# Rewriting Historical Characters: Henry Tudor and Elizabeth of York as Daenerys Targaryen and Jon Snow

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# Abstract

This essay examines the relationship between the historical figures Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, and the fictional characters Jon Snow and Daenerys Targaryen from the popular TV series *Game of Thrones*. Through the analysis of the similarities between their lives, this project attempts to prove how both fictional characters are based and influenced by Henry VII and Elizabeth of York. Moreover, there is very little previous literature about the life of Elizabeth of York, obscuring and undermining her important role in putting an end to the Wars of the Roses. Thus, besides proving the relationship between these historical characters and the fictional ones, the aim of this paper is also to emphasise the historical importance given to Elizabeth of York in *Game of Thrones* by means of using her as a main source of inspiration for two of the most important an relevant characters of the series. As a result, this work also intends to prove how *Game of Thrones* demolishes gender boundaries by using characteristics of both Henry VII and Elizabeth of York to shape the characters of Jon Snow and Daenerys Targaryen.

Key words: reversal gender roles, historical discourse, power, recognition, fantasy

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# 1. Introduction

Fantasy literature has very deep roots in the British literary system. Many representative British literary works belong to the fantastic genre, such as *The Lord of The Rings* (1954-55) by John R. R. Tolkien or the *Harry Potter* (1997-2007) saga by J. K. Rowling, which are two of the greatest exponents of contemporary English literature. Moreover, fantasy literature represents elements of the landscape and society from which it has been inspired (Manlove 2016, 1). This is the case of *Game of Thrones*, the popular TV series that has currently become a global phenomenon. Even though George R.R. Martin, the author of the books that the show is based on, is American, *Game of Thrones* is mainly inspired by British historical elements. Thus, the aim of this paper is to prove that the fictional characters Jon Snow and Daenerys Targaryen are mostly based and inspired by Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, the two figures that put an end to the Wars of the Roses, and that the fictional characters empower the historical figures. To do so, after a brief introduction to the show and its connection to the Wars of the Roses, the similarities between the events of these characters' lives are going to be deeply analysed. Firstly, this paper will go through the different phases of Daenerys' and Henry Tudor's lives, from their childhood in exile being nobodies to ending up raising huge armies. Then their weak claims to the throne and the development of a clever personality as a consequence of being fugitives under constant danger will also be explored. Afterwards, the focus will be put on the acquisition of allies, mainly the Starks and the Yorks, and the final decisive battle against their respective tyrants, connected to the role of their partners Jon and Elizabeth in bringing stability to the country. In addition, Jon Snow's and Elizabeth of York's lives will also be compared from their marginalised position in their family, their right to the throne due to their bloodline, and their connection with magical elements and how it conditioned their lives. Moreover, the magical influence of Elizabeth of York's family on House Targaryen, and how this empowers Daenerys will also be studied. Additionally, since there is few previous literature about Elizabeth of York, this work will also attempt to show how *Game of Thrones* is giving Elizabeth of York the recognition she has not been given before by using her as a main source of inspiration for two of the most important and relevant characters of the show, since she was hidden and marginalised from the historical discourse of the country. Regarding methodology, several episodes from the entire show, along with aspects from Henry VII's and Elizabeth of York's lives will be analysed from the point of view of Cultural Studies, in terms of how the rewriting of these historical characters transgresses the traditional historical image that society has of them. Furthermore, the analysis of these characters and their traits will be done from a Gender Studies perspective.

The reason why this topic has been selected is that, despite of being a gamut of comparisons between Henry VII and Daenerys Targaryen in previous literature, Elizabeth of York has been misplaced and ignored in the historical discourse, probably because of being a woman. This has led to the realization that Jon Snow is ignored in the same way just for the fact of being a bastard. Therefore, proving that Daenerys and Jon Snow are inspired by Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, this paper will attempt to highlight the importance of both monarchs in British history and in putting an end to the Wars of the Roses, in contrast to previous works which only make Henry VII relevant. Since Jon Snow ends up being a very important figure regarding Westeros' fate and future, this essay intends to explore to which extend this can be applied to Elizabeth of York.

## 2. *Game of Thrones*

*Game of Thrones*, created by David Benioff and D.B. Weiss, is an American show based on the series of fantasy novels *A Song of Ice and Fire* written by George R.R. Martin. He started writing the saga on 1991, and he has published five books up to this day, which correspond to the first five seasons of the TV series. From the sixth season onwards, the show has overtaken the books and made several changes to the plot. The show premiered on HBO in 2011 and it ended in 2019, after eight seasons. Even though its first pilot was unsuccessful, after a rework it ended up as the first episode of season one and became the first step to the huge global success the series has now become.

