

# Parvenus in Politics: The Woodvilles, Edward IV and the Baronage 1464-1469

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Edward IV's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville has received much attention from historians studying the cause of the breakdown in relations between the king and his barons, which led to his loss of throne and the continuation of the Wars of the Roses. Detailed studies of the Woodvilles, however, have tended to be isolated from the politics of the period. Here I shall attempt to put the king's marriage and the rise of the queen's family into the political context of Edward's 'first reign'. How unsuitable was Edward's choice of bride? How far were the Woodvilles inordinately favoured? What effect did Edward's marriage and the subsequent advancement of his bride's family have on the fragile political foundations of the young Yorkist regime?

## The Marriage

On his way north to crush the Lancastrian threat, Edward IV stopped and made camp at Stony Stratford on 30 April 1464. In the early hours of the morning, Edward stole away, and rode to Grafton Regis. The chronicler, Robert Fabyan reports on the king's fateful actions on that May morning,

In moste secrete maner, vpon the firste daye of May, kynge Edwarde spousyd Elizabeth, late wife of sir Iohn Graye, knight, whiche before tyme was slayne at Toweton or Yorke felde, whiche spowsayles were solempnyzed erely in y<sup>e</sup> mornynge at a towne named Graston, nere vnto Stonyngstrstforde; at whiche marriage was no persones present but the spowse, the spowsesse, the duches of Bedforde her moder, y<sup>e</sup> preest, two gentywomen, and a yong man to helpe the preest synge. After which spowsayles endyd, he went to bedde, and so tarried there vpon iii or iiii houres, and after departed & rode agayne to Stonyngstratforde, and came I maner as though he had ben on huntinge, and there went to bedde agayne.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank the Norfolk Branch of the Richard III Society for their kind award, and Professor Carole Rawcliffe for her help and guidance whilst writing my dissertation. R. Fabyan, *The New Chronicles of England and France*, London 1811, p. 654. Robert Fabyan's *New Chronicles* was not completed until 1504 and as an ardent supporter of the new regime of Henry VII; his works have a Lancastrian bias, yet his is the most comprehensive description of Edward's marriage. See A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England II, c. 1307 to the Early*

The political consequences of this unlikely marriage would prove an important factor in the downfall of the Yorkist dynasty and the continuation of the Wars of the Roses.

In 1464, most people must have thought they had seen the end of the dynastic struggle that had catapulted the Yorkist regime to power. The decade before Edward's coronation in 1461 had seen open confrontation between the two most powerful noble families in England. Evidence of this had presented itself 1455 at the battle of St Albans, but not until 1459 did full-scale civil war break out. After the death of Edward's father, Richard, Duke of York, and his uncle, Richard Neville, Earl of Salisbury, at the battle of Wakefield in December 1460, Edward himself and his cousin, Richard Neville, the Earl of Warwick became the key advocates of the Yorkist cause. After victories at Mortimer's Cross and Towton in 1461, thanks in no small part to the power and influence of Warwick, Edward set about the establishment and consolidation of the Yorkist regime.

Although Henry VI, his wife Margaret of Anjou, and his heir, Edward of Lancaster, remained at large, Lancastrian resistance was restricted to a few remote castles in Northumberland and Wales, and by the spring and early summer of 1464 all significant threats in the far north had been crushed.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Edward had taken seemingly successful steps to win over support from the nobility; an essential task, given the narrow clique upon which he had relied at his usurpation.<sup>3</sup> To what extent did his marriage threaten to upset this precarious balance?

While most historians have been united in condemning Edward's marriage as imprudent, there has been some debate as to how far the Woodvilles were inordinately favoured. J.R. Lander argued that their social status 'was not as lowly as many historians have assumed' and that they were not excessively rewarded.<sup>4</sup> Ross supported Lander's argument whilst observing of Elizabeth Woodville that 'any temptation to argue that by birth and social degree she was a suitable queen must be resisted'.<sup>5</sup> The most recent article on the issue is by

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*Sixteenth Century*, London, 1996, pp. 245-47.

<sup>2</sup> A.J. Pollard, *The Wars of the Roses*, London 1995, p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Edward's first parliament on the 6 November 1461 was attended by six of the seven earls who were of full age. This compares with the six dukes and twelve earls that existed before the first battle of St Albans in 1455, See T.B. Pugh, 'The magnates, knights and gentry,' in *Fifteenth Century England 1399-1509*, ed. S.B. Chrimes, C.D. Ross and R.A. Griffiths, Manchester 1972 pp. 88-89.

<sup>4</sup> J.R. Lander, 'Marriage and politics in the fifteenth century: the Nevilles and the Wydevilles', in his *Crown and Nobility 1450-1509*, London 1976, pp. 94-126, p. 109.

<sup>5</sup> C. Ross, *Edward IV*, London 1974, p.89.

M.A. Hicks, in which he argued against Lander by stressing the lowly origins of the Woodvilles and concluded that their influence and rewards were excessive.<sup>6</sup>

Whilst some biographers have tried to detect a political motivation behind Edward's marriage, arguing that he deliberately set about creating an alternative support base to counter the influence of the Nevilles, most recent historians now find this unconvincing.<sup>7</sup> The most popular explanation of Edward's choice of bride remains that 'he was led by blynde affection, and not by reule of reason' as the humanist historian, Polydore Vergil, and other more contemporary writers thought.<sup>8</sup>

Of the primary sources that refer to the Woodvilles, by far the most scathing report of their reputation is to be found in Dominic Mancini's *Usurpation of Richard III*. Mancini writes that 'They were certainly detested by the nobles, because they, who were ignoble and newly made men, were advanced beyond those who far excelled them in breeding and wisdom'.<sup>9</sup> Mancini, although born in Rome, spent much of his life living in France as a priest before a short stay in England between the autumn of 1482 and July 1483. Mancini's primary purpose was to record Richard III's rise to power for the French. As a foreigner writing some years after the Woodvilles had broken onto the political scene, Mancini relied on second-hand information, and his knowledge of events before his arrival in England can be brought into question. However, as he would not have been caught up in the factional politics of the period, thus his reliability is unlikely to fall short on account of bias.<sup>10</sup>

Of the other near contemporary sources valuable for a study of the Wars of the Roses, all suffer in some part, either through lack of reliable

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<sup>6</sup> M.A. Hicks, 'The changing role of the Wydevilles in Yorkist politics to 1483', in *Patronage, Pedigree and Power in Later Medieval England*, ed. C. Ross, Gloucester 1979, pp. 60-86

<sup>7</sup> For arguments for a political motivation behind the marriage see, W. Stubbs, *The Constitutional History of England*, 3 vols, Oxford 1874-78, vol. 3, p. 200, and, more recently, B. Wilkinson, *Constitutional History of England in the Fifteenth Century (1399-1485)*, London 1964, pp. 146-47. Ross, Lander and Hicks all dismiss the idea. Whilst Hughes has bravely argued that Edward and his alchemists were excited by the possibilities raised by the marriage, I am here concerned with the politics: Hughes, pointing to Elizabeth's traced ancestry through her mother to Melusine, the serpent woman, suggests that, 'There is little doubt that Edward, with his intense interest in alchemy, was excited by his bride's genealogy.' See J. Hughes, *Arthurian Myths and Alchemy*, Stroud 2002, pp. 110-11.

