



# Loyalty to the Monarchy in Late Medieval and Early Modern Britain, c.1400–1688

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*Edited by*

MATTHEW WARD  
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Matthew Ward • Matthew Hefferan  
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## ABBREVIATIONS

BL	British Library
CCR	<i>Calendar of Close Rolls</i>
CPR	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls</i>
CSPD	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Domestic</i>
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
Howell, <i>State Trials</i>	<i>A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and Other Crimes and Misdemeanours from the Earliest Period to the Year 1783 ...</i> , compiled T. B. Howell, 34 vols. (London, 1816–28).
KJV	King James Version (Bible)
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> (Online edn.: Oxford, 2005), available at: <a href="http://www.oxforddnb.com">http://www.oxforddnb.com</a>
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
PROME	<i>Parliament Rolls of Medieval England</i> , available at: <a href="http://www.sd-editions.com/PROME/home.html">http://www.sd-editions.com/PROME/home.html</a>
TNA	The National Archives, Kew, London
TRHS	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>



## CHAPTER 1

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# Introduction: Loyalty to the Monarchy in Late Medieval and Early Modern Britain

*Matthew Ward and Matthew Hefferan*

Throughout the late medieval and early modern periods, loyalty to the monarchy remained a salient concept. In *c.* 1400, the Alliterative *Morte Arthure* recounted how King Arthur's 'lele lege-men' were prepared to follow him unflinchingly, while in 1667 readers of John Dryden's *Annus Mirabilis* were treated to a portrayal of London's 'true Loyalty, invincible Courage, and unshaken Constancy' in the face of naval warfare and the Great Fire.<sup>1</sup> These two quotes, separated by more than 250 years, come from different contexts and epochs. The first is couched in terms of the feudal bond between lord and vassal, while the second focuses on municipal fidelity. Yet they share a common broad theme: that of demonstrating loyalty to the monarch, whilst perhaps also intimating a unifying effect which the virtue can engender. Scholars have suggested that 'the core of loyalty does not change, but its shape is conformed'.<sup>2</sup> It is axiomatic that any concept can evolve and be subjected to challenges over a period of three centuries, and the period between 1400 and 1688 was certainly a

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challenging one for the rulers of the British Isles: there was the Hundred Years War to contend with, two major civil wars, two Acts of Supremacy (three if one includes the Irish Act), countless rebellions and a multitude of depositions, in addition to numerous failed attempts.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of this collection of chapters is to examine how the concept of loyalty to the monarchy in England and Scotland was encouraged, expressed and challenged in such a turbulent period. In doing so, readers will be encouraged to consider both continuity and change in this ever-present concept.

### LOYALTY IN HISTORY

The English word ‘loyalty’ stems from the Old French *loialté*.<sup>4</sup> The noun ‘loyalty’ and adjective ‘loyal’ could have several interpretations, not least in the late medieval period when they were associated with faithfulness, alongside other concepts such as justice, truth, honour and lawfulness.<sup>5</sup> Loyalty was intrinsically associated with legality—the French *loial* comes from the Latin *legalis* (from *lex*)—and the link between loyalty and legality continued into the early modern period.<sup>6</sup> Contemporaries used the term in connection with individuals (friends, comrades, lords), groups (a military body), institutions (a monastic community) and even principles (the commonweal), but loyalty was not infrequently discussed in terms of the monarch, or indeed the monarchy.<sup>7</sup> This is true just as much for the end of our period as the beginning. In the mid-eighteenth century, when compiling the first dictionary, Samuel Johnson interpreted ‘loyalty’ firstly as ‘Firm and faithful adherence to a prince’, and secondly as ‘Fidelity to a lady, or lover’. The adverb ‘loyally’ he described as ‘With fidelity; with true adherence to a king’.<sup>8</sup>