In spite of being an American work, the medieval setting of *Game of Thrones* is mostly based on European history. The main sources of inspiration come from British history, mainly the period from 1450 to 1485, approximately when the Wars of the Roses took place (Dey and Mondal 2018, 60). However, other aspects of the series are based on earlier and later stages of British history, such as the Purple Wedding (Graves 2014, 4/2, 47:00)[1], which was inspired by Eustace of Bloi's death by choking; the destruction of the Sept of Baelor (Sapochnik 2016, 6/10, 16:25), based on the Gunpowder Plot in 1605; or the Westerosi Wall created by Martin after being inspired by the Hadrian's Wall (Dey and Mondal 2018, 70). The resemblance in shape between Great Britain and Westeros also serves as evidence to prove that *Game of Thrones* is more British than American.

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[1] Episodes will be referenced following the pattern of season number/episode number.

### 3. *Game of Thrones* and the Wars of the Roses

The main source of inspiration for *Game of Thrones* are the Wars of the Roses and their palace intrigues. The Wars of the Roses (1455-1485) are the group of civil wars between the Lancasters and the Yorks that took place in medieval England. Despite being officially started in 1455, the seeds of war were planted after Edward III dead in 1377, who was succeeded by his grandson Richard II, since his son Edward "the Black Prince" died before him. However, the Black Prince's brothers were still alive, and the skipping of their generation in the line of succession originated the tensions. The Houses of Lancaster and York come from Edward III (Penn 2012, 2), specifically from his third and fourth sons respectively, John of Gaunt and Edmund duke of York. In *Game of Thrones*, these two houses are incarnated by House Stark as the Yorks, and House Lannister as the Lancasters (Pavlac 2017, 8). After Henry of Bolingbroke, Richard II's cousin, seized him and became Henry IV, the Lancaster faction kept the crown until the start of the wars in 1455, during Henry VI's reign.

Henry VI was a weak king whom both factions tried to manipulate. Margaret of Anjou, his French wife, put her supporters, like the Earls of Suffolk and Somerset, in court. Mirroring this, Cersei Lannister also pulls the strings by putting friends of her house in court. On the other hand, Richard of York was Henry VI's most trusted advisor, but he was also distrusted by the queen. Likewise, at the beginning of the show, Ned Stark is summoned by Robert Baratheon to be his Hand of the King, a petition that does not please Cersei whatsoever. In the same way that Ned Stark confronted Queen Cersei by accusing her of having her children with her brother, provoking Cersei's fury, Richard of York criticised the inept handling of the war against France and the supporters Margaret of Anjou promoted. Richard of York was transferred to Ireland, but he returned with an army in 1455, defeating the Lancasters forces in the First Battle of Saint Albans. Thus, he reformed the court, arrested Somerset and, after Henry VI's mental breakdown, he became Protector of the Realm. Therefore, Richard of York was the Protector of the Realm, Ned Stark the Hand of the King, and they were both hated by their respective queens. When Henry VI recovered, Margaret of Anjou convinced him to reverse Richard's reforms. Richard of York was forced to flee but came back with an army once more. However, he was murdered in the Battle of Wakefield in 1460. Nevertheless, his son conquered the throne after the Battle of Towton in 1461 and became Edward IV, putting the York faction in power. Ned Stark was also killed by the Lannisters. Consequently, his oldest son Robb Stark declared independence in the North and was crowned King in the North.

Nonetheless, both Edward IV and Robb Stark lost a key ally due to their marriage. Edward IV was supposed to wed a French princess, marriage agreed by his supporter the Earl of Warwick. Robb Sark also had to marry one of Walder Frey's daughters in exchange for letting him cross his bridge during war. However, both kings clandestinely married another lady and broke their oaths. This resulted in the Earl of Warwick's alliance with the Lancasters, who rebelled against the throne and forced him to flee into exile in 1470. Walder Frey secretly allied with the Lannisters and, after pretending to accept Robb's apology, he invited him to a wedding, now referred to as the Red Wedding (Nutter 2013, 3/9, 35:06), in which Robb and his forces would be slain. In this way, Richard of York's damnation and Edward's IV secret marriage with Elizabeth Woodville shaped the characters of Ned Stark and Robb Stark (Pavlac 2017, 9).

