



She-Wolves: The Women Who Ruled England Before Elizabeth

By Helen Castor

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“Helen Castor has an exhilarating narrative gift. . . . Readers will love this book, finding it wholly absorbing and rewarding.” —Hilary Mantel, Booker Prize-winning author of *Wolf Hall*

In the tradition of Antonia Fraser, David Starkey, and Alison Weir, prize-winning historian Helen Castor delivers a compelling, eye-opening examination of women and power in England, witnessed through the lives of six women who exercised power against all odds—and one who never got the chance. Exploring the narratives of the Empress Matilda, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Isabella of France, Margaret of Anjou, and other “she-wolves,” as well as that of the Nine Days’ Queen, Lady Jane Grey, Castor invokes a magisterial discussion of how much—and how little—has changed through the centuries.

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

From England's durably popular dynastic history emerges this quartet of finely characterized portraits of would-be or actual female monarchs prior to those of the House of Tudor. Displaying precise perceptions of political contexts, often expressing herself in archly sardonic turns of phrase, Castor presents Matilda, daughter of Henry I and mother of Henry II; the latter king's celebrated consort, Eleanor of Aquitaine; Isabella, who overthrew her hapless husband, Edward II; and Margaret of Anjou, a redoubtable contender in the War of the Roses who was vilified by a Tudor propagandist named Shakespeare. Interpreting hostility in historical sources about these women, Castor shows how they confronted their central problem in playing the power game, asserting a notional right of female succession to the crown against an array of prejudices against so preposterous an idea. Banned from leading armies into battle, each of them exhibited political acuity in inspiring support for her bid from magnates who could fight for her cause. The subsequent turns of fortune will fasten royalty readers to Castor's lively narrative. --Gilbert Taylor

Review

"Helen Castor's very readable *She-Wolves* is . . . full of beautiful, imperiled ladies; fearless knights; and remarkable, often unbelievable turns of fortune. . . . Castor is a fine scholar and an equally fine storyteller." (Cleveland Plain Dealer)

"[Helen Castor is] an accomplished and elegant historian." (Miranda Seymour, New York Times Book Review)

"A gripping book . . . *She-Wolves* is a superb history of the powerful women who have surrounded England's throne, combining blood-drenched drama, politics, sex and swordplay with scholarly analysis, sympathy for the plight of women and elegant writing." (Simon Sebag Montefiore, Daily Telegraph (London))

"A fascinating biography of four powerful English queens...An insightful look at issues still relevant today, related by an accomplished historian and storyteller." (Kirkus Reviews)

"Castor's deep research will please European, military, and women's historians, while [her] tight storytelling makes this unusually fine royal history enjoyable reading for casual readers." (Publishers Weekly (starred review))

"Beautifully narrated . . . learned and exciting. This is medieval history at its best." (Evening Standard)

"Castor skillfully combines this analysis with driving narratives, using vivid details from contemporary chronicles to bring those distant days alive. *She-Wolves* makes one gasp at the brutality of medieval power struggles—and at the strength and vitality of the women who sought to wield royal power." (Jenny Uglow, Financial Times)

"Exceptional, even inspirational reading." (BookPage)

"Castor has done a masterful job of outlining the burdens these women faced. . . . Readers of popular history of British royals will enjoy their immensely human stories." (Library Journal)

“A fascinating biography...An insightful look at issues still relevant today, related by an accomplished historian and storyteller.” (Kirkus Reviews)

From the Back Cover

With the death of Edward VI in 1553, England, for the first time, would have a reigning queen. The question was: Who?

Four women stood upon the crest of history: Katherine of Aragon’s daughter, Mary; Anne Boleyn’s daughter, Elizabeth; Mary, Queen of Scots; and Lady Jane Grey. But over the centuries, other exceptional women had struggled to push the boundaries of their authority and influence—and been vilified as “she-wolves” for their ambitions. Revealed in vivid detail, the stories of Eleanor of Aquitaine, Isabella of France, Margaret of Anjou, and the Empress Matilda expose the paradox that England’s next female leaders would confront as the Tudor throne lay before them—man ruled woman, but these women sought to rule a nation.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Crystal Scott:

The book She-Wolves: The Women Who Ruled England Before Elizabeth will bring you to definitely the new experience of reading any book. The author style to explain the idea is very unique. Should you try to find new book to learn, this book very acceptable to you. The book She-Wolves: The Women Who Ruled England Before Elizabeth is much recommended to you to study. You can also get the e-book from your official web site, so you can quickly to read the book.

Ezra Talbott:

Do you have something that you enjoy such as book? The book lovers usually prefer to select book like comic, short story and the biggest an example may be novel. Now, why not attempting She-Wolves: The Women Who Ruled England Before Elizabeth that give your fun preference will be satisfied by reading this book. Reading habit all over the world can be said as the means for people to know world much better then how they react to the world. It can't be explained constantly that reading practice only for the geeky man or woman but for all of you who wants to become success person. So , for all of you who want to start reading through as your good habit, you could pick She-Wolves: The Women Who Ruled England Before Elizabeth become your own personal starter.

Marvin Murphy:

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Joseph Johnson:

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