinions of the prince were high.[111] Prince Edward had the potential to live up to a mythic status of kings but in many ways, he wasn't able to fully achieve what life had made available for him.

His death came at the end of a long-suffered bout of illness the prince got while supporting Castille in a Spanish war. Its odd that there are very few accounts of his actual illness. Most people who report his life, like Herald Chandos, would merely skip over the period of time Edward was sick. Why would an otherwise well-documented figure have such a large part of his life left out of records? It was humiliating for a prince to be reduced to such base suffering. All the dignity of a heroic man is stripped away when he soils his sheets. Various authors have diagnosed his condition as amoebic dysentery, but we have few sources that substantiate this claim, and it is unlikely that an individual would have survived dysentery for nine years. In recent times others have suggested dropsy and cirrhosis, or a combination of these. The few records that exist that detail the prince's symptoms were recorded by Thomas Walsingham, a man often involved in recording contemporary court happenings and had many connections to eyewitnesses to the prince. He recorded the prince as suffering from 'almost every month he suffered a discharge of both semen and blood [which] rendered him so weak on many an occasion that his attendants very often thought he had died."[112]

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[110] David Green, "Masculinity and Medicine: Thomas Walsingham and the Death of the Black Prince," *Journal of Medieval History* 35:1 (2009), 34-51.
[111] Froissart. *The Chronicles of Froissart,* 108.
[112] Green, "Masculinity and Medicine," 34-51.

These symptoms perhaps show exactly why these details of the prince’s life are so seldom recorded. There is a striking similarity in the symptoms suffered by the prince to symptoms of menstruation. A link like that would have had an overwhelming feminizing effect on the prince’s image that would have been destructive to the image he cultivated in his life. Though there wasn’t the same imperative to save the prince’s image as there was for Edward II due the prince never being the figurehead of the realm, there was still an important reason to keep from letting such an embarrassing detail become common knowledge. As seen above both domestic and foreign men looked up to the Black Prince as a seeming paradigm of chivalric masculinity. He was elevated to that status by his own dominance over other men of similar means. The destruction of the Prince’s manly image would have emasculated not just Edward but any man that was subordinate to him. The omission saved a great deal of turmoil in the personal identities of men of the time.

Burial and Commemoration

Within the context of generational kingship, burials are crucial points of negotiation over the memory of a deceased monarch. Those who lived treacherous lives cannot be put in the ground with widespread animosity as it destabilizes the people still attaching meaning to their memory.

Following the messy politics of the 1320s, Edward III had a great deal of rebranding to do for his own monarchy. The bulk of this work was devoted to restoring the reputation of Edward II. After his deposition and death in 1327, Edward was buried in Gloucester Abbey. There were few choices as many abbeys refused to take the king’s body after his tyrannical life and shameful deposition. Despite this, Edward III’s government spent upwards of £350 on the

funeral. With gilt lions, plenty of gold leaf and oak barriers to manage anticipated crowds, it would seem that there was an attempt to put a veneer of normalcy over the event. Edward was interred wearing the same shirt, coif, and gloves he had at his coronation. His effigy depicted him as king, holding a scepter and orb, and wearing a strawberry-leaf crown.[113] Though deposed, this honored commitment to the legacy of a monarch and a royal line is foundational for hereditary monarchy. Edward III traced his right to rule from his father's line, though he made claims from his mother's was well. The inclusion of Edward II in the Plantagenet line of succession is a necessary part of the inheritance that Edward III had to contend with. Without his father, Edward III would not be able to sit on the throne of England himself so, despite the image of him as a tyrannical king, Edward acknowledged him as a king. Giving Edward a strawberry-leaf crown in his effigy could have been seen as a method of redeeming him through the powers of Christ. The strawberry was a symbol of perfect righteousness. Its presence in medieval art suggests the healing powers of Christ that lead us to eternal salvation.[114]

The treatment of Isabella after her death was tricky. Edward III had her imprisoned for two years after seizing power, however her life after was a relative luxury. Though she was forced to forfeit her lands and power to her son, she had a yearly income £3,000-£4,000 to her castle in Norfolk and was able to travel around England freely. She ultimately died in 1358, 30 years after her time in the seat of power. Edward staged an elaborate burial for her. She was interred while wearing her wedding dress and holding Edward II's heart.[115] His heart had been

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[113] Joel Burden, "Re-writing a Rite of Passage: The Peculiar Funeral of Edward II," in Nicola McDonald and Mark W. Ormrod, eds, *Rites of Passage: Cultures of Transition in the Fourteenth Century* (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press. 2004), 13–30.
[114] Colum Hourihane, *The Routledge Companion to Medieval Iconography* (London: Routledge, Taylor et Francis Group, 2019), 348.
[115] Ormrod, *Edward III*, 37.

taken out of his body at his funeral and kept in a silver container until Isabella’s. It’s not clear if it was always planned for Isabella to be buried holding Edward’s heart but it was an important symbolic gesture. She was painted as a remorseful wife, still holding onto the heart of her true husband, thus creating a narrative that continues the patriarchal values the society was based upon. In the same way that Edward’s image as king needed to be restored at his burial in order to keep power consistent, so too was there a need to reinforce the image of a strong royal marriage. Contemporaries would have recognized manifestations of the royal marriage as a guide by which to model their own households and marriages. Animosity in the marriage between king and queen would reflect poorly on the very notion of marriage within the realm. This is felt especially when the man is the “problem” of the marriage. The king after all was meant to have total authority within his marriage, roots of the word husband translate to “master of the house.” Were the sanctity and importance of marriage to be undermined, there would be a loss of control over the people in the kingdom, most notably women who were often relegated to the domestic sphere as a means of male domination over women. The blame for the break down in the royal marriage was placed upon both of these monarchs’ partners, as was evident in the treatment of Hugh Despenser. Mortimer’s more severe punishment was due to him becoming the scapegoat for the wedge that came between the king and queen. Mortimer’s punishment was even advantageous to decenter the narrative away from Edward II’s homosexual relationships. This act was meant to strengthen the power of the crown now resting on Edward III’s head as he continued to trace his line of power from his father. Furthermore, the narrative written for Isabella was taken out of her hands, placing her back in the role of a subjugated woman, and her

son, by lowering her relative position of power raised his own.[116] She was made out as the adulterous and conniving woman who brought the king to ruin, not because this narrative was true, but because the public would easily absorb it. Isabella's image was sacrificed in order to save the face of the king.

