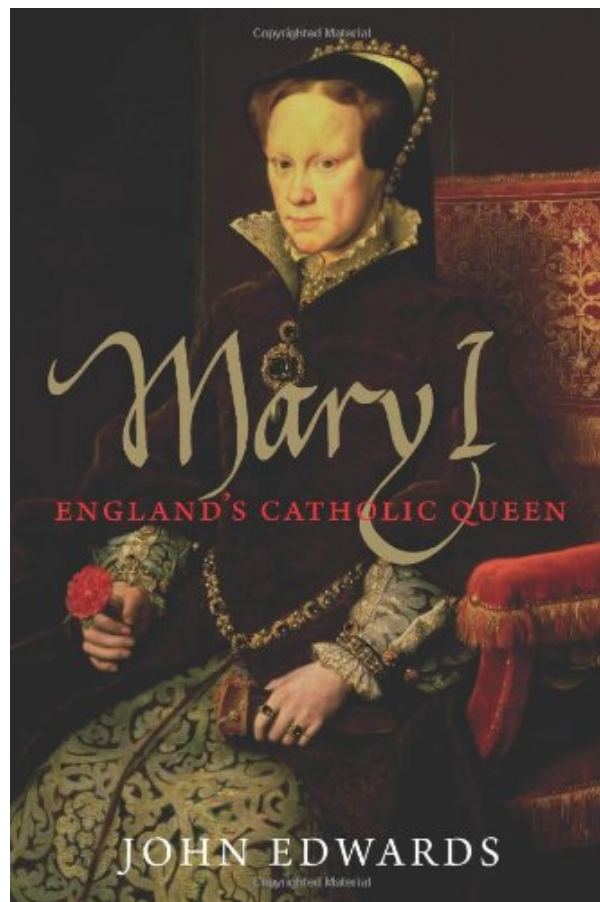
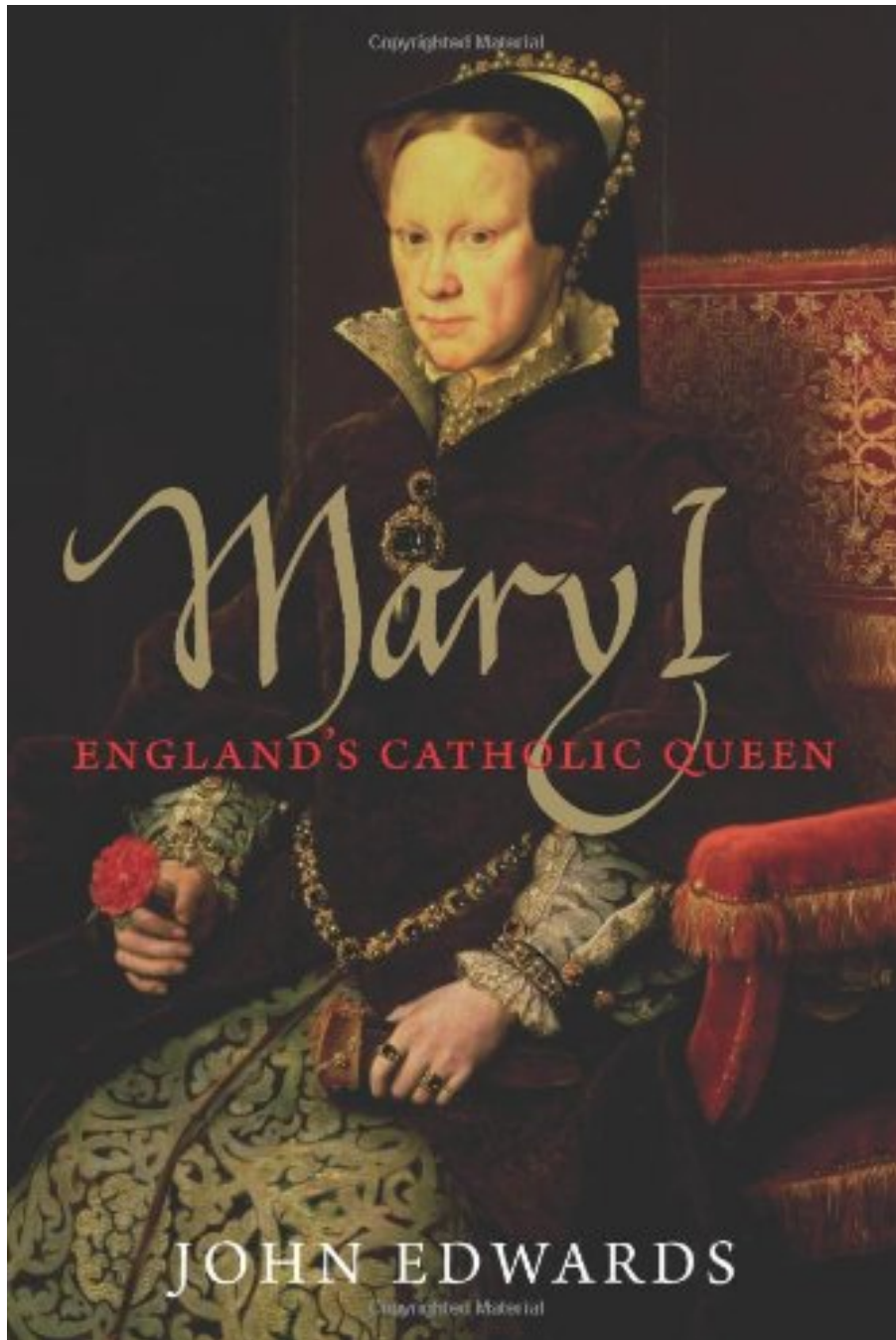


