



***Mid-Tudor Queenship and Memory:
The Making and Re-making of Lady
Jane Grey and Mary I***

**Edited by Valerie Schutte and
Jessica S. Hower**

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This collection follows hard on the heels of two other volumes edited by Valerie Schutte and Jessica Hower, *Mary I in Writing: Letters, Literature, and Representation* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022) and *Writing Mary I: History, Historiography and Fiction* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022). Together, they give an enormous breadth of insight into the reign of Mary I, first crowned queen regnant of England. The joy of these volumes is that they move on from comparisons with Elizabeth to evaluations of how Mary constructed her queenship.

In this collection, Mary is juxtaposed with her initial rival for the throne, Jane Grey, in a focus on the accession period of mid-1553 to early 1554, although given the short span of Jane's ascendancy there is necessarily more focus on Mary. The underlying thesis of the collection is that the Banquo-esque presence of Jane as a possible alternative sovereign shaped Mary's construction of her queenship.

The opening essay by Matthew Tibble challenges historians of political engagement, who are focused on the Protestant theories of commonwealth, monarchical republicanism, and resistance, to link political discourse about Mary's succession to princely humanism, which had been the dominant theory of good government in the early sixteenth century. Elizabeth was later to be portrayed as a virtuous monarch because she transcended the supposed weaknesses of her gender, whereas Mary's contemporaries, Reginald Pole, John Proctor, and John Christopherson, saw her personally virtuous character as an indicator of her fitness to be a prince. Tibble suggests that those who characterise these writers as mere producers of 'obedience propaganda' should reconsider their arguments in the light of the long history of princely humanism in which Mary had been educated. He argues that this centring of legitimacy in the character of the monarch outweighed questions of gender, and that Mary's gender could be interpreted as a positive quality, femininity being associated with piety and mercy, attributes of the virtuous prince.

Louisa Woodville's essay considers how Mary fashioned her queenship, using visual symbols in emulation of her powerful grandmother, Isabella of Castile. It is hard to argue against Woodville's contention that Mary was influenced by Isabella's example, yet some of the specifics she quotes do not entirely support the argument. For example, in

her discussion of Mary's image in the Michaelmas Plea Roll of 1553, she connects Mary's wielding of a sword with the unsheathed sword borne before Isabella in Isabella's coronation procession. However, Woodville does not present any evidence that anyone questioned Mary carrying a sword, nor can we know whether she carried it because she was emulating Isabella or previous English monarchs. For there are other, English, examples using the same representation of authority, such as the depiction of Richard I sitting in judgement with a sword in Langtoft's *Geste* (Royal MS 20 A II, f. 8r.). It could plausibly be argued that Mary had not seen that manuscript, but it is unlikely that she was unaware of Holbein's 1542 painting of Henry VIII brandishing a sword as he grants a charter to the Barber-Surgeons. Perhaps the most interesting point about this iconography of Mary, which Woodville does not pursue, is that it was copied not just by Elizabeth, but also by James I and Charles I, who all appear on rolls holding a sword. Woodville refers to other 'male accouterments' [sic] used in Mary's coronation. A question for further development in considerations of gender and sovereignty is whether an interpretation of these symbols as masculine, rather than as monarchical, speaks to our own assumptions about gender, rather than contemporary ideas – especially as Woodville covers fascinating ground about depictions of female saints with swords with which Mary was familiar. While the brandishing of swords by these saints reflects their martyrdom, their power lay in that martyrdom, so that, paradoxically, the sword changed its meaning from an instrument of torture and death to an instrument of power.

Daniel Bennett Page's erudite offering is an extensive exploration of Mary's coronation, in which he demonstrates that the queen was intimately concerned with every liturgical and musical detail. He shows that the analogies that had been drawn between Mary and the Old Testament leader, Judith, following her triumph over Northumberland were amplified by the queen herself and were so fruitful that they were exported to the music and prayers for the success of the Council of Trent. I hope he will undertake further research into the use of music and liturgy during Mary's reign.

Mary's agency and creativity is the focus of Moira Duncan's analysis of her Guildhall speech, in which she forensically examines the different extant versions to show how subtle variations in the recorded text exemplify different receptions by Mary's supporters and by her arch-detractor, Foxe. Duncan challenges the view that collaborative authorship, for which she uses Hirschfeld's definition, is necessarily inimical to a transmission of the female author's meaning, instead showing how textual comparison can allow a nuanced understanding of Mary's oration.

William Robinson looks at the historiography of Wyatt's Rebellion, giving a welcome summary of the historical debate on the causes of the Rebellion (although it seems surprising that he does not question what he reports to be Wernham's statement that one underlying cause was the loss of Calais). Nevertheless, I am not sure what it adds to the debate about Mary and Jane's different manifestations of queenship, since it does not pursue any investigation of whether enthronement of Jane was an aim of the rebels – either openly at the time or in historiographical analysis.

Turning to chapters specifically comparing Mary and Jane, the first is Jessica Hower's own essay which is a detailed analysis of their proclamations – while both presented themselves as legitimate inheritors, Jane's rather more prolix document (focused on Edward VI's Devise and her blood-relationship with Henry VIII) smacks of protesting too much. Mary, confident in her rights, was succinct, while claiming a far longer pedigree.

Courtney Herber looks at two dramatic representations of the Mary-Jane rivalry from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in a masterly exposition of the use of drama to comment on contemporary questions of fitness to rule (legitimate Catholic successor or virtuous Protestant contender?). Colbert takes a similar comparative approach, but in the context of twentieth- and twenty-first century media. Disappointingly, she repeats the notion that Mary was in love with Philip, although Alexander Samson has clearly demonstrated in *Mary and Philip: the Marriage of Tudor England and Habsburg Spain* that there is insufficient evidence to analyse the couple's emotional relationship beyond standard public protestations of love. Nevertheless, Herber's exploration of how Jane and Mary are portrayed in the 1938 and 1988 films, *Tudor Rose* and *Lady Jane* shows how the two women (who in life were not dissimilar) are shown as opposites: young versus old, Protestant versus Catholic, idealistic versus pragmatic, engaged in a romantic relationship with her husband versus hysterical infatuation with a portrait. Sadly, little has changed in popular culture to reconcile these stereotypes.

The final essay is Stephanie Rosso's insightful contribution, which investigates the afterlives of Jane and Mary in historical fiction, identifying a refreshing transition in the representations of Jane from meekly subservient martyr and heroine to assertive teenager. Mary, however, is still nearly always the villain – even the characteristics which bind them (intelligence and religious conviction) manage to be a virtue in Jane, but a fault in Mary.

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Each essay is well-written, packed with information and analysis, and adds to the debate on how Mary manifested queenship, as well as suggesting what approach Jane might have taken had she had a longer period to express her royal image. Had the arguments been brought together in an overarching essay fulfilling the introduction's promise of a comparison of approaches to queenship, then this excellent volume would have become more than the sum of its parts.

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