<sup>8</sup> H. Ellis, ed., *Three Books of Polydore Vergil's English History*, Camden Society 1844, p. 117. See also Gregory's Chronicle in *The Historical Collections of A Citizen of London in the Fifteenth Century*, ed J. Gairdner, Camden Society 1876, p. 226, where Gregory points to Edward's actions to use the moral: 'Nowe take hede what love may doo, for love wyll not nor may not caste no foute nor perelle in noo thyng'.

<sup>9</sup> D. Mancini, *The Usurpation of Richard III*, ed C.A.J. Armstrong, Oxford 1969, p. 69.

<sup>10</sup> Gransden, pp. 300, 305.

information, political bias, or because they are reporting later or from abroad. Another important foreign source used in this dissertation comes from the Burgundian, John de Wavrin. Wavrin served at the Burgundian court, and therefore would have come into contact with the main figures of the period, either whilst they were in exile or on diplomatic missions. Again, as a foreigner, Wavrin is not infallible but is unlikely to suffer from undue partiality. The same cannot necessarily be said of John Warkworth's chronicle. Little is known of Warkworth himself, or even if he was really the author. Although the work attributed to him is useful, it has a distinct pro-Lancastrian bias (despite being produced under the Yorkist Edward IV) and was probably written after February 1478.<sup>11</sup> The chief source that reports the critical opinion of the Woodville marriages into the ranks of the baronage is that of an un-identified author, previously thought to be William Worcester. Yet, Lander has suggested that the author was a very pro-Neville writer and thus automatically biased against the Queen's relatives.<sup>12</sup> Sir Thomas More's humanist work, the *History of Richard III*, is considered by some to be a valuable source despite having been written much later, some time between 1510 and 1518; More had access to a number of important sources, possibly even a former mistress of Edward's, Elizabeth Shore.<sup>13</sup> The Second Croyland Chronicler is the most perceptive contemporary observer,<sup>14</sup> and the only author to suggest that Warwick's breach with the king was over the direction of foreign policy, yet his identity remains unknown.

Perhaps more than any other source, William Shakespeare's *Richard the Third* shaped how the Woodvilles have been portrayed in history. The Woodvilles are portrayed as greedy and grasping and play a key role in bringing about the rift between the king and his barons. In Shakespeare's plays, it is Edward's marriage that alienates the earl of Warwick, and it is his Richard III who blames Elizabeth Woodville for his brother, Clarence's arrest and imprisonment. Whilst Shakespeare drew on the same contemporary sources, it should not be forgotten that his plays were dramas and not histories, containing many factual errors and whole scenes unknown to history. However the question remains, how far was Shakespeare drawing upon an understanding already firmly entrenched in contemporary and near contemporary sources?<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 258, 290-291.

<sup>12</sup> Lander, 'Marriage and Politics', p. 110, n. 91.

<sup>13</sup> Gransden, pp. 443-48.

<sup>14</sup> Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 104, n. 1.

<sup>15</sup> K. Dockray, *William Shakespeare and the Wars of the Roses and the Historians*, Stroud 2002, p. 12; p. 4.

## The Woodvilles

Lord Ryvers was brought to Caleys, and by the Lords with the viij<sup>xx</sup> [eight score] torches, and there my Lord of Salesbury reheted [rated] hym, callynhg hym knaves son, that he schuld be so rude to calle hym and these other Lords traytors, for they schall be found the Kyngs treue liege men, whan he schuld be found a traytour, &c. And My Lord Warrewyk reheytd hym, and seyde that his fader was but a squyer, and broute up with Kyng Henry V<sup>te</sup>, and sethen himself made by maryage, and also made Lord, and that it was not his parte to have swyche langage of Lords, beyng of the Kyngs blood. And my Lord of Marche reheted hym in lyke wyse. And Sir Antony was reheted for his langage of all iij. Lords in lyke wyse.<sup>16</sup>

In 1460 none would have supposed that four years later, as king of England, Edward, Earl of March, would marry into this same family.

Elizabeth Woodville was in no respect a suitable bride for king Edward. She was the widow of the Lancastrian, Sir John Grey of Groby, who died on the battlefield of St Albans in 1461. Earlier attempts by historians such as J.R. Lander to emphasise the elevated social status of her family through her mother Jacquetta of Luxemburg, the widowed Duchess of Bedford, or through earlier generations of her father's family have successfully been refuted.<sup>17</sup> Even if the Woodvilles had been 'a decent county family',<sup>18</sup> this was scarcely a fitting background for the wife of a member of the nobility, let alone for the queen of England, as was apparent from Edward's decision to marry in secret. The folly of the Woodville marriage is all the more striking when viewed against the background of the dynastic chaos out of which Edward had won his throne. Marriage in later medieval England, if used strategically, was an invaluable tool with which the king could strengthen his position either abroad or at home. It was of even greater importance for a monarch who had usurped power: one example of how the potential of marriage could be fully exploited was that of Henry Tudor to Elizabeth of York in 1485. This was a masterpiece of diplomacy; in marrying Elizabeth, Henry united the houses of Lancaster and York, eliminating the greatest threat to the security of his dynasty. Although a similar marriage was not available to Edward in 1464, there were suitable matches abroad. In marrying well below himself Edward was not just throwing away a diplomatic card that could have bought greater dynastic security, but was placing unnecessary strains upon his far from secure regime.

The picture that Lander paints of the Woodvilles in 1464 is one of a family that had been moving up the social ladder since the fourteenth century, and through royal service and Richard Woodville's marriage to the widow of John,

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<sup>16</sup> J. Gairdner, ed., *The Paston Letters*, 4 vols, London, 1900, vol. 1, p. 506.

<sup>17</sup> See Lander, 'Marriage and Politics', Hicks, 'Changing role' and Ross, *Edward IV*.