During Edward IV's short time in exile, Henry VI was restored to the throne. However, Edward IV returned with gathered support, took Henry VI as prisoner and recovered the crown in 1471. In one of the battles through which Edward IV restored his position, Edward of Westminster, son of Margaret of Anjou, was murdered. This resembles the death of Joffrey Baratheon. Even though he was not a soldier, Joffrey was a psychopath, similar to Edward of Westminster's known cruelty. After taking the throne, Edward IV enjoyed "the high life until an early death" (Pavlac 2017, 8). Not only did Edward IV influence Robb Stark, but also influenced Robert Baratheon regarding his bad ruling and vices (Pavlac 2017, 9). Edward IV died "died grossly fat" (Okerlund 2009, 6), a physical trait highly emphasised on the character of Robert Baratheon. Moreover, when both of them died, their brothers tried to usurp the crown. The difference lies in the fact that Richard III was successful, while Stannis Baratheon never achieved his aim.

Both Richard III and Stannis accused their nephews of being illegitimate so they could attain the crown. Richard III relayed on Edward IV's secret marriage to discredit their nephews, and put them into the Tower of London, where they disappeared. On the other side, Stannis was also informed by Ned Stark about his nephews' real father, which encouraged him to claim the throne. Due to Richard III's treachery, since he was supposed to be the guardian of the princes, Elizabeth Woodville, Edward IV's widow, agreed with Margaret Beaufort that once his son Henry Tudor, who had raised a great army and acquired great support abroad, defeated Richard III and became king, he would marry Woodville's daughter Elizabeth of York. Henry Tudor was the last Lancaster male candidate remaining to claim the throne. He was raised into exile across the sea, where he acquired great armies and loyal supporters. In the same way, Daenerys Targaryen was also fled across the narrow sea as a

child and it was in exile where she also raised an army in order to conquer the throne. Henry Tudor successfully defeated Richard III in the Battle of Bosworth in 1485 and became Henry VII. Along with his marriage to Elizabeth of York, the two confronted factions became united and the Wars of the Roses came to an end.

## 4. Analysing fictional and historical characters: Daenerys Targaryen vs Henry Tudor and Jon Snow vs Elizabeth of York

As previously mentioned, the character of Daenerys Targaryen is certainly based on Henry VII, while the character of Jon Snow highly resembles the figure of Elizabeth of York. The couple that put an end to the period of instability of England during the Wars of the Roses is reflected in the couple that dealt with the great menace of Westeros, the white walkers, and the dispute over the Iron Throne.

### 4.1. Daenerys Targaryen and Henry Tudor

When Daenerys first appears in *Game of Thrones*, she is not in Westeros but in Pentos, located in the continent of Essos (Van Patten 2011, 1/1, 31:53). She was forced into exile when she was just a baby alongside with her older brother Viserys, due to Robert's Rebellion against the Targaryen dynasty, which took the lives of her father, the Mad King, and her older brother and successor to the throne Rhaegar Targaryen. The rebellion put an end to the rule of the Targaryen dynasty over Westeros, since the last Targaryens, Daenerys and Viserys, escaped the castle of Dragonstone, where they had been hiding from the rebels. Regarding Henry Tudor, he was also raised in exile. The young Henry fled Pembroke Castle, where he was hidden from the Yorkist armies, to the duchy of Brittany alongside Jasper Tudor (Penn 2012, 4). Both Daenerys and Henry Tudor were kindly hosted in foreign lands. Daenerys and Viserys lived in Illyrio Mopatis' house in Pentos, while Henry Tudor was welcomed by Duke Francis of Brittany. As well as Illyrio knew the value of Viserys and Daenerys, Francis of Brittany was also aware of Henry's importance (Penn 2012, 4). Furthermore, Daenerys had no power nor agency when *Game of* Thrones began. Not only was she an exile but also she was under the total control of her brother, not daring to reject any of his commands (Sandqvist 2012, 21). In the same way, Henry Tudor was just a teenager across the sea who depended on Jasper Tudor and Francis of Brittany. Therefore, both future monarchs had to spend their childhood abroad, across the sea, far away from their homeland. Nonetheless and against all odds, they were able to gain the support of the people and to raise an army.

