



Mary Queen of Scots

By Susan Watkins, Mark Fiennes

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Mary's inheritance gave her both the Scottish throne in 1542, when she was only six days old, and a claim to the English throne that would lead to her death. It gave her an upbringing in France, cultural and intellectual centre of Europe, where she witnessed the power play of her Guise relations, married the heir to the French throne, and became queen of France, only to be widowed at 18. There was a turbulent interlude as ruler of Scotland, made the more tumultuous by two disastrous marriages and rumours of adultery and murder. Finally, there was an 18 year exile as Elizabeth I's prisoner, passing the long days of captivity at her embroidery or her prayers, the centre of a network of intrigue, double agents, coded dispatches, and mysterious couriers, which was to lead inevitably to her trial and execution.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Although most writings about Mary Stuart (1542-87), Queen of Scots, have been historically inaccurate, modern scholarship has revealed the details of her dramatic life as wife to three husbands and queen in three kingdoms (France, Scotland, and England). Any new work on Mary should provide a fresh interpretation or presentation. Watkins (Jane Austen: In Style) has attempted the latter in an illustrated history, yet the result is neither a quality coffee-table book nor a readable biography. The lavish photographs of historical places and high-quality illustrations cannot make up for an overly dramatic narrative full of simplistic historical judgments. None of the period quotations has scholarly attribution, and most are presented in a bold, oversized font, often literally unreadable as they are superimposed on illustrations. Lastly, a book that lists in its bibliography James A. Mackay's *In My End Is My Beginning* (St. Martin's, 2000), generally considered to be plagiarized, cannot be reliable for the general reader. The curious should see Antonia Fraser's sympathetic biography, *Mary Queen of Scots* (published in 1969 and frequently reprinted), with the more studious turning to Gordon Donaldson's sound *Mary, Queen of Scots* (o.p.) and Jenny Wormald's politically astute *Mary Queen of Scots: A Study in Failure* (Tauris, 2000). James Tasato Mellone, Queens Coll., CUNY
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From Booklist

Mary, Queen of Scots, has captivated the popular imagination ever since she was executed by her cousin, Queen Elizabeth I of England. Made Scotland's queen when only six days old, she was betrothed to the short-lived English heir apparent and married the future king of France, only to be widowed at 18. A second marriage, to the duke of Albany, produced James VI of Scotland, the eventual James I of England. Held in exile by Elizabeth for 19 years, she lost her claim to the English throne only when she lost her life. Watkins and Fiennes elegantly tell this remarkable woman's story and illustrate it with attractive photographs of the incidentals of Mary's life: the castles in which she lived and was incarcerated; the letters she wrote; the jewels she wore; and the faces, as rendered in artists' portraits, of her, her family, her friends, and her enemies. Social history puts a life in context, as Watkins and Fiennes put Mary's, in an engaging and beautiful book. *Michael Spinella*

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Review

"No man ever saw her without love, or will read her history without pity" - Abbe Brantome, 17th century chronicler"

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