<sup>18</sup> Lander, 'Marriage and Politics', p. 109.

Duke of Bedford (d. 1435), had acquired at least equal status with ‘some of the lordlings who made Edward IV king’.<sup>19</sup> Yet Hicks has argued that the standing of the Woodvilles has been exaggerated. Richard Woodville, Elizabeth’s grandfather, as the youngest son of Sir John Woodville, did not inherit a title to the Northamptonshire family estates and had to build up his wealth more or less from scratch. His career was spent in the service of Lancastrian knights and princes. At his high point he was a councillor, chamberlain, seneschal of Normandy, lieutenant of Calais and treasurer of finances to the regent Bedford. Despite the fact that he was militarily active in France during the period of English victories, he did not seem to profit as much as some, buying at the most two English manors, one of which he wanted to sell to pay off his debts.<sup>20</sup>

Thus Elizabeth’s father inherited only four small manors in three shires, which was just enough to earn him a place among the middling ranks of the local gentry. Richard Woodville, later Earl Rivers, was, however, able to take advantage of the links his father had made at court and with Bedford in France. His second marriage in 1436-37, to the widowed Duchess of Bedford, Jacquetta of Luxemburg, was well above his station. Jacquetta could claim membership of the high nobility of Europe through her father, the count of St Pol, a powerful French magnate. In February 1436, a year after the death of her first husband, Jacquetta had been granted her dower in England, Jersey, Guernsey and Calais on the condition that she did not marry again without a royal licence. Her secret marriage to Richard Woodville broke this condition, but after she had paid a considerable fine, her dower was released.<sup>21</sup> Jacquetta brought her new husband the customary third of the annual revenue of Bedford’s English estates (which annually totalled £4,000) as well as estates in France, and as such her potential income was more than sufficient to reach the qualifying level for an earldom.<sup>22</sup> Yet the nature of Jacquetta’s dower meant that she was largely dependant on annuities from the crown; and, as the financial difficulties of Henry VI’s treasury worsened, these payments were rarely forthcoming. Given, moreover, the deteriorating situation in France and the resultant loss in income from her French estates, Jacquetta’s actual income by the mid 1450s was far less than might theoretically be expected.

Because Jacquetta’s dower on her death would, in any event, revert to the crown, it was in the Woodville family’s interests to try and invest in land, ideally obtaining ownership of at least part of the other two-thirds of the Bedford estates. This could be achieved either through purchase or royal favour. Richard Woodville’s career had been socially as well as materially

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Hicks, ‘Changing role’, p. 61.

<sup>21</sup> J. Stratford, *The Bedford Inventories*, London 1993, p. 26.

<sup>22</sup> According to Pugh, the qualifying level was £666, see Pugh, ‘Magnates, knights and gentry’.

advanced by his marriage to Jacquetta, owing to her highborn European relatives and her kinship to the king. Richard was created Earl Rivers, served in France, reached the position of seneschal of Gascony and, like his father, became lieutenant of Calais. He was also given a place on the royal council. However too much should not be made of this appointment, as, even during this period of unprecedented access to royal favour, Rivers was unable to prevent the land he wanted from being granted elsewhere. This certainly points to his having very little weight at court. By 1461 the Woodville family were in actual possession of only eight scattered manors, which generated barely sufficient income to support a baron.<sup>23</sup>

Having fought against the Yorkists, Rivers was pardoned in 1461 and reappeared on the royal council in 1463, prompting Lander to assert that Edward's marriage did not begin the advancement of the Woodvilles at the Yorkist court.<sup>24</sup> However this return to favour was probably more to do with Edward's recognition of Rivers' military talents than anything else, and Rivers exerted very little political influence over the young king. As Hicks argues, 'Until 1464 the Wydevilles were least among nobles, nursing tenuous ties with the great, poorly endowed and politically impotent'.<sup>25</sup> In short, they were hardly a family fit to provide a queen of England and, as we shall now see, there were certainly more suitable options available to Edward in 1464.

A continental marriage alliance had been considered for the king as early as October 1461, when a mission headed by Lord Wenlock proposed Mademoiselle de Bourbon, the niece of Duke Philip of Burgundy and sister in law of his heir, Charles, Count of Charolais. This diplomatic gambit was appealing. It would serve to consolidate the political position of the House of York both by securing a foreign ally and by going some way to neutralising the Lancastrian threat. However negotiations were cut off on the Burgundian side on the grounds that Edward's situation was too precarious. The prospects of a Burgundian marriage were again considered in 1464, largely as a stratagem designed to counter rival marriage negotiations being conducted in France, although these were never pursued. It was the possibility of a French alliance between Edward and Bona, daughter of the duke of Savoy and sister in law of the French king, that interested Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick and Louis XI.<sup>26</sup>

In marrying a 'mere widow of England',<sup>27</sup> Edward was turning down a chance to form a concrete alliance with at least one of the major European

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<sup>23</sup> Hicks, 'Changing role', p. 63.

<sup>24</sup> Lander, 'Marriage and politics', p. 105.

<sup>25</sup> Hicks, 'Changing role', p. 82. So strange was the match that Elizabeth's political enemies could later level charges of witchcraft upon her mother for engineering the marriage.

<sup>26</sup> Ross, *Edward IV*, pp. 85, 90.

<sup>27</sup> As quoted in Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 85.

powers. Not only was he passing up an opportunity to secure the house of York more firmly on the throne, but the nature and consequences of his marriage to Elizabeth Woodville conspired to undermine his reputation, both at home and abroad. And potentially even more serious was the irritation this was likely to cause his leading supporters among the baronage.

Little is known of immediate reactions to Edward's marriage. Lord Wenlock's letter to Jean de Lannoy, from Reading on the third of October states how the king's announcement caused 'great displeasure to many great lords, and especially to the larger part of his council.'<sup>28</sup> The account of the Burgundian chronicler, Jean de Wavrin, seems to concur,

They answered that she was not his match, however good and however fair she might be, and he must know well that she was no wife for a prince such as himself ... though she was a child of a duchess and the niece of the count of St Pol, still she was no wife for him.<sup>29</sup>

Certainly, one cannot expect the general opinion to have been anything other than one of shock, at the very best. Edward's very handling of the marriage suggests he was fearful of possible repercussions. His failure to seek advice over the issue, as well as his decision to marry in secret can be seen as evidence that Edward recognised only too well that his choice of bride would not be welcomed by his council. The king's failure to consult even his closest advisers over such an important matter of state can have achieved nothing but to undermine their confidence in his political judgement.<sup>30</sup> Henry VI's isolation from his rightful council, the leading noblemen of the realm, had been singled out for complaint by Cade's rebels in 1450, and had proved a major factor in the alienation of Edward's father, Richard, Duke of York.<sup>31</sup> A good king was expected to take advice. Given the volatile circumstances in which Edward had gained the throne, a usurpation achieved with the support of disgruntled magnates in opposition to the politically inept Henry VI, one can imagine their stunned reaction to his wilful disregard of the most basic criterion for successful kingship. Matters were further complicated by Edward's reluctance to announce the marriage after it had taken place on the first of May 1464; in waiting some four months before finally doing so at Reading, he behaved in a manner more fitted to a guilty schoolboy than to a king of England.