**MARY I: ENGLAND'S CATHOLIC QUEEN  
(THE ENGLISH MONARCHS SERIES) BY  
JOHN EDWARDS**



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## Review

"[T]he most comprehensive and convincing account to date."—J.H. Elliott, *The New York Review of Books* (J.H. Elliott *The New York Review of Books*)

“Erudite . . . a remarkable synthesis of Mary’s turbulent life . . . exceptional.”—Brian Odom, *Library Journal* (Brian Odom *Library Journal*)

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## About the Author

John Edwards is Modern Languages Faculty Research Fellow in Spanish, University of Oxford. He lives in Oxford, UK.

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The lifestory of Mary I—daughter of Henry VIII and his Spanish wife, Catherine of Aragon—is often distilled to a few dramatic episodes: her victory over the attempted coup by Lady Jane Grey, the imprisonment of her half-sister Elizabeth, the bloody burning of Protestants, her short marriage to Philip of Spain. This original and deeply researched biography paints a far more detailed portrait of Mary and offers a fresh understanding of her religious faith and policies as well as her historical significance in England and beyond.

John Edwards, a leading scholar of English and Spanish history, is the first to make full use of Continental archives in this context, especially Spanish ones, to demonstrate how Mary's culture, Catholic faith, and politics were thoroughly Spanish. Edwards begins with Mary's origins, follows her as she battles her increasingly erratic father, and focuses particular attention on her notorious religious policies, some of which went horribly wrong from her point of view. The book concludes with a consideration of Mary's five-year reign and the frustrations that plagued her final years. Childless, ill, deserted by her husband, Mary died in the full knowledge that her Protestant half-sister Elizabeth would undo her religious work and, without acknowledging her sister, would reap the benefits of Mary's achievements in government.

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John Edwards is Modern Languages Faculty Research Fellow in Spanish, University of Oxford. He lives in Oxford, UK.

## Most helpful customer reviews

3 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Yes, it gets boring

By Amazon Customer

I agree substantially with the other reviewers here. I actually really enjoyed the first part of this book, not having as much background in the history as many others do. It's a rollicking story. But the author isn't content with TELLING it as a story, and instead reverts back to what I imagine is his normal academic writing style. In this, chronology gets trumped by pedantic observation. And what the author really wants to talk about is minute details in the religious battle waged behind the royal curtain.

I think a good editor would have reined him in, and deleted at least 1/3 of this book. I'm not saying there isn't a SECOND book on that subject, that might have appealed more to an academic audience, but the story of Mary gets completely lost in this version.

I salute the author for his obvious hard work and skilled research. It's a shame the academic verbiage gets in the way of what could have been more enjoyable.

Others have taken the author to task for "taking sides," and that's certainly the case here, but to me that made the book more interesting. I can read through the propaganda and accept the book as one man's opinion, albeit, in this case, a brain-numbing read.

10 of 19 people found the following review helpful.

Biased, boring and full of mistakes

By Judith Loriente

I do not recommend this book. It's written in a dull, long-winded manner, it's full of factual errors and it's so biased that if I weren't so cranky at being expected to fall for propaganda I would feel genuine sympathy for an author who is unable to conceal such unscholarly prejudice.