However, both Daenerys and Henry Tudor had very weak claims to the throne. Being the last survivors of their houses, they did not had a direct connection with the current line of succession. Daenerys was the youngest daughter of Aerys II, who was slain during Robert's Rebellion. After that, Robert Baratheon took the throne by the medieval right of conquest. Thus, any Targaryen claim to the throne instantly became illegitimate. Moreover, when Robert died, the first in line to inherit the throne was his son Joffrey. However, it is discovered that Joffrey and his brothers are bastards (Minahan 2011, 1/6, 44:34). In any case, Daenerys was not the rightful heir, since Robert had two younger brothers, Stannis and Renly. Furthermore, in the later seasons, Bran Stark's visions reveal that Jon Snow has a stronger claim to the Iron Throne than Daenerys (Sapochnik 2016, 6/10, 54:45), since he is the secret child of Daenerys' older brother Rhaegar and Lyanna Stark, secretly married before Robert's Rebellion as Samwell Tarly discovers (Shakman 2017, 7/5, 44:10). Similarly, Henry Tudor was not a direct successor to the throne, but a distant relative of the royal family, since his mother, Margaret Beaufort, was a great-granddaughter of John of Gaunt, Richard II's uncle. This also meant that his whole claim to the throne came from a woman, which did not strengthen it whatsoever. However, as Daenerys was the last remaining member of House Targaryen, Henry was the most supported member from the Lancastrian side by the Lancaster themselves (Pavlac 2917, 8). Due to their feeble claims to the throne and their remote geographical position from their homelands, both Daenerys and Henry were not given much importance in their early years. In fact, Cersei Lannister states that Daenerys is just a child at the edge of the world (Sakharov 2014, 4/6, 25:46). However, some members of the Small Council were concerned about her continuously incrementing power and wanted to deal with her. The same happened with Henry Tudor. Not everyone ignored his existence, and some even conspired against him.

Growing up as fugitive and as a claimant to the throne means learning whom not to trust and being aware of your constant state of danger. In *Game of Thrones*, Daenerys is always on the move. Before becoming a conqueror and moving from one city to another to liberate the slaves in them, she changed her location in order to survive. The Targaryen girl goes from looking for shelter and food through the Red Waste desert to being trapped in a tower by evil wizards who stole her dragons in the great city of Qarth (Taylor 2012, 2/10, 48:00). She is almost poisoned at Vaes Dothrak (Minahan 2011, 1/7, 29:19), and nearly attacked by a manticore (Minahan 2013, 3/1, 48:55). These threats mirror Henry Tudor's life as an exile. He lived among constant spreading rumours of enemies plotting against him and his life. Consequently, he was never fully settled in one place, but constantly moving (Penn

2012, 4). In addition, both Daenerys and Henry were betrayed by one of their closest supporters in exchange to the King's appealing offers. Jorah Mormont, Daenery's most trustful advisor and friend, first approached her in order to get a royal pardon by King Robert in exchange for keeping him informed about Daenerys' location and plans. On the other hand, Henry Tudor was temporarily betrayed by Duke Francis, who agreed to exchange him for military and economic support (Penn 2012, 5). Jorah Mormont deeply regretted betraying Daenerys, so he begged for forgiveness. Eventually, he was pardoned and allowed to return back to her side. In the same way, when the Duke Francis of Brittany encountered Henry Tudor again, he "was all contrition" (Penn 2012, 5). Being under constant danger made Daenerys and Henry be always on their guard, suspicious, and clever. Henry survived Francis of Brittany's betrayal because he pretended to be sick and was sent to sanctuary (Penn 2012, 5). Daenerys' greatest epitome of intelligence was pretending to be unable to speak High Valyrian when she negotiated with the master of the unsullied. She reached an agreement that consisted in trading one of her baby dragons for eight thousand unsullied. After being insulted and disrespected in High Valyrian, she waited until the deal was completed and then ordered her dragon to burn alive the master. Furthermore, she also ordered all her recently earned unsullied army of eight thousand men to kill all the masters in the city, conquering it while keeping the three of her dragons (Graves 2013, 3/4, 46:20).