The match was certainly not welcomed with open arms by Edward's formidable mother, Cecily Neville. Having been an advocate of the Yorkist cause throughout the 1450s, Cecily had long planned illustrious marriages for

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<sup>28</sup> As quoted in C.L. Scofield, *The Life and Reign of Edward IV*, 2 vols, London 1924, vol. 1, p. 354.

<sup>29</sup> As translated and quoted in *ibid.*, p. 354.

<sup>30</sup> Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 92.

<sup>31</sup> I.M.W. Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450*, Oxford 1991, p. 80.

her children within Europe's ruling dynasties. Cecily was a woman with a taste for luxury who even had castles rebuilt if they were not up to her high standards.<sup>32</sup> In an age of such sharp social distinction and pride in lineage, one can imagine her indignation at the news of Edward's marriage, and the affront to her pride that it must have caused. Thomas More later recalled a confrontation he had heard described between Cecily and Edward, when she remarked that

It was not princely to mary hys own subiect, ... it were a rich man that would mary his mayde, onely for a little wanton dotage vppon her parson. In which marriage manye moe comment y<sup>e</sup> maidens fortune, then y<sup>e</sup> masters wisdom ...<sup>33</sup>

In a society defined by blood and ancestry, the marriage was a total mismatch.<sup>34</sup> Through his father, Richard Plantagenet, the third Duke of York, Edward was a prince of the blood royal three times over. Elizabeth, on the other hand, came from comparatively impoverished, obscure origins, a fact demonstrably recognised by her own family. By constantly emphasising their European connections, redesigning their coat of arms, and adopting the title of Rivers instead of Woodville, they attempted to manufacture a noble lineage for themselves.<sup>35</sup> Certainly, on hearing Edward's revelation, the upper ranks of the nobility had legitimate reason to regard the newest members of their exclusive caste as parvenu.

As Edward's chief counsellor and 'the man by whose assistance he had both won and held his crown',<sup>36</sup> Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, had as many grounds for annoyance as anyone and more than most. The previously accepted account of Warwick's whereabouts during 1464 placed him on the continent negotiating a French marriage even after Edward's wedding in May.<sup>37</sup> Whilst it is now apparent that this was not the case, and that Warwick was not made to look a fool by conducting these talks after Edward was married, the earl could still legitimately feel aggrieved. The plan to cement an alliance with his favoured European partner had, after all, been ruined by his former protégé's choice of a Lancastrian widow of inferior social status.<sup>38</sup> Any immediate offence felt by Warwick would have been caused as much by

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<sup>32</sup> M.K. Jones, *Bosworth 1485*, Stroud 2002, p. 61.

<sup>33</sup> R.S. Sylvester, *The Complete Works of St Thomas More*, vol. 2 *Richard III*, New Haven and London 1963, p. 62.

<sup>34</sup> M. Keen, *Chivalry*, London 1984.

<sup>35</sup> M. Hicks, *False, Fleeting, Perjur'd Clarence*, Gloucester 1980, pp. 11, 30.

<sup>36</sup> Scofield, *Edward IV*, p. 343.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 344-47.

<sup>38</sup> Warwick was in Scotland see A. L. Brown and B. Webster, 'The movements of the earl of Warwick in the summer of 1464: a correction', *English Historical Review*, vol. 81 (1966), pp. 80-82.

resentment at his exclusion for the first time from the young king's decision making, as by frustration at the failure of his own plans for Edward's foreign policy.

Ill-advised as it may have been, the marriage itself did not prove fatal to the possibilities of a French alliance, as Louis XI continued to seek an English treaty. Whilst the marriage was, no doubt, received in private with profound shock by the king's advisers, the latter were too circumspect to express outright indignation. None were as affronted as some contemporary sources suggest.<sup>39</sup> It must have been acknowledged that Edward's marriage could not be undone and refusal to accept Elizabeth Woodville with anything less than open arms would have achieved nothing except a fall from royal favour, a fact obviously recognised by Wenlock's comment: 'We must be patient despite ourselves'.<sup>40</sup> Certainly, the consequences of the marriage were to prove more divisive than the event itself.

Having married Elizabeth Woodville, Edward set about the task of advancing the wealth of his new in-laws, a task made more difficult by the sheer number of the queen's relatives. The extent of the Woodvilles' profits has been debated. Professor Lander persuasively overturned the assertions of earlier historians to suggest that the promotion of the Woodvilles was not at all excessive, especially compared with the grants and titles Edward had distributed earlier among his other favourites.<sup>41</sup> It is certainly true that Elizabeth Woodville was given a smaller dowry than her far more unpopular predecessor, Margaret of Anjou. Advancement in the way of titles and grants was, moreover, limited to Elizabeth's brother, Anthony (who received only four royal grants before 1469), and her father, Lord Rivers, whom Edward made an earl, as well as treasurer and constable of England.<sup>42</sup> This may at first sight seem generous, but when compared to the grants awarded at the beginning of his reign to the Nevilles, Lord Hastings and Lord Herbert, Edward's patronage towards the Woodvilles seems far less rash or open handed.<sup>43</sup> However, as Hicks has shown, the resources at Edward's disposal in

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<sup>39</sup> Especially the first, anonymous, continuator of the Croyland Chronicle, see T. Riley, trans., *Ingulph's Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland*, London 1845, p. 445.

<sup>40</sup> As quoted and translated in Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 92.

<sup>41</sup> Lander, 'Marriage and politics'.

<sup>42</sup> A.R. Myers, 'The household of Queen Elizabeth Woodville 1466-7', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol. 1 (1967), pp 208-35. In 1452-3 Queen Margaret's total household income was £7,563, whereas in 1466-67 Queen Elizabeth had a total income of under £4,541. Myers suggests that reduced expenditure was achieved by genuine cutbacks (for example, only having 7 maids in waiting compared with the 10 in Margaret's household), and because of more efficient financial management which meant that actual income was closer to the nominal total income.