Rulers did not shy away from appealing to the loyalty owed to them by their subjects; indeed, their very existence depended on it. At the opening of Edward IV’s 1478 parliament, the chancellor Thomas Rotherham, bishop of Lincoln, chose as his theme ‘The Lord rules me and I shall lack nothing’. He reminded members of the faithfulness which subjects owed their king and the penalties for disobedience, quoting St Paul: ‘The king does not carry the sword without cause’. Rotherham also used his address to refer to the reciprocity involved in a loyalty transaction, stressing that King Edward had brought many benefits to his subjects.<sup>9</sup> Yet there were circumstances when the apparent ultimate act of disloyalty to the sovereign, in the form of tyrannicide, was permitted and even considered an act of ‘loyalty’ itself. The idea has classical precedents, but one of the most

significant contributions came in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* in the mid-twelfth century. Although his theory is incoherent and he did not actively encourage it, the writer suggested tyrannicide was a legitimate act if the monarch had acted unjustly and failed to perform their due responsibilities. In these circumstances a tyrant has no right to claim loyalty; it was deemed a duty imposed by God and the common good to remove them.<sup>10</sup> The work was cited by subsequent political thinkers and was being published well into the sixteenth century. The aforementioned John Dryden referred to the subject of removing the monarch in *The Cock and the Fox*, first printed in 1700 and based on Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Nun's Priest's Tale*:

So loyal subjects often seize their prince,  
Forced (for his good) to seeming violence,  
Yet mean his sacred person not the least offence.<sup>11</sup>

The author no doubt had the forced abdications of Charles I and James II in mind, the former of course an altogether more violent episode than the latter.

Richard III also appealed to the sentiment of loyalty in adopting *Loyaulte me lie*, 'loyalty binds me', as his motto in c. 1483.<sup>12</sup> 'Loyalty' mottoes were common throughout the late medieval and early modern periods: Henry VIII's close confidant Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk (d. 1545), used *Loyaulte me oblige* (loyalty obliges/obligates me) as one of his mottoes.<sup>13</sup> It is likely that King Richard used *Loyaulte me lie* for a number of connotations, including loyalty to his brother Edward IV, loyalty to his lady, to his people, to justice and to the law, as befitting his duties as a prince.<sup>14</sup> The issue of loyalty was a conspicuous presence throughout Richard's life. By his late teens he had witnessed Henry VI lose his throne to Edward IV, then briefly reclaim it, only for Edward to win it back in 1471 with Richard fighting by his side. Richard worked tirelessly over the next decade to help Edward establish some kind of order in his kingdom, becoming 'Lord of the North' of England. It was in light of this loyal service that Edward apparently appointed Richard as Protector for his son and heir, Edward V. As it was, Richard's loyalty to the young king was not boundless, and on 6 July 1483 Richard was himself crowned king having seen Edward V first set aside as illegitimate, and then disappear with his younger brother while they were residing in the Tower of London. Although the notion of loyalty remained a key aspect of Richard's life,

ultimately loyalty to Richard as king was lacking and he was deserted by some of his supporters, including Henry Percy, earl of Northumberland, who failed to fight for Richard at the battle of Bosworth in 1485.

Richard III was far from the only monarch in late medieval or early modern Britain to accentuate the value of loyalty, nor was the Wars of the Roses the only period that offered a substantial challenge to the loyalty that a monarch could expect or demand of their subjects. The British Civil Wars of the mid-seventeenth century were equally tumultuous. Unlike any other time in the last millennium, the period from 1649 to 1660 saw an interregnum during which England was ruled as a republic under a variety of different forms of government, most famously the Protectorate of Oliver (and then Richard) Cromwell from 1653 to 1659. Such a momentous and unique occurrence had a profound impact on the nature of loyalty: some subjects remained loyal to an absent and powerless monarchy, while others chose to focus their loyal directly towards a new, kingless state.<sup>15</sup>

There were comparatively significant developments under the Tudors in the previous century. Henry VIII's break from the Catholic church in Rome in the early 1530s saw secular and religious authority combine in a way that had never before been seen. As a consequence, loyalty to the monarchy became inescapably entwined with religious belief. Such divisions were particularly prevalent in the reigns of Mary and Elizabeth, who had the added complexity of being the first women to rule England in their own right.