When Richard III came to the throne, Henry Tudor saw an opportunity to claim it. He was advised to seek help from outside England, in Wales. Even though Henry Tudor did not found opposition there, it was not until Rhys ap Thomas supported with him that he obtained a powerful ally (Chrimes 1999, 42-43). Similarly, Daenerys decided to look for allies in Essos, since there were no Targaryen supporters left in Westeros. Similarly to Essos, Wales was barely under the control of Richard III. As time went on, Henry Tudor progressively acquired new allies, some of them previous supporters of Richard III, now disappointed and tired, such as William Stanley and Thomas Stanley, who shifted their loyalty and agreed to join Henry Tudor's side in the Battle of Bosworth. The same happened with Daenerys, who was backed by Olenna Tyrell, previous ally of House Lannister, and Ellaria Sand, both wishing to put an end to Cersei's tyranny. Among them, Daenerys also gathered support from members of House Greyjoy, Varys, and Cersei's own little brother Tyrion. The greatest ally Henry Tudor had was the Woodville family. He reached an agreement with them that consisted in marrying their oldest daughter Elizabeth of York once he had taken the crown. In this way, not only would he gain the support of the Yorks, but also he would legitimise his claim, uniting the two families and putting an end to the Wars of the Roses (Pavlac 2017,

167). This is mirrored in the allegiance pledged to Daenerys by Jon Snow in the name of the North. Even though Jon and Daenerys do not reach an agreement initially, after helping Jon and seeing with her own eyes the white walker's menace coming to Westeros, Daenerys decides to help Jon, who agrees to bend the knee and calls her "my queen" (Taylor 2017, 7/6, 1:02:58), granting her the North. Consequently, Daenerys is now backed by the biggest kingdom in Westeros, and albeit Jon Snow is still not aware, by the true Targaryen heir to the Iron Throne.

Henry Tudor and Daenerys Targaryen terminated Richard III's and Cersei Lannister's reigns respectively by means of conquest and after great, decisive battles. Through his own Lancaster heritage and by conquering the throne in the battlefield, Henry Tudor claimed the crown in 1485, changing England's history forever after the Battle of Bosworth (Pavlac 2017, 167). During the Battle of Bosworth, the forces of Henry Tudor defeated Richard III, slaying him in the field. At the same time, Daenerys' armies defeated Cersei Lannister and all her allies in the Battle of King's Landing (Sapochnik 2019, 8/5, 1:09:43), finally completing Daenerys' quest for the Iron Throne and Westeros. Cersei, as Richard III did, died during the battle, by being smashed by her crumbling castle. However, in spite of uniting her house with the Starks by marrying Jon Snow as Henry Tudor did marrying Elizabeth of York, Daenerys was assassinated by Jon Snow shortly after the battle (Benioff and Weiss 2019, 8/6, 34:50).

The fact that such a relevant historical character like Henry Tudor is incarnated by Daenerys Targaryen, a woman, in *Game of Thrones* enhances female characters. Both figures strengthen each other. Henry, through his obvious important role in the history of England, empowers the character of Daenerys just by being the character's source of inspiration. Daenerys, on the other hand, by being a woman who is able to get the same influence and support that Henry Tudor did, experiences a reversion of gender roles that not only bolsters Henry Tudor's role in the history of England but also empowers the figure of female characters. Daenerys' claim to the throne is stronger than Henry's, since she is a more direct descendant from the previous king, before Robert's Rebellion. During their lives as fugitives, they both had to think fast. Wisdom and audacity are often characteristics of male characters, but Daenerys possesses both. The Targaryen woman is fiercely depicted as a leader and a liberator, the same as Henry Tudor liberating England from Richard III. Nevertheless, at the end of *Game of Thrones*, Daenerys loses her sanity. For this reason, Jon Snow chooses to end her life. Otherwise, her blind trust in her cause would have driven Daenerys to spread chaos and tyranny all over Westeros, since she claimed that people "don't get to choose" (Benioff and Weiss 2019, 8/6, 34:03). Therefore, it is because of Jon Snow that Westeros recovers its

stability. In the same way, England regains stability after a period of civil wars thanks to the role of Elizabeth of York in uniting forces and marrying Henry VII. Thus, both Daenerys and Henry are proved not to be the epitome of power.