<sup>43</sup> In Edward's twenty-two-year reign he created or revived at least 35 peerage titles: he made 4 dukes, 2 marquises, 11 earls, 2 viscounts and 16 barons. See Pugh, 'Magnates, knights and gentry', p. 90.

terms of patronage were by 1464 far less than they had been when he took the crown.<sup>44</sup> In 1461 Edward had no choice but to reward his loyal supporters, to whom he owed the throne. We should also remember that he then had ample reserves of property confiscated from the Lancastrians at his disposal. By 1464 he could not provide for the Woodvilles on such a scale through titles and grants alone, even had he wished to do so.

The other way in which the Woodvilles were advanced was through marriage, an attractive option to Edward since it did not eat into his own permanent resources. By the end of 1466 five of Elizabeth's sisters, her eldest son, and her brother, had been married into the baronage. All of them married well above any rank that they could ever have achieved without their new connections. Elizabeth's sister Margaret became the wife of Thomas, Lord Maltravers, heir to the earldom of Arundel and nephew of the earl of Warwick. Katherine Woodville married Henry Stafford, heir of the duke of Buckingham, a descendant of Edward III and one of the richest landowners in England. Anne Woodville married William, Viscount Bourchier, eldest son of the earl of Essex. Eleanor married Anthony Grey, heir to the earl of Kent; and the last unmarried sister, Mary, was betrothed, in 1466, to the son of William, Lord Herbert. Elizabeth's son, Thomas Grey, was married to Anne Holland, the Exeter heiress; and her brother John was married to the elderly dowager Duchess of Norfolk, Katherine Neville.

Ross has stressed the apparent lack of resistance to these marriages from the wealthy and, in at least some cases, ancient noble families into whom the Woodvilles were marrying.<sup>45</sup> Surely this was in part because the relatives of the Woodvilles' prospective spouses saw the advantages of an alliance with the royal family, and no doubt feared the repercussions that a rejection might have brought in terms of the withdrawal of royal favour. But, as Hicks has shown, the additional inducements offered by Edward's power and purse were by no means negligible. The surviving contract for the Herbert marriage reveals that the groom's father received two lordships, Jacquetta's third share of St Briavels and the forest of Dean, as well as a title to the lordship of Dunster. The Bourchier marriage was again sweetened by Edward, who promised £100 a year, a lump sum of unknown value, a licence to ship 1000 woollen cloths out of England and a grant of forfeited lands in East Anglia. Likewise, the marriage between Thomas Grey and Anne Holland was accompanied by a payment of 4,000 marks, the equivalent of £2664.<sup>46</sup>

The seven prestigious marriages occurred so rapidly as to corner the upper reaches of the lucrative aristocratic marriage market, which no doubt caused a

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<sup>44</sup> Hicks, 'Changing role', pp. 65-66.

<sup>45</sup> Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 94, Pugh also makes this point, see Pugh, 'Magnates, knights and gentry', p. 90.

<sup>46</sup> Hicks, 'Changing role', p. 68.

great deal of frustration in any section of the baronage that sought marital advancement. The importance of marriage to any fifteenth century magnate is summed up by K. B. McFarlane: 'The disposal of the hand of a daughter was his chief opportunity to forge a valuable connection; for him, therefore, a marriage contract was in the nature of a treaty of alliance'.<sup>47</sup> Between September 1464 and Edward's deposition, every English earl, who had a male heir available to marry, chose a Woodville wife.<sup>48</sup>

### The Baronage

In the ninth year of King Edward, being the year of our Lord, 1469, there arose a great disagreement between that king and his kinsman, Richard, the most illustrious earl of Warwick: which was not allayed without the shedding of the blood of many persons.<sup>49</sup>

Of the leading magnates in attendance at the Great Council of Reading who witnessed Edward's 'confession' of his secret marriage, by far the most powerful were his brother George, Duke of Clarence, and Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, to whom he owed his throne.

As Edward's brother, George had been awarded the title of duke of Clarence on St Peter's day, 28 June 1461. He was lavishly endowed, principally through lands rather than annuities, owing to the unprecedented stock of patronage Edward had secured through attainders passed at his accession.<sup>50</sup> By September 1464 Clarence had been granted the possession or reversion of eighty manors, with his power mainly concentrated in the West Country, Lincolnshire, South Yorkshire and in Nottinghamshire.<sup>51</sup> These estates gave him considerable influence as with them came a sizeable group of retainers.

Warwick was, even so, the wealthiest magnate at Edward's court. As head of the prestigious Neville family, he could also draw on his powerful relatives for support. Warwick's brother John Neville, Lord Montagu, became earl of Northumberland in 1464; his brother George, Bishop of Exeter, was chancellor of England; his uncle Lord Fauconberg was steward of the king's household, whilst through his sisters and aunts he could claim kinship with almost every noble family in England.<sup>52</sup> Having been a staunch supporter of

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<sup>47</sup> K.B. McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England*, Oxford 1973, p. 85.

<sup>48</sup> Pugh, 'Magnates, knights and gentry', p.88.

<sup>49</sup> Riley, *Ingulph's Chronicle*, pp. 444-45.

<sup>50</sup> G.E.C., revised V. Gibbs, *The Complete Peerage*, 13 vols, London 1910-40, vol. 3, p. 260 and note a.

<sup>51</sup> Hicks, *Clarence*, p. 172.

<sup>52</sup> George Neville, see note 66 below. George and Warwick were both present when Edward was presented as king at Baynard's Castle on 3 March 1461. See *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 14, pp. 252-54.

the Yorkist cause since 1458, Warwick was rewarded with a commensurate share of the vast reserves of patronage at Edward's disposal in 1461. The lands and titles in his hands in 1464 stretched from the Scottish border, where he was warden of east and west marches, to the English Channel, where he was captain of Calais, admiral of England and warden of the Cinque Ports.<sup>53</sup> Edward gave him the estates confiscated from three Lancastrian noble families, including the Beaufort dukes of Somerset. In addition, of course, he already owned sizeable estates of his own in the Midlands and Wales.