### LOYALTY IN HISTORIOGRAPHY

One does not have to look far before coming across the subject of loyalty in the secondary literature. It would be surprising if a book examining the social or political history of the late medieval and early modern periods failed to bring up the topic at some point. Yet studies devoted to the concept are harder to find. *Fidélité* and *loialté* were at the root of the chivalric code, and some medieval scholars have approached loyalty as a chivalric concept and knightly attribute. Both Maurice Keen and, more recently, Richard Kaeuper have stressed the centrality of loyalty to the way in which the medieval nobility were expected to conduct themselves.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, historical thinking on kingship and the power relations between the monarchy, nobility and gentry have approached loyalty as one aspect of this dynamic. Historians in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were



quick to portray the Middle Ages as an ongoing power struggle between the king and his nobility (or, more accurately, the crown and parliament), in which loyalty had to be actively sought and encouraged by the monarchy, such as through the liberal distribution of financial reward.<sup>17</sup> Such a reading of the period was challenged by the work of K. B. McFarlane in the mid-twentieth century, however. By focusing on the people involved in the late medieval polity, rather than the institutions, McFarlane instead argued that the monarchy and nobility were natural allies, and it was only when a particularly poor king sat on the throne that divisions appeared.<sup>18</sup> McFarlane's conclusions have since come to form the foundation of many studies in this area, most notably in the work of influential fifteenth-century historians such as Christine Carpenter and John Watts.<sup>19</sup> A move towards examining the meaning and significance of loyalty in the medieval period has been made in a recently published collection of essays, edited by Jörg Sonntag and Coralie Zermatten, which focuses on loyalty as a key element of social relationships.<sup>20</sup> The volume explores how loyalty was manifested in the context of social bonds: ties between individuals, ties between individuals and groups and ties between institutions and groups, focusing in particular on friendship, political expressions of loyalty and loyalty and faith.<sup>21</sup>

Loyalty has also been a key facet of early modern historiography. A significant element has been the use and efficacy of royal propaganda. In 1972, Geoffrey Elton suggested that following the 1534 Act of Supremacy, Henry VIII, with the help of Thomas Cromwell, rolled out a comprehensive propaganda campaign which utilised a mixture of print and preaching to persuade his subjects of the rightfulness of his cause.<sup>22</sup> Others, such as Bertrand Taithe and Tim Thornton, have more recently highlighted the important role that royal propaganda played in allowing monarchies to communicate with and persuade their subjects of the merits of their policies.<sup>23</sup> Doubt has been cast by some, however, as to whether the structures of government and communication in pre-modern Europe were sufficiently developed to allow this propaganda to reach the broader populace. Rather, some such as Steven Gunn and Sydney Anglo have suggested that only the bare bones of state propaganda trickled down to everyday people.<sup>24</sup> In addition, a number of historians and literary scholars of this period, such as David Cressy, have focused on treason and seditious speech, themes closely associated with loyalty or more appropriately disloyalty.<sup>25</sup> Writers have been drawn to the legal interpretation of treason,<sup>26</sup> and the association between the language used and the severity of the

offence (ranging from defamation to treason). Spatial settings have also been addressed, which have suggested that where things were said was just as important as what was said.<sup>27</sup>

Seventeenth-century studies have addressed loyalty in various contexts, not least conceptions of the divine right of monarchy under the Stuarts, and choosing and changing sides during the British Civil Wars. David Underdown's work during the 1980s on political 'allegiance' in the lead-up to and during the British Civil Wars took a great stride forward in this area, examining the extent to which the English common people took sides (and stuck to them) during the conflict.<sup>28</sup> Of similar importance was Glenn Burgess' *Absolute Monarchy and the Stuart Constitution* (1996), in which he challenged the established (and in his view oversimplified) understanding of seventeenth-century politics as the gradual polarisation of the 'absolutists' of the court—who placed the monarchy's divine right to rule above all else—and 'constitutionalists' of parliament—who opposed tyranny and insisted that even monarchs were subject to the law—which ultimately ended in civil war.<sup>29</sup> This enabled Burgess to provide a more nuanced reading of the place of loyalty within the polity at this time, one in which loyalty did not simply have to be for or against the king. More recent research from Andrew Hopper has considered attitudes from across the social spectrum, from the nobility to the commoner, and has cautioned against making conclusions which emphasise homogenous consonance.<sup>30</sup> Hopper argues that individuals changed sides during the Civil Wars for a variety of reasons, some based on personal beliefs, and others for practical considerations, such as who was able to offer the highest wages. This chimes well with Malcom Mercer's study of the gentry in the Wars of the Roses, which similarly suggests that a range of factors determined an individual's actions and loyalties, from personal principles and ideas of duty, to ties of neighbourhood and kinship.<sup>31</sup>