Regardless the tragic end of Daenerys, she is an important example of feminist power. Traditionally, power is portrayed in old age, and generally in male characters, so young women tend to be around elder wise men who possess all the knowledge and wisdom (Quilter and Henry 2009, 210). These elder men pass their knowledge to the younger men, leaving women out of the transmission line, but feminists have "sought to reclaim the power of such traditions, exploring feminine transmissions of power and knowledge" (Quilter and Henry 2009, 219). This feminist approach is shown when Olenna Tyrell, having a moment alone with Daenerys, advises her about ruling and conquering, claiming: "I've known a great many clever men. I've outlived them all. You know why? I ignored them. The lords of Westeros are sheep. Are you a sheep? No. You're a dragon. Be a dragon" (Mylod 2017, 7/2, 22:45). With this quote, Daenerys is being advised by an elder woman, not a men, who had outlived a gamut of clever men. This can be interpreted as a reference to the important role Elizabeth of Woodville and Margaret Beaufort had in the ascension of their children to power. Because of Margaret Beaufort's secret agents, she and Elizabeth Woodville agreed to marry Henry Tudor and Elizabeth of York once Henry obtained the crown (Penn 2012, 5).

Feminism is also present regarding Daenerys sexuality. She loses her child and her ability to give birth, which was the main purpose of women in medieval societies, and what made her a real woman (Sandqvist 2012, 24). Nonetheless, Daenerys becomes more powerful after losing her fertility. She hatches her dragon eggs and embraces her sexuality from a dominant position. In fact, she is the one who gives commands, not only on her life as a ruler but also during her sexual relations, as it is seen when she orders Daario Naharis to take off his clothes (Sakharov 2014, 4/7, 19:23).

## 4.2. Jon Snow and Elizabeth of York

The other important, but frequently ignored figure in the history of England and the Wars of the Roses is Elizabeth of York. As Licence calls her in her book's title, Elizabeth of York is "the forgotten Tudor queen" (2013). Probably because of being a woman, and Henry VII's consort, Elizabeth of York is not given the importance she deserved for being the person who legitimised Henry Tudor's claim to the throne, which definitively resulted in the end of the Wars of the Roses. She was also less relevant than her brothers, who were first in the line of succession until they disappeared. This resembles the character of Jon Snow, who was

marginalised from the Stark family only for being a bastard. For instance, despite being Ned Stark's son, he is not standing in first line like all his half-brothers when meeting King Robert (Van Patten 2011, 1/1, 24:06). Even though not much is known about Elizabeth of York, some events of her early life mirror Jon Snow's life.

Neither Elizabeth and Jon were meant to be rulers nor heirs of their houses. Their first encounter with the cruelties of real life had to do with murder. Elizabeth of York's uncle and grandfather were murdered by the Earl of Warwick's forces, since he sought revenge from the day Edward IV revealed he had married Elizabeth Woodville. In *Game of Thrones*, Jon Snow's half-brother Robb is killed by Walder Frey's men, who had allied with the Lannisters, after breaking his promise to wed one of Frey's daughters to marry a young lady in secret. Moreover, Jon's father Ned had been beheaded by the Lannisters in King's Landing (Taylor 2011, 1/9, 52:50). Both Elizabeth and Jon found themselves facing the horrors of political vengeance from the distance, without being able to help their families and without even being noticed, since they were still not relevant in the line of succession at that point. Elizabeth of York's brother was Edward IV's heir. However, their uncle Richard of Gloucester, later crowned Richard III, put him and his other brother into the Tower of London, where they disappeared, for which they are known as "the Princes in the Tower". This mirrors Jon Snow's half-brothers Bran and Rickon, who also were missing after Theon Greyjoy invaded Winterfell, their ancient home (Nutter 2012, 2/6, 02:19). Shortly after losing track of his younger brothers, the Stark heir, Robb, was killed in the Red Wedding (Nutter 2013, 3/9, 35:06), turning Jon into the fittest to be heir of Winterfell, since the Northerners ignored Sansa Stark and named Jon King in the North after the Battle of the Bastards (Sapochnik 2016, 6/10, 56:47). Therefore, Jon, who never expected to have any claim on Winterfell, became the North's hope for independence in the same way that Elizabeth of York became her family's hope for power (Pavlac 2017, 166).

Moreover, Jon Snow's real parents are revealed in the later seasons; he is not Eddard Stark's bastard but the son of Rhagear Targaryen and Lyanna Stark (Sapochnik 2016, 6/10, 54:45), which makes him a stronger claimant to the throne than Daenerys. Even though Jon kills Daenerys due to her insanity, from the moment Jon's origins were discovered Daenerys knew she needed Jon on her side to bolster her position as Queen of Westeros and to gain the support of the Westerosi people. Elizabeth of York was also a more direct descendant from Edward IV, as her daughter, and more directly related to Richard III, as her niece, than Henry Tudor was, so he also realised he needed her to consolidate his reign and to "obtain sovereignty and legitimacy in England" (Pavlac 2017, 167). However, there were rumours

about the illegitimacy of Elizabeth of York's mother's marriage to Edward IV, similar to the initial belief that Rhaegar and Lyanna were not officially married, but that he raped her. Regardless of this, both figures proved to be necessary to support their respective partners' claim to the throne.