Yet, less than ten years after Warwick had supported Edward's usurpation of the throne, both he and Clarence took part in a *coup* to replace their king. Some historians, as well as some contemporary chroniclers, have seen the cause of this dramatic parting in the Woodville marriage. John Warkworth's chronicle recalls Warwick's reaction to the marriage: 'And when the Erle of Warwyke come home and herde hereof, thenne was he gretely displesyd withe the kyng; and after that rose grete discencyone evere more and more betwene the kyng and hym ...'.<sup>54</sup> However one should question Warkworth's reliability here, not least because he was writing over a decade later, at some point between 1478 and 1483.<sup>55</sup> It is now accepted that Warwick was not in France negotiating a marriage between Edward and the 'suster-doughtere to the Kyng of Fraunce',<sup>56</sup> as he supposed, but in Scotland.<sup>57</sup> This would seem to refute Scofield's assumption that, 'no small part of Warwick's chagrin was due to a fear that to certain French eyes it would look as if Edward had made a fool of him ...'.<sup>58</sup> Whilst one can have no doubt that Warwick must have been displeased by the young king's marriage, he was not too offended to accompany Elizabeth into Reading Abbey when she was presented as queen on Michaelmas day, 1464, nor to stand as godfather to Elizabeth's eldest daughter.<sup>59</sup>

According to the Italian chronicler, Dominic Mancini, Clarence was also sufficiently angered by Edward's marriage to make his hostility known, 'by his bitter and public denunciations of Elizabeth's obscure family'.<sup>60</sup> However, as Hicks has argued, Mancini (like Warkworth) was writing some nineteen years later, after seeing the relationship between Clarence and Elizabeth deteriorate to the extent that it brought about Clarence's death. Hicks points to the fact

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<sup>53</sup> For a full list of Warwick's lands and titles see *the Complete Peerage*, vol. 12, pt 2, p. 388.

<sup>54</sup> J. Warkworth, *A Chronicle of the First Thirteen Years of the Reign of King Edward the Fourth*, ed J.O. Halliwell, Camden Society 1839, p. 3.

<sup>55</sup> Gransden, p. 258.

<sup>56</sup> Warkworth, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> Brown and Webster, pp. 80-82.

<sup>58</sup> Scofield, *Edward IV*, p. 355.

<sup>59</sup> M. Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker*, Oxford 1998, p. 258.

<sup>60</sup> Mancini, p. 63.

that any overt opposition from Clarence over the marriage would have led to the drying up of rewards from his hitherto generous brother, whereas during the period between August 1464 and July 1465 the duke continued to enjoy the fruits of patronage.<sup>61</sup> It was Clarence who escorted his new sister-in-law into Reading Abbey in 1464, and who later presided over her coronation, prompting Hicks to reason that, 'At the very least he bowed to the fait accompli .... He may have even welcomed it'.<sup>62</sup>

On the other hand, however, both Warwick and Clarence had reason to resent Edward's strict control over the upper reaches of the marriage market, and the way in which he was to exploit it as a means of promoting the Queen's many relatives.

One chronicler, the pseudo William Worcester, describes three of the Woodvilles' marriages with disapproval;<sup>63</sup> certainly one can see in them potential sources of aggravation to Warwick. Prominent amongst these is the infamous marriage of John Woodville to Katherine, dowager Duchess of Norfolk. Katherine was a grand-daughter of John of Gaunt, a Neville by blood and aunt to both Warwick and the king. The marriage ran counter to the interests of Warwick's second cousin, the young duke of Norfolk, as it effectively deprived him of his inheritance. It has been suggested that Warwick, in upholding the interests of his relative, opposed the marriage in the hope of securing a powerful future ally,<sup>64</sup> yet his disapproval was no doubt also fuelled by the appalling mismatch between a woman of such pedigree and a lowly Woodville. The disparity in their ages (the dowager was forty-eight years older than her new husband) must have added insult to injury. The Anne Holland match was no less offensive to the Neville family, as she was already betrothed to Warwick's nephew, George. In the case of the Herbert match it was not so much the marriage but the gift of the title of lord Dunster, which accompanied it, that may have given Warwick cause for annoyance, as it was a title to which he himself had laid claim.

Certainly, it seems as though contemporaries saw the rapid advancement of the Woodvilles as significant. In 1469 a court jester joked that 'the Ryvers been [never] soo hie that I coude hardly scape thorw theym'.<sup>65</sup> Both Warwick and Clarence must have been disconcerted by the freedom with which the Woodvilles were allowed to corner the marriage market. This meant that Warwick was unable to find suitable husbands for his two daughters, who, in the absence of a male heir from his marriage to Anne Beauchamp, were

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<sup>61</sup> Hicks, *Clarence*, p. 32.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>63</sup> 'Annales rerum anglicarum' in *Letters and Papers illustrative of the Wars of the English in France*, ed. J. Stevenson, Roll Series, London 1864, vol. 2, p. 788.

<sup>64</sup> Lander, 'Marriage and politics', p. 112.

<sup>65</sup> *The Great Chronicle of London*, ed A.H. Thomas and I.D. Thornley, London 1938, p. 208.

destined to be the greatest heiresses of their day. Because of the monopolisation of high-status marriages by the Woodvilles, the only remaining matches for his daughters within the ranks of the upper nobility were Edward's brothers, George, Duke of Clarence, and Richard, Duke of Gloucester. Clarence certainly saw the advantages that marriage to one of Warwick's heirs would bring, but Edward vetoed it. One can suppose that Edward's decision to refuse his brother's request to marry Isabel Neville was designed both to limit the power of these two already overmighty subjects, and also to retain his brother's hand for future use as a diplomatic card. Clarence could rightfully feel resentment that Edward, having shown such reckless, impulsive behaviour in the management of his own marriage, now chose to use him as a diplomatic pawn. He therefore decided to defy the royal mandate, and, despite his brother's prohibition, on 11 July 1469 was married to Isabel in Calais. Archbishop Neville, who it seems may have played a large part in the organisation of the marriage, conducted the ceremony.<sup>66</sup> Present were Warwick and 'v other knyghtes of the garter, and many other lordes and ladies and wurshipfull knyghtes...'.<sup>67</sup> That it was so well attended is perhaps an indication of the sympathy with which other members of the baronage viewed Clarence's situation.

Edward's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville and the subsequent marriages of her family into the baronage were certainly causes of frustration both to Warwick and Clarence, but it would be wrong to suggest that this alone caused the eventual rupture between them. The second, anonymous, Crowland Chronicler suggests that it was Edward's foreign policy and the alliance with Burgundy, symbolised by the marriage of his sister; Margaret, which alienated Warwick,

Richard Neville, who for some years had appeared to favour the French as against the Burgundian faction, was deeply offended. He would have preferred to arrange a marriage for the Lady Margaret within the kingdom of France so that some kind of favourable understanding might result between the kings of the two realms instead of assisting the cause of Charles, by now duke of Burgundy, through an English alliance, because the earl bore a bitter hatred for this man. It is my belief that this was the real cause of dissension between the king and

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<sup>66</sup> George Neville, having been created archbishop of York by 23 September 1465, was a key figure at court. As chancellor he was in a position of great influence and was regularly involved in foreign affairs, See *DNB*, vol. 14, p. 287. His fall began on 8 June 1467 when he was dismissed from his office of chancellor because Edward discovered he had been working to make himself a cardinal and was also seeking a papal dispensation for the marriage of Clarence to Isabel, E.F. Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century 1399-1485*, Oxford 1969, pp. 552-53.

