



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."

From the Back Cover

When Edward VI died in 1553, the extraordinary fact was that there was no one left to claim the title of king of England. For the first time, England would have a reigning queen—but the question was which one: Katherine of Aragon's daughter, Mary; Anne Boleyn's daughter, Elizabeth; or one of their cousins, Lady Jane Grey or Mary, Queen of Scots.

But female rule in England also had a past. Four hundred years before Edward's death, Matilda, daughter of Henry I and granddaughter of William the Conqueror, came tantalizingly close to securing the crown for herself. And between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries three more exceptional women—Eleanor of Aquitaine, Isabella of France, and Margaret of Anjou—discovered how much was possible if pre-sumptions of male rule were not confronted so explicitly—and just how quickly they might be vilified as "she-wolves" for their pains.

The stories of these women, told here in all their vivid detail, expose the paradox that female heirs to the Tudor throne had no choice but to negotiate. Man was the head of woman, and the king was the head of all. How, then, could royal power lie in female hands?

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mable Garza:

The book *She-Wolves: The Women Who Ruled England Before Elizabeth* gives you the sense of being enjoy for your spare time. You should use to make your capable considerably more increase. Book can to be your best friend when you getting pressure or having big problem together with your subject. If you can

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Deborah Martins:

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Jennifer Williams:

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