Elizabeth of York and Jon Snow were related to supernatural elements and magic, though with different connotations and consequences. Jacquetta of Luxembourg and Elizabeth Woodville, grandmother and mother of Elizabeth of York, were accused of sorcery, witchcraft and necromancy to dishonour their family. The Earl of Warwick and his rebels accused Jacquetta of Luxembourg of sorcery, since her sister-in-law dealt with similar charges. Moreover, rumours circulated about her mother seducing Edward IV to marry her by means of some kind of mysterious magic (Okerlund 2009, 4). Thus, the women of Elizabeth of York's family acquired the reputation of sorceress and witches, discrediting them, since relating women with witchcraft showed their weakness of spirit by being vulnerable to diabolic forces (Anderson and Gordon 1978, 173). Regarding Jon Snow, he is a character strongly related with the supernatural. Jon's plot in the series is focused on the white walker's menace. He is concerned about the ancient army of the death, being one of the few people who have seen it. His whole life is dedicated to defeat them. Furthermore, he also encounters mythical creatures such as giants during his trip beyond the wall. Not only is Jon related with the supernatural but also he owes his life to it. After being charged as traitor by his brothers of the Night's Watch, he is stabbed to death in Castle Black (Nutter 2015, 5/10, 54:05). However, he is resurrected by Melissandre through blood magic (Podeswa 2016, 6/2, 44:52). When the Lord of Light, Melissandre's god, brings someone back to life, it is believed that that person has a purpose in the world. In addition, he also shares blood with supernatural people, such as Bran Stark, who becomes the three-eyed raven and has the ability to see the past, present and future in his visions. Therefore, Jon Snow was also marked by magic.

As a frequently ignored figure in the historical discourse, the fact that Elizabeth of York influences a character such as Jon Snow, who can be considered the centre of *Game of Thrones*, is a way to consolidate her importance in the Wars of the Roses and the history of England. Again, these characters, empower each other. Jon, being inspired by Elizabeth, is given the role of one of the key figures that helped to bring stability to England after the Wars of the Roses. Additionally, Elizabeth, who is barely mentioned in the historical discourse, is being incarnated by the very person who made the defeat of the Night King possible by uniting all Northern armies and bringing Daenerys to the cause. Both Jon and Elizabeth experienced a gradual acquisition of power due to the constantly decreasing amount of

relatives they had left to claim the crown. Jon, initially a marginalised bastard, became King in the North, and suddenly, the first claimant in line for the Iron Throne, before Daenerys. Elizabeth as well had legally a stronger claim than Henry Tudor, but as a woman she was ignored. Here is when the character of Jon Snow empowers Elizabeth of York. In the last season of *Game of Thrones*, everyone who is aware of Jon's true identity recognises him as the rightful king, regardless Jon's constant rejection of the title. Daenerys is slowly put aside by the Westerosi people and realises she only has the option of maintaining Jon by her side and winning the people support, or convincing him to keep his identity a secret. Anyhow, the key for Daenerys' success is Jon, as well as Elizabeth was for Henry and for the stability of England. At the end, it is Jon who brings stability to Westeros by killing Daenerys and triggering a new order, in which the king is elected.

Moreover, Jon is surrounded by sorcery and supernatural elements, which had been traditionally associated with women, due to being considered as socially and spiritually inferior individuals throughout the Middle Ages (Anderson and Gordon 1978, 172-173). In contrast to the intentions of the rebels accusing Elizabeth of York's family of being corrupted by dark magic, Jon Snow is seen as the chosen one, some kind of god in the eyes of the wildlings, with a bigger purpose in the world, being the last hope of all the people in Westeros. Again, just as Daenerys, the character of Jon Snow experiences a reversion of gender roles by being related to sorcery, trait attributed to female characters. Thus, magic is seen as an strengthening marker of the importance and relevance of people in the world, which empowers feminine characters and can be attributed to the figure of Elizabeth of York and her family and their role in the Wars of the Roses. Elizabeth, similarly to Jon, became England's hope for a new period of stability.