Edward repositioned his father away from the image of a disgraced and tyrannical sodomite, towards one of a martyred king, struck down by the adulterous and evil woman. This narrative played well into the preconceived gender politics of the age and calmed any male anxieties heightened by Isabella's momentary time in power. Furthermore, the harsh treatment enacted against both Despenser and Mortimer was meant convey that the dissent carried out by these men was not to be tolerated in Edward III's reign. Perhaps a gesture made out of fear of following his father's fate, Edward's strong-willed and unrelenting authority made sure the message of his actions was understood. Through his manipulation of the last generation's burials, he made a much more stable foundation and well of power to draw upon during his reign.

Richard paid a good deal of attention in honoring the death of his first wife Anne. He continued to display Anne's heraldic symbol of rosemary in portraits of his own likeness and monarchy.[117] Furthermore, Richard was the first English monarch to commission a joined tomb for him and his wife. At the death of Anne, he was effectively marking the death of a conjoined power in his monarchy. Anne's side of the tomb was decorated by portraits of the saints that Richard venerated. While Edward III's tomb hosted his 13 children, Richard selected saints to protect the resting place of his beloved wife. Each saint shared a remarkable quality; they were all childless or participating in chaste marriages, a reflection of Richard and Anne's marriage.

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[116] Connell, *Masculinities,* 233.
[117] Lewis, "Becoming a Virgin King," 86–100.

Richard was also well aware of the importance in venerating the dead as a way of legitimizing his own power. Richard steeped himself in the storied lineage of the Plantagenet dynasty as his greatest justification to rule. With that came a deferential treatment towards the royal figures who came before him. Richard annually observed the anniversaries of his father and grandfather's deaths. Furthermore, he had a tomb built for his father in Canterbury Cathedral in order to properly honor him.[118] However, it is curious the amount of attention Richard paid to his great-grandfather, Edward II, a figure one would assume would have fallen into relative obscurity by this time. Despite never having known the man personally, Richard made a sincere attempt to draw a connection between himself and his great-grandfather. A cult of worship cropped up to venerate Edward II at the abbey where he was buried, and Richard was a lifelong patron of the cult.[119]

Conclusions

This project began as a means of understanding the life, gender, and tragic events surrounding Richard II. From that point its scope grew to encompass a much wider context of the impact family relationships and gender have on the manifestations of medieval monarchy. My main conclusion from the work here is that being king takes a lifetime of justification. Looking at each of the categories presented we can observe both the generational and gendered dynamics of monarchy that manifest at different points in a king's life to provide this justification. Coronations grant monarchs with the power they need to rule, while chivalry often justifies the power they enact. How a king worships, dies and is buried are all illuminating to the public

[118] Saul. *Richard II.* 121.
[119] Lewis, "Becoming a Virgin King."

manifestations of a private identity. The amount of justification necessary for a monarch to prove his station necessitates conventions to meet and to uphold his stations of power. It was not that Edward III was truly more of a man than his father and grandson. When faced with similar challenges to his masculinity, the issues of patronage, however, he was more successful in employing conventionally accepted models of masculinity to strengthen his perceived image. When there is a failure by a monarch to meet the proper threshold of justification, politically anxieties erupted because a king’s personal is inexplicably political. In the case of Edward II it would seem that it was his personal identity the ultimately corrupted his political persona, leading to his deposition. Richard remains puzzling though. During Richard’s life and after, similarities have been drawn between Edward II and Richard II as both monarchs and men. Both men faced conspiratorial whispers around their sexuality and unconventional displays of masculinity. They both had their authority challenged on the basis that they do not conform to the hegemonic displays of masculinity of the time. It makes sense for Richard to gravitate towards another black sheep in his family. He actively attempted to fight for his great-grandfather to be recognized in the church as a fully canonized saint. Just as Edward III had gone to great lengths to correct the memory of his father to strengthen his seat of power, Richard, too, was attempting to link himself to the tragic image of a wrongfully deposed king in order to protect his own reign. Perhaps too, there was a hope that once Richard died, there would be someone to preserve his memory. However, though Edward had Richard, there was no one who would use Richard’s memory as a claim to power as Lancasters moved to replace the Plantagenet line. Following his deposition the same chroniclers that had favorably depicted his earlier reign now turned against Richard, amending earlier portions of chronicles to further delegitimize

Richard's royal presence.[120] Thus, Richard though not dissimilar from other canonized kings, was never petitioned to join such a revered area of English historical figures.

Perhaps the true purpose behind Richard's deposition cannot solely be explained by the discomfort surrounding a man's relationship–or lack thereof–to masculine ideals, but it is my wholehearted belief that this was a prevalent element in his unpopularity in their own time. The boundaries of identity are defined by what threatens it. I hope that adding a gendered lens to the study of kings shows that they are as much impacted by their gender identity as queens. However to add a gendered dimension to a group that is often times exempt from gender studies, both men and kings, would be enough. The need to decenter men from the default necessitates the study of men as a gendered subject.

[120] Federico, "Queer Times," 25-46.

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