### THE CONTRIBUTION OF THIS BOOK

The majority of the chapters included in this book were first read at a British Academy-funded conference on 'Loyalty to the British Monarchs, c. 1400–1688', held at the University of Nottingham in January 2018. The purpose of the conference was to bring together scholars from a range of periods and academic disciplines to share their valuable work on the theme of loyalty. To these papers have been added a small number of contributions from scholars who were not able to attend the conference, but,

nevertheless, are engaged in important research into loyalty in the late medieval and early modern periods. Together, the chapters in this volume thus represent a collection of the most recent work that is being done to shape our understanding of the place of loyalty in the history of the British monarchy. Within this, there are three key focuses: how the monarchy encouraged loyalty among their subjects through royal propaganda, how their subjects chose to express their loyalty in return and what happened when periods of secular and religious turbulence between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries saw the relationship between a monarch and their subjects break down. In considering these three core themes, the chapters in this book aim to provide a detailed and rounded account of the theory and reality of loyalty to the monarchy in late medieval and early modern Britain.

Four chapters deal with the issue of propaganda and royal attempts to foster loyalty among their subjects. The first of these, by Emma Levitt, considers the importance of tournaments in allowing the first Yorkist king, Edward IV, to cultivate friendship and personal loyalty among the English nobility following his usurpation of the crown. Wesley Corrêa's chapter, meanwhile, focuses on royal propaganda under the Yorkist and early Tudor monarchies and suggests that propaganda was not, at this time, a one-way flow of information, but rather a dialogue in which the crown used the channels of information available to it to promote itself and court the people for approval, legitimacy, taxation and loyalty. Likewise, Michael A. Heimos uses two important legal cases from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries to examine what the common law concept of 'allegiance' reveals about the way in which contemporaries understood and discussed the loyalty that each subject owed to the monarchy. Finally, Janet Dickinson examines how Elizabeth I was able to use the concept of courtly love to foster loyalty among her nobles, some of whom had difficulty reconciling their Catholic faith with their allegiance to Protestant England.

On the other side of the coin, many of the chapters in this volume are concerned with the way in which the subjects of British monarchs expressed their loyalty. Callum Watson offers a valuable re-reading of Blind Hary's fifteenth-century poem *The Wallace* to argue that, rather than being a subversive text written in support of those dissatisfied with King James III of Scotland's rule, the poem was intended to encourage those with grievances against the king to cling to those values for which the king was supposed to stand, even when the king failed to embody those values himself.

Other chapters explore how loyalty to the monarchy was demonstrated for less idealistic reasons, and more in the self-interest of the person or community professing loyalty. Simon Lambe uses the Paulet family of Somerset as a case study to demonstrate how expressions of loyalty to the monarchy could be used by a gentry family in the hope of receiving royal patronage in the form of land and office, especially as religious reforms gained pace in the 1530s. Similarly, Valerie Schutte uses the previously untapped evidence of book dedications during Henry VIII's reign to show how the sixteenth-century nobility used dedications to profess loyalty to the king in the hope of receiving royal favour and influence as they navigated a new religious and political landscape. John Pagan, meanwhile, explores how the royal colony of Virginia sought to use the reciprocal relationship of loyalty and protection with the king of England to avoid a parliamentary tax that the colonists found unduly burdensome, but were ultimately unsuccessful in the face of the British monarchy's unwillingness to use grievance petitions as vehicles for questioning imperial policies formulated by the king and parliament. Finally, James Harris investigates how 'repeated testimonies of duty and affection' were used in Cornwall and south-west Wales to reaffirm loyalty to the crown following the restoration of the monarchy in the second half of the seventeenth century.

