



Queen of Scots: The True Life of Mary Stuart

By John Guy

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National Book Critics Circle Award finalist

“A triumph . . . a masterpiece full of fire and tragedy.” — Amanda Foreman, author of *Georgiana*

In the first full-scale biography of Mary Stuart in more than thirty years, John Guy creates an intimate and absorbing portrait of one of history’s greatest women, depicting her world and her place in the sweep of history with stunning immediacy. Bringing together all surviving documents and uncovering a trove of new sources for the first time, Guy dispels the popular image of Mary Queen of Scots as a romantic leading lady — achieving her ends through feminine wiles — and establishes her as the intellectual and political equal of Elizabeth I.

Through Guy’s pioneering research and superbly readable prose, we come to see Mary as a skillful diplomat, maneuvering ingeniously among a dizzying array of factions that sought to control or dethrone her. *Queen of Scots* is an enthralling, myth-shattering look at a complex woman and ruler and her time.

“The definitive biography . . . gripping . . . a pure pleasure to read.” — Washington Post Book World

“Reads like Shakespearean drama, with all the delicious plotting and fresh writing to go with it.” — Atlanta Journal-Constitution

John Guy is a fellow in history at Clare College, University of Cambridge, and the author of several books, including the best-selling textbook *Tudor England*.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The story of Mary Stuart has been told in many contexts (most recently in *Elizabeth and Mary*), but nowhere has she been defended more rigorously than in this new study. Guy, a fellow at Cambridge University and BBC consultant, describes Mary's formative years in France, but the heart of the book is her short reign in Scotland. Negotiations with Elizabeth Tudor over the succession in England and the shadow of Mary's final fate dominate the narrative, but while Guy effectively establishes that Elizabeth's chief minister William Cecil was Mary's true English enemy, what is most shocking is how suppliant he shows Mary to have been to Elizabeth. The most dramatic moments, however, are supplied by the Scottish nobles, who shifted alliances around her and colluded in kidnappings and assassinations. Though not the first to challenge Mary's femme fatale image, Guy does not even deign to discuss the accusation that she was romantically involved with her Italian secretary Rizzio and convincingly absolves her of involvement in the death of her second husband. He re-examines her actions and choices and offers a lively textual analysis of letters usually used as evidence against her. Yet he does not conclusively argue that she ruled from the head, and, in the end, the question of whether Mary Stuart ruled from her head or her heart appears beside the point. Guy's detailed account of the familial, political and religious machinations of the forces swirling around the queen suggests that it was not flaws in Mary's character but the entire constellation of circumstances that doomed her rule in Scotland and led to her execution. 16 pages of b&w photos.

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From [Booklist](#)

Few royal figures from the pages of European history continue to fascinate historian and lay reader alike as much as Mary Stuart, the ill-fated queen of Scots, who has come down to us dressed in the raiment of legend. British historian Guy delves deeply into previously little-mined archival evidence, and, aided by a felicitous style (no drifting into dry lecturing), he arrives not at a whitewash but at a restoration of Queen Mary with respect to the truth about the quality of her character and her performance as monarch. The easiest and quickest way to judge Mary Stuart has always been to compare her to her cousin and fellow queen-sovereign Elizabeth Tudor. Guy, on the other hand, takes Mary on her own terms, seeing as "stereotype" the long-perpetuated concept that Mary "ruled from her heart" while Elizabeth "ruled from the head." Mary's is a complicated story, as were Scottish politics at the time, but Guy explicates the complications--including Mary's marriages, her struggle with the Scottish lords, the murder of her second husband, and her long incarceration and eventual execution in England--with both authority and clear illumination. A major biography. *Brad Hooper*

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Review

"Spirited and satisfying....Guy's account has all the twists and turns of a good thriller--and plenty of horror, too." Kirkus Reviews

"As enthralling as a detective story..." --Gerard Kilroy The New York Times Book Review

"Recent royal shenanigans look tame compared with what John Guy unearths in *QUEEN OF SCOTS*." -- Claire Lui Entertainment Weekly

"Queen of Scots is a triumph of biography, artistry, and historical detective work. John Guy has produced a

masterpiece, full of fire and tragedy." --Amanda Foreman, author of *Georgiana*

"Rarely have first-class scholarship and first-class storytelling been so effectively combined." --John Adamson, *Daily Telegraph*

"[An] absorbing biography . . . meticulously researched . . . scholarly and intriguing." --Peter Ackroyd *The Times of London*

"A definitive biography. . . . Reads as thrillingly as a detective story, and is rich in detail and authoritative in its analysis." --Miranda Seymour, *The Sunday Times*

"I couldn't put this book down....Never before has [Mary's story] been told with such detail, accuracy, insight and drama." --Gerard DeGroot, *Scotland on Sunday*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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