The author's prejudice in favour of his subject - and her mother, Catherine of Aragon - quickly becomes evident through his willingness to make unsubstantiated and often insidiously-derogatory comments about Anne Boleyn. They start out more dubious than derogatory:

'On 2 June 1527 Wolsey forwarded Fisher's opinion to the King, with a covering letter in which he tried to soften the blow by suggesting that the bishop of Rochester's judgement had been warped by his support for Catherine [of Aragon]. At this stage, Wolsey had still not told Fisher that Anne Boleyn was the other party involved, though the bishop must surely have guessed this, but in early July he finally revealed the name of the woman concerned.' (p. 27-28)

There is no citation for this statement. Is there any proof that Bishop Fisher was told in early July 1527 that Anne Boleyn was going to be Henry VIII's next wife? Eric Ives' biography of Anne Boleyn states (p. 88):

'When Wolsey left for France on 22 July he knew of the plan to reject Katherine but nothing of any serious liaison with Anne, despite his own careful monitoring of the court and the vigilance of his agents in the privy chamber. Nor were others more prescient. No hint of Anne's involvement with the king has been found in any records earlier than the summer of 1527 - an unlikely thing if the betrothal was already a fait accompli; the imperial ambassador only identified Anne in August.'

If Wolsey still didn't know that Anne was going to be Henry VIII's next consort on 22 July, how could he have told Bishop Fisher this back in early July? Retha Warnicke's *The Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn: Family*

Politics at the Court of Henry VIII (Canto) also dates Henry's decision to marry her to after 15 July (see chapter three). If Edwards has evidence to prove these historians wrong, he should have presented it. The next dubious statement is:

'Henry was acutely aware of the importance of securing international support for his position. Not before time, in the summer of 1527 the issue was raised of the meaning of 'heirs' in the Leviticus text. Mary's supporters, Fisher being notable among them, argued that her birth could not be discounted for this purpose, as Henry (and Anne) wished.' (p. 28)

Edwards has already pointed out that 'At the deepest psychological level, as conditioned by the social and political values of the time, Henry seems scarcely to have regarded his daughter as his child'. So why drag Anne Boleyn into it? Henry was the one who decided to seek to annul his marriage. In 1528 Cardinal Campeggio offered Catherine of Aragon a deal in which if she agreed to enter a convent, allowing Henry to remarry, her daughter's legitimacy would be confirmed and Mary would come in the succession before any of Henry's daughters by a subsequent wife. For all Edwards knows, Anne Boleyn might have been happy to have Mary's legitimacy confirmed through such a deal, firstly since she had no reason to believe she would not bear a son and secondly since it would avoid protracted proceedings, thereby expediting her own marriage.

This may look like making a fuss over little. Nonetheless, these are unsubstantiated statements that the reader is expected to just accept - and this in what's supposed to be academic history. Another is on p. 33:

'Between 1531 and 1533, Anne habitually ill-treated both Catherine and her daughter, whom she commonly referred to as a 'bastard', which hardly helped a teenager develop into a woman, and evidently was not meant to.'

What is meant by 'evidently was not meant to'? Is Edwards suggesting that Anne Boleyn was engaged in some pre-Freudian attempt to stunt Mary's emotional development in order render her less of a threat to her daughter Elizabeth, who wasn't even born until September 1533? And, given that Henry VIII separated from Catherine of Aragon in 1531 and never saw her again, how could Anne Boleyn ill-treat his wife? Did she or Henry even have any personal contact at all with Mary during this time? Edwards refers on p. 52 to 'the five years of her [Mary's] separation from her parents' in 1536, so probably not. Calling someone a bastard at a distance might indeed be described as ill-treatment. Or it might be dismissed as name-calling, and nothing compared to Henry's own bullying of his daughter - which, as the author knows (since he relates the details), got worse after Anne Boleyn's death. In his attempts to blacken Anne he even descends to this:

'During the autumn of 1529, the Savoyard Eustache Chapuys, who was now Charles V's ambassador in London, heard a rumour that Mary would be married instead to her illegitimate half-brother, Henry, duke of Richmond. If there were problems with Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine, and Pope Clement VII was once again effectively in thrall to the Emperor, this grotesque idea, which possibly originated with Anne Boleyn, would hardly be feasible and, if it ever in fact existed, it was quickly abandoned.' (p. 32)

Possibly originated with Anne Boleyn? Any evidence to back up that? Take, for instance, the following statement, in a footnote on p. 33 of H. A. Kelly's *The Matrimonial Trials of Henry VIII* (a book listed in the bibliography, so presumably read by Edwards):

'An indication of what was thought of the pope's power over marriage can be seen from the circumstance that as late as October 1528 there was still talk (on Wolsey's part, to be sure) of settling Henry's dynastic worries by obtaining a dispensation from the pope to allow Mary to marry her brother Henry. The pope