A number of chapters in this volume are, by contrast, interested in disloyalty, dissent and subversion. Jamie Gianoutsos examines how religious persecution in the seventeenth century tested the boundaries of loyalty to the English monarchy. Focusing on the persecution of three key puritan protestors, John Bastwick, Henry Burton and William Prynne, Gianoutsos argues that these men adopted a mixture of religious polemic, historical exempla and gendered language to successfully justify disobedience to the English church. Religious division was not the only cause of dissent in the seventeenth century. The reign of Charles I, and the Civil Wars which it encompassed, was also divisive. This is reflected in the chapter by Richard Bullock, which assesses how sheriffs in the East Midlands found their loyalties divided between the king and their local community when Charles I sought alternative sources of revenue to parliamentary subsidies and the enhanced use of prerogative rights. Edward Legon, meanwhile, examines how disloyalty to the crown continued even after the Restoration in 1660, often with dangerous consequences for those involved. Nevertheless, despite the opportunities for dissent that the Civil Wars presented, others remained loyal to the British monarchy. This included, as Andrew Lind's chapter demonstrates, a number of Scottish Royalists who, despite the

dangers that support of the crown presented for them, remained steadfast in their deep-rooted belief that good subjects owed loyalty to the king.

The chapters in this book are thus intended as a first foray into the malleable concept of loyalty, how it was expressed towards the monarchy and how this changed across one of the most eventful and transformative periods in the history of the British Isles. An argument could be made for extending the scope of this book beyond 1688. However, given the changing dynamic between monarchy and parliament that resulted from the Glorious Revolution, the decision was taken to take this event as a natural stopping point. Even so, subsequent work on loyalty to the monarchy after 1688 would be a worthwhile endeavour and would add further richness to the chapters in this collection. So too would work on loyalty to the monarchs of the British Isles before 1400. As with the period covered in this book, the centuries preceding 1400 witnessed regular conflict and dissent, often on a scale that tested the bonds of loyalty that medieval subjects were willing to give to breaking point. Nevertheless, the period covered by this book was one in which political and religious upheaval tested the bonds of loyalty between ruler and ruled beyond comparison. As such, it offers the ideal opportunity to take a first step towards a fuller understanding of how the concept of loyalty has helped shaped Britain's past.

## NOTES

1. *King Arthur's Death: The Middle English Stanzaic Morte Arthur and Alliterative Morte Arthure*, ed. L. D. Benson (Indianapolis and New York, 1974), p. 183, line 2389; *The Poems of John Dryden*, ed. J. Sargeant (Oxford, London and New York, 1913), pp. 18, 35.
2. C. Zermatten and J. Sonntag, 'Loyalty in the Middle Ages: Introductory Remarks on a Cross-Social Value', in *Loyalty in the Middle Ages: Ideal and Practice of a Cross-Social Value*, ed. J. Sonntag and C. Zermatten (Turnhout, 2015), p. xx.
3. Henry VI has the dubious honour of being deposed twice, in 1461 and 1471.
4. *OED*, *loyalty*, n.
5. Middle English Dictionary, *leaute*, n. and *lel*, adj. & n.
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PART I

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Loyalty to Late Medieval and Early  
Tudor Monarchs





## CHAPTER 2

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# Tiltyard Friendships and Bonds of Loyalty in the Reign of Edward IV, 1461–1483

*Emma Levitt*

Fifteenth-century England was characterised by political disorder and turbulence. The country was frequently divided by the rivalry between the houses of Lancaster and York and the fight between Henry VI and his distant relative Edward IV for the crown. Of the many sudden changes of political fortune which mark English society in the fifteenth century, none was more remarkable than the recovery of the Yorkist cause. Edward IV's usurpation of the throne on 4 March 1461, and again on 11 April 1471, heralded a new Yorkist dynasty following the sixty-two-year rule of the house of Lancaster. Edward's main task upon seizing the crown was to stabilise the country from within, and to do this Edward used the tournament as a way to unify men who had once fought against each other.