<sup>67</sup> Warkworth, pp. 6-7.

the earl rather than the marriage between the king and queen Elizabeth as previously stated ...<sup>68</sup>

It had been Warwick who negotiated the truce at sea with France on 12 April 1464, and who had been authorised to negotiate a French match for Edward. Yet, whilst Warwick eventually became strongly aligned with Louis XI and a pro-French foreign policy, Hicks has argued that his affiliations were still 'far from obvious' in 1464.<sup>69</sup> In these early dealings with France, Warwick was merely carrying through Edward's policy, rather than pursuing an agenda of his own.

Warwick continued to press for a French alliance after Edward's marriage, with a view to securing other marital links with the French royal family. With Edward's own diplomatic card squandered, Warwick sought French marriages for the king's sister Margaret and his brother Clarence. Warwick's enthusiasm for a pro-French policy was based on his personal liking for Louis XI and hostility towards Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy.<sup>70</sup> Yet, from September 1465, with the death of Charles's wife, Isabel of Bourbon, the opportunity for a strong Burgundian alliance sealed with the marriage of Margaret to the duke, presented itself. This was a hard decision, not to be taken lightly. A delegation, led by Anthony, Lord Scales, was dispatched to deal with Burgundy, whilst Warwick headed the French negotiations. These two potentially confrontational appointments have prompted Weightman to argue that by the end of 1466 Margaret's marriage had become 'a focus for the domestic rivalry between Warwick and the Woodvilles'.<sup>71</sup> The Woodvilles were obvious candidates to head the Burgundian delegation, which allowed them the opportunity to stress their relationship with Jacquetta of Luxembourg and to advertise their international status as ambassadors. That Edward would eventually favour an alliance with Burgundy should not, however, necessarily be seen as a capitulation to the influence of the Woodvilles.

Edward was in a vulnerable position both at home and abroad. While the possibility of domestic unrest remained, his diplomacy was dictated by the need to deny foreign support to any exiled Lancastrians. As the Yorkists became more secure on the throne Edward could afford to take other options into consideration, and he now sought peace with all his neighbours, wishing above all to avoid any moves likely to strengthen 'his most formidable and predatory neighbour', France.<sup>72</sup> Hence in January 1465 he agreed to supply

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<sup>68</sup> N. Pronay and J. Cox eds, *The Crowland Chronicle Continuations 1459-1486*, London 1986, p. 115.

<sup>69</sup> Hicks, *Warwick*, p. 259.

<sup>70</sup> The earl's enmity towards the duke first arose when Warwick and Edward had been in exile in 1460.

<sup>71</sup> C. Weightman, *Margaret of York, Duchess of Burgundy 1446-1503*, Stroud 1989, p. 37.

<sup>72</sup> Hicks, *Warwick*, p. 262.

troops to aid Brittany to preserve its autonomy.<sup>73</sup> By the mid-1460s Edward enjoyed a strong diplomatic position abroad; both France and Burgundy were now keen to secure an alliance with England against each other. It is therefore hardly surprising that embassies were sent to each of the two powers to conduct negotiations, since the intention was to see who could serve England as the best ally.

The Valois dukes of Burgundy ruled over the richest trading and manufacturing area of Northern Europe. Their wealth and influence made them key diplomatic players and powerful, desirable allies for England and France. It was, for example, the withdrawal of Duke Philip the Good from his earlier alliance with England, during Henry VI's reign, which left the way clear for Charles VII to drive the English out of France. Closer links with this major European power offered much in the way of consolidation for the Yorkist regime. That Edward favoured an alliance with Burgundy is hardly surprising; the Yorkist invasion of 1460, which preceded his usurpation, had been aided by the forces of Burgundy; moreover, traditionally the Yorkists had advocated a hostile policy towards France.<sup>74</sup> Edward was also aware of the prosperous economic links that existed between the two countries, and any alliance between the princes would be well received by the merchants of both states. It should also be noted that in the mid 1460s there was no French suitor for Margaret who could rival the status of the duke of Burgundy.

The Woodvilles played a prominent role in maintaining cordial relations with Burgundy. Elizabeth's eldest brother, Anthony, Lord Scales, had been put in charge of the delegation that was sent to Burgundy in 1466. The famous Smithfield Tournament of May 1466 between Scales and Anthony, Bastard of Burgundy, was reportedly organised by the queen and her ladies,<sup>75</sup> and proved an occasion for Edward and the Woodvilles to take centre stage in a grand show of chivalry. The tournament offered the opportunity for a great diplomatic gathering between the two countries, as well as the chance for a display of pageantry. An account survives describing the decoration of Lord Scales' pavilion, at the top of which was an eagle holding a banner of Scales' arms, whilst 'around the lists', were forty-three banners representing 'the armes of dyvers lordshippes accordyng to the lyneall petigree of his discent'.<sup>76</sup> Clearly, such a visual display of ancestry was consciously designed to further the prestige of the Woodville family. Warwick was actually in France at the time of the tournament, yet news would have reached him of the central role played by the Woodvilles. One can imagine, given the distinguished history of

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<sup>73</sup> Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 113.

<sup>74</sup> Weightman, pp. 33, 39.

<sup>75</sup> Weightman, p. 38.

<sup>76</sup> As quoted in S. Anglo, 'Anglo-Burgundian feats of arms: Smithfield, June 1467', *Guildhall Miscellany*, vol. 2, no. 7 (1965), p. 277.

his earldom and his family's pride in lineage, and feats of arms, how bitterly the Earl would have received the reports of the chivalric centre role played by Edward's upstart in laws.<sup>77</sup>

The Woodvilles were again heavily involved in another delegation to Burgundy in the late summer of 1467, this time headed by Lord Rivers, and attended by, amongst others, Lord Scales.<sup>78</sup> But surely the Woodvilles' role in the negotiations did not go further than one that might have been expected of the king's family, and of a noble who had been assigned such a task? The ultimate decision to ally with Burgundy must have rested with Edward. Yet one can imagine the frustration felt by Warwick, who, as well as proving unsuccessful in his attempts to guide Edward's foreign policy, had to witness the meteoric rise of the Woodvilles, as they replaced him centre stage.