## 4.3. Empowering Elizabeth of York: Inspiring Daenerys Targaryen

In addition, Elizabeth of York is not only an influence for Jon Snow's character but also for Daenerys, which highly enhances the relevance and importance of Elizabeth of York. As previously mentioned, Elizabeth's family was suspected of sorcery. In the same way, House Targaryen's main characteristic is their connection with dragons and their old, mystical ancestry, being descendants from the blood of Old Valyria. The turning point in Daenerys' plot comes when she hatches her dragons (Taylor 2011, 1/10, 48:06). By doing so, she is the first Targaryen in ages to owe dragons. When discovering her ability of walking into fire undamaged, Daenerys passes from girl to woman and obtains her three more valuable and

powerful means to conquer the throne, which become her main way of exercising power and influence. Magic is involved in her "maturation process" (Quilter and Henry 2009, 214) and it is her principal source of power, a fact that grants the supernatural positive connotations, in contrast to Elizabeth of York's family's criticism. Dragons made the Targaryen queens equal to their male counterparts, since by marrying within their family, they shared the same blood and the ability to ride their mythological beasts (Pavlac 2017, 22). In fact, after the Dance of Dragons, the Targaryens lost their last dragons and Targaryen women eventually adopted a more formal role, away from military matters (Pavlac 2017, 23). Therefore, sorcery, considered such a negative element used by the rebels against the Yorks is turned into a positive element of power that differences House Targaryen from the rest of the ordinary Houses in Westeros. By using Elizabeth of York as an influence not only for Jon Snow but also for Daenerys Targaryen, she is symbolically given a highly important role in the historical discourse of England.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be confirmed that the historical figure of Henry Tudor heavily shapes the character of Daenerys Targaryen while Elizabeth of York influences the character of Jon Snow. Moreover, these *Game of Thrones*' characters also empower Henry VII, Elizabeth of York and women figures. Both Henry and Daenerys started as exiles across the sea with feeble claims to the throne, being the last available candidates of their families. They spent their life as fugitives, which made them develop their intelligence and audacity, raising great armies and gaining powerful allies and loyal supporters. With their conquering of the throne, they ended the tyranny of Richard III and Cersei Lannister respectively, putting an end to the period of instability which England and Westeros were going through. Moreover, they both knew that in order to legitimise their role as monarchs, they needed Elizabeth of York and Jon Snow by their side. Indeed, it was because of Elizabeth of York that the Yorks and the Lancasters united their houses and the Wars of the Roses came to an end, granting England stability. In the same way, by murdering Daenerys after seeing how she succumbed to madness, Jon Snow triggered a new order in which kings were elected, putting an end to the conflictive period Westeros had gone thorugh over the past years. With all this parallelisms, it can be proved that both characters empower each other. There is a reversal of gender roles that occurs when giving Daenerys traditionally male traits such as fierceness, wisdom and a dominant sexuality but without the ability to give birth; meanwhile, Henry is being incarnated

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by a young woman whose main weapon are three magic dragons. Thus, the king who brought stability to England is rewritten with feminine elements like sorcery.

The connection between the figure of Elizabeth of York and the character of Jon Snow is also based in the events of their lives and definitely bolsters the character of Elizabeth of York, giving her the recognition she is not given in the historical discourse and previous literature, while also empowering the figure of women. Both characters have been marginalised, Elizabeth for being a woman hence not as relevant as her brothers, and Jon, because of being a bastard, was also behind all his half-brothers in everything related to heritage. They faced the hardships of real life at young age, when their kindred was murdered by their enemies. Nonetheless, both achieved a relevant position and acquired power, becoming the hope of their families and their country, Jon mainly because of his secret lineage and Elizabeth of York because of her direct family bond with the previous king and Richard III. In this way, they became the people who brought stability to their countries. Moreover, they are both connected with sorcery, a typical feminine trait. Elizabeth through her mother's family and Jon because of the white walkers and his resurrection. In short, the reversal of gender roles helps to enhance the figure of Elizabeth, who is portrayed through a man who has a stronger claim to the throne than the character that incarnates Henry Tudor. Additionally, his purpose in life is marked by magic and supernatural elements. Finally, Elizabeth of York's family's accusations of sorcery resemble the fact that Daenerys Targaryen and her family are distinguished for having a bond with dragons, which is a characteristic that differentiated them from the other houses in Westeros. This made them the most powerful dynasty, and equalised men and women.

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