The civil strife of the Wars of the Roses entailed fighting for local and personal advantages rather than national ideas, since noblemen were often willing to support either side, or even to change sides if they thought it might benefit them. This has led historians, notably Kenneth Vickers, to argue that 'from the point of view of the fifteenth century nobleman, the

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Wars of the Roses were seen as a series of magnificent tournaments', with the crown and revenues of England as the prize.<sup>1</sup> By using the tournament as a way to foster loyalty to the crown, Edward was thus calculated in his use of chivalry as a set of ideals and practices that was inherent in military, masculine, and cultural codes of the elite. This chapter analyses the tactics and methods by which Edward IV managed to retain his throne, at the same time as reasserting the prestige of the monarchy and cementing bonds of loyalty amongst a divided court. It demonstrates how, through the revival of chivalry and the use of honours such as membership of the Order of the Garter, Edward IV was able to foster loyalty amongst an inner circle of the Yorkist elite. The first part focuses on how Edward used the tournament as a dedicated space in which to forge bonds between his men following a regime that had its foundation in civil war and fractured government. The second part highlights how the development of a chivalric culture under Edward IV had at its core the Order of the Garter and St George's Chapel that brought a bestowal of honour to its members and greater physical proximity to the king. This patronage was offered as a reward for martial prowess and loyalty, and thus was a vital instrument through which Edward was able to tie this group of knightly warriors to the crown. Overall, it is, therefore, the aim of this chapter to identify the chivalric devices that Edward IV used to transform the crown's relationship with the English nobility during one of the most turbulent periods for the English monarchy.

The extent to which 'ideal kingship' was founded on 'ideal masculinity' has been a recent area of research for historians examining medieval monarchs. It was Christopher Fletcher's monograph *Richard II* (2008) that initially began to fill a large gap in the study of masculinity and kingship.<sup>2</sup> Fletcher took a social approach to masculinity, showing that kings were supposed to pursue vigorous, constant, and violent fighting activity from the start of their reign. He argues that far from being an essentially unmanly king as he has so often been painted, Richard's desire to pursue conventional masculine activities was constrained predominantly by circumstance. This attempt to understand what Richard's gender meant to him, how it interacted with his political actions, and how others interpreted it has been a significant development in the study of medieval kingship. In more recent years, Katherine Lewis' analysis of the contrasting masculine identities of Henry V and Henry VI (2013) has explored how far kingship was predicated on the ability to embody and display ideals of masculinity.<sup>3</sup> The office of the king, argues Lewis, is an exemplification of hegemonic masculinity, wherein the masculinity performed by the ruling male is more perfect than,

but similar in type to, the masculinity expected from males at all strata of society.<sup>4</sup> What we learn from Lewis' study is that kings in particular were judged according to their performances of masculinity. Edward III and Henry V are considered great kings because they were viewed as manly kings; Richard II and Henry VI are poor kings because they were regarded as unmanly.<sup>5</sup> The effectiveness of medieval kingship based on the ability to master masculine virtues is an important relationship that can be applied to the kingship of Edward IV and his ability to perform his hegemonic masculinity, thus restoring order following the turbulent Wars of the Roses and shedding new light on the events of the fifteenth century.<sup>6</sup>