The chronicler, Jean de Wavrin, recalled a meeting between Warwick and Clarence, following Edward's less than warm reception of a party of French ambassadors in 1467. 'Then they spoke of the circle round the king, saying that he had scarcely any of the blood royal at court, and that Lord Rivers and his family dominated everything'. We are told that, when Clarence asked how this could be remedied, Warwick replied, 'that if the duke would trust him, he would make him King of England or governor of the whole realm, and he need be in no doubt that most of the country would support him'.<sup>79</sup> The reliability of Wavrin's account has already been discussed, yet, a meeting of some sort would certainly have taken place before the duke and earl broke with Edward. Whilst Wavrin reports Warwick's obvious resentment of Rivers and the domination of the Woodvilles at court, the background to the meeting seems to support the view that Edward's independence in foreign policy provides a key to the rift. Whether the conversation Wavrin recalls is accurate or not, his setting of the meeting in the context of Warwick's frustrated foreign policy shows his recognition of foreign affairs as an important factor.

On 12 July, the day after Clarence's forbidden wedding, Warwick and Clarence released a manifesto in the form of an open letter, attached to a copy of the rebels' petition. They blamed the

disceyvabille covetous rule and gydyngge of certeyne ceducious persones; that is to say, the Lord Ryvers, the Duchess of Bedford his wyf, Ser William Herbert, Erle of Penbroke, Humfrey Stafford, Erle of Devenshire, the Lordis Scalis and Audeley, Ser John Wydevile, and his brethren, Ser John Fogge, and other of theyre myschevous rule opinion and assent, wheche have cause oure seid sovereyn Lord and his seid realme to falle in grete poverte of myserie, disturbynge the

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<sup>77</sup> For an example of the chivalric history, genealogy and heraldry of the earls of Warwick, see J. Rous, *The Rous Roll*, Gloucester 1980.

<sup>78</sup> Weightman, p. 39.

<sup>79</sup> A. R. Myers, ed., *English Historical Documents 1327-1485*, London 1969, p. 297.

mynystracion of the lawes, only entending to thaire owen promocion and enriching.<sup>80</sup>

Whilst the manifesto is clearly propaganda, it should not be wholly dismissed. As a document designed to win support for the rebels' cause, the success of the manifesto rested on its ability to appeal to popular grievances. Hence the absence of any reference to foreign policy; it was not that Warwick was any less angered by his thwarted influence in foreign affairs,<sup>81</sup> just that Warwick knew that he could not mount support for the rebellion by justifying it in terms of frustrated attempts to secure a pro-French policy. It would seem that hostility to the Woodvilles was sufficiently widespread for Warwick to feel confident that he could gain support by singling out their influence with the king as cause for complaint. In attacking the king's advisers and not the king, Warwick was following an established tradition of rebel grievances, similar to that evoked by Richard of York when he rebelled against Henry VI.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, Warwick was not necessarily complaining about the manipulation of the king, or the self-enrichment of the king's advisers, as to do so would have been hypocritical. Instead his objections were limited to the influence held by the upstarts.

The claims of the manifesto prompt the question: how far did the Woodvilles' rapid acceptance into Edward's inner circle displace his old councillors? Among those with access to Edward's ear in 1465 were twenty councillors, the chief officers of state and household, and assorted nobles.<sup>83</sup> The Woodvilles would have had considerable influence; Rivers, as lord treasurer and constable of England, and as a leading member of the king's council occupied a particularly strong position. Given their new and old links with other councillors, the Woodvilles rapidly became a formidable political force, greatly strengthened by the close proximity they enjoyed to the king himself. However, as Ross suggests, 'The introduction of a new and favoured group into the malicious and competitive atmosphere of a royal court was likely to produce exaggerated reports of its influence'.<sup>84</sup> Certainly, the speed of the rise of the large Woodville family contributed to their unpopularity, as did the timing.

The Woodville marriage marked a point in Edward's reign where his council was growing from a narrow faction, with which he had won the throne, to incorporate representatives from the whole country.<sup>85</sup> This process

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<sup>80</sup> Printed in the notes accompanying Warkworth's *Chronicle*, p. 46.

<sup>81</sup> Wilkinson, *Constitutional History*, pp. 147-49, Wilkinson uses the absence of any reference to foreign affairs in the manifesto to down play Warwick's grievances in foreign policy.

<sup>82</sup> York had rebelled in 1452 (as well as 1455 and 1459), see Pollard, *Wars of Roses*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>83</sup> Hicks, 'Changing role', p. 71.

<sup>84</sup> Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 99.

<sup>85</sup> This is not to suggest that Edward deliberately designed the marriage to set up a political

necessarily saw the influence of Warwick and the Nevilles decline, and the emergence of other, newer noble families, such as the Herberts and the Woodvilles. From 1466, Edward's increasing independence from Warwick was becoming more obvious, and his resolve was ultimately shown in *his* choice (not that of the Woodvilles) of a continental ally. His prohibition of the marriage between Clarence and Isabel marked another step in the same direction. Warwick and Clarence's disillusionment arose partly from the disdain with which they jealously viewed those most visibly encroaching on their position at court, and partly through genuine frustrations over foreign policy and the marriage market. However the principal reason that caused the alienation of the earl of Warwick was that he was not content to follow government policy, but expected to dictate it, and refused to accept anything less than total domination over the king.<sup>86</sup>

### Conclusion

Edward's choice of wife was in no way a suitable, or a wise one. In marrying into a family of humble English origins, Edward squandered an invaluable diplomatic card. The king's councillors can only have been disappointed at their young king's impulsive and imprudent marriage. However, the extent to which any later grievances were rooted in the king's actions of 1464 should not be exaggerated. Although the Woodvilles were not awarded limitless titles and lands, their rapid elevation to the baronage, especially through the series of illustrious marriages, was certainly significant, and was abrasive enough to cause legitimate frustration to the most powerful members of the nobility. At the same time the sheer number of the queen's relatives who enjoyed unrivalled access to the king, and a prominent position at court, was viewed with great jealousy by former court favourites.

Edward's marriage and the rapid emergence of the Woodvilles did put unnecessary strains on the already weak political environment of Edward's 'first reign'. To attribute the break between Edward and his barons exclusively to the king's imprudent marriage and its immediate consequences, however is to misunderstand the politics of the period.

First published in *The Ricardian* Vol. 15 2005.

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counter-weight to the Nevilles—see above.

<sup>86</sup> Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 116.