To be one of the knights of the tiltyard competing against Edward IV was a definite marker of the king's trust, since it was not typical for fifteenth-century kings to actively participate in jousting competitions. It is true that Edward's predecessors Henry VI, Richard II, and Henry IV had each held tournaments during their reigns, but all had chosen not to compete as kings, which was an accepted stance as the tournament was a dangerous competition based on exceptional martial skill. Despite being recognised as one of the best jousters in England, Henry Bolingbroke seems to have dedicated little time to the sport after his coronation in 1399.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps as a usurper of the throne Henry IV recognised it was too politically risky for him to joust against men who might have tried to deliberately harm him. It is noteworthy that a plot to murder Henry IV and his sons was planned for a tournament held at Windsor on Twelfth Night in 1400, which ultimately failed, but seems to have left its mark. In fact, the last medieval king to compete in tournaments while sovereign was Edward III, well over fifty years prior to Edward IV entering the tiltyard.<sup>8</sup> Thus it is significant that Edward IV as a usurper king decided to actively participate in tournaments during his reign, in the absence of a male heir for the Yorkist dynasty, and knowing that he would be competing against noblemen who had previously fought in favour of the Lancastrian cause. It is evident that Edward was not risking his life in the tiltyard for simple enjoyment, or as a way to showcase his martial prowess. His military career was already well established following his triumphs at the battles of Mortimer's Cross and Towton in 1461, which had proven him a capable leader and warrior king.<sup>9</sup> Edward was presented as the very model of chivalry: he had been victorious in every battle in which he had fought. In addition, Edward's decision to compete in tournaments as a king is testament to how he viewed chivalric activities as a fundamental aspect of his kingship, which were to be taken seriously and not trivialised as kingly hobbies held only for entertainment.

Edward IV was fortunate to be endowed with a tall and broad stature that rendered him visibly and undeniably manly, and well-suited to the joust. At the opening of Edward IV's first parliament in November 1461, the speaker of the Commons addressed the king, praising his 'beauty of person', a description that was evidently not mere flattery.<sup>10</sup> This was expanded on by the chroniclers of the age, who all remarked on his impressive height and handsome appearance, characteristics that qualified Edward to be viewed as the archetypal king of the Middle Ages. The Croyland Chronicle portrayed Edward as 'in the flower of his age, tall of stature, elegant of person'.<sup>11</sup> Gabriel Tetzels description in 1466 confirmed that 'the King is a very handsome upright man'.<sup>12</sup> Polydore Vergil depicted Edward as 'taule of stature, slender of body'.<sup>13</sup> Even his harshest contemporary critic, Philippe de Commynes, who met him twice, remarked on his fine appearance several times: 'he was young and more handsome than any man then alive'.<sup>14</sup> His modern biographer Charles Ross drew the comparison to Edward IV's great-grandfather, Edward III, from whom he apparently inherited the full Plantagenet characteristics of great height and good looks.<sup>15</sup> When the antiquarians who found Edward's remains in 1789 in St George's Chapel in Windsor stretched out his bones and measured them, they estimated his height at just over 6 ft 3 in.<sup>16</sup> Edward's height and build would have made him a formidable force in the tiltyard, which gave the king a natural advantage over his opponents. Hence Edward's very physique supported his claim to be king as it qualified him to restore the prestige of monarchy, as, unlike his predecessor Henry VI, he looked like a medieval king should.

In the 1460s there was a major revival of the tournament under Edward IV, with the joust becoming a regular court activity for the first time since the reign of Richard II. In particular, Edward's model of kingship marked a stark contrast to his predecessor Henry VI, as he tried to rebuild the image of monarchy by setting a knightly precedent for his men to follow, in the same way as Edward III by competing in tournaments. The resurgence of interest in tournaments in England during the reign of Edward IV has been traced by Richard Barber who concluded that Edward's court, 'with its emphasis on splendour, ceremonial, and chivalry, was both a deliberate revival of the courtly culture of the fourteenth century, and an attempt to imitate the courts of Burgundy and Italy'.<sup>17</sup> In fashioning a culture of splendour after the European courts, especially that of Burgundy, which was known for its decadent spectacle of chivalry, it is apparent that Edward unlike Henry VI realised the importance of elaborate ceremonial

display to the status of monarchy and to the prestige of England.<sup>18</sup> In so doing Edward hoped to restore the faith of noblemen in the authority and dominance of the monarch in England. Edward's preoccupation with the forms of chivalry is argued by Loades to have been 'a calculated gesture of solidarity with his own nobility, whose service and loyalty he so badly needed to retain'.<sup>19</sup> In particular, the private feuds of the Wars of the Roses created a need for stability in England; it therefore seems likely that Edward used tournaments to demonstrate power and to maintain the appearance of stability and continuity. This was a deliberate attempt by Edward to counteract the political turbulence which had been brought on by the recent civil war in England.

As the battles against the Lancastrians ceased, it is evident that Edward turned his attention to chivalric pursuits in the 1460s and set about establishing a new Yorkist court culture through a series of magnificent tournaments. The first tournament of the reign took place in October 1461; another marked the short reconciliation with the house of Beaufort at Whitsun 1463; and a third at the coronation of Elizabeth Woodville in 1465. Then, in 1467, the first large-scale royal tournament held in England for over twenty years took place at Smithfield. In the king's second reign jousting continued at the creation of Richard, duke of York in 1474, and his marriage in 1478. It is apparent that in the fifteenth century the tiltyard was a venue for political display, as much as chivalric exercises: on 27 May 1465 Edward chose to mark his wife's coronation with a major tournament. Significantly, Elizabeth Woodville's coronation was the only Yorkist coronation to be celebrated with jousting, which was not surprising given that Elizabeth was considered an unacceptable choice for an English queen by most of the English aristocracy.<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth was one of thirteen children born to Richard Woodville and Jacquetta of Luxembourg, widow of Henry V's brother John, duke of Bedford, but despite the Woodville family connections, she was not considered noble. She was also a widow, already a mother, and brought no dowry nor international connections for England's diplomatic aims. It is clear, therefore, that Elizabeth's coronation, in contrast to those of Edward IV and Richard III, was not a focus for taking power, but one of establishing queenship.

The magnificent scale of the 1465 tournament is clear from John Wodde's writ for immediate payment of £34 10s for a bill of items needed for the tournament that included 200 spears, 150 'graters', which protected the hand, and 150 coronals that protected the lances from penetrating the armour.<sup>21</sup> He also had to pay twenty-four carpenters and twelve

men to pick up the graters and coronals from broken spears ‘in the field on the day of the joust’, which suggests that a considerable number of English and Burgundian knights took part in this tournament.<sup>22</sup> It has been suggested by Barber that the number of spears requested indicates the possibility of a grand *mêlée*, which was a large mock battle not formalised or even confined to the tournament field, as well as the general jousts.<sup>23</sup> The potential that this was a *mêlée* is important. The *mêlée* had been at the height of its popularity in the twelfth century.<sup>24</sup> It brought hundreds of knights together: some large twelfth-century tournaments claimed to have more than 1000 participants.<sup>25</sup> That Edward organised a *mêlée* at the start of his reign, therefore, enabled a large number of English knights to compete against each other, on the designated tournament field, rather than fighting against each other in actual warfare.

The joust and tilt were nevertheless still popular under Edward IV. The joust was a mounted single combat, fought on horseback, usually with lances.<sup>26</sup> The two knights would ride from opposite sides of the tilt barrier and would strike at each other with lances, in an effort to break them against their opponents’ armour. Points were awarded for hits made on the body and head in accordance with John Tiptoft’s rules for jousting across the tilt that were formulated in 1466 at Edward’s command.<sup>27</sup> The joust offered knights a greater opportunity to showcase their individual prowess as they paraded down the lists in their richest clothing to perform feats of arms.<sup>28</sup> Those who gained the highest scores would be rewarded with a prize that might include a falcon, a gold clasp, or even a diamond ring.<sup>29</sup> In reframing the rules for jousting contests it is apparent that Edward was making a deliberate attempt to revive chivalry in England by returning to a knightly and martial culture that advanced men according to their individual merits, rather than because of their high birth or kinship.

It is evident that Edward used the culture of chivalry to appeal to those traditional members of the aristocracy and, in particular, to those who had fought on the side of the Lancastrians and who had been supporters of Henry VI.<sup>30</sup> Even those who had so recently been Edward’s enemies, Ross identifies, ‘were given a chance – often more than one – to enter the service of the new king’.<sup>31</sup> For example, Henry Beaufort, duke of Somerset, was granted a full pardon at the Westminster parliament that sat from April to June 1463.<sup>32</sup> The king also reversed the attainder passed against him in 1461, allowing him to recover his lands. It is apparent from reports at the time that Edward did not just make peace with Somerset, but actually made a real effort to befriend him, inviting the duke to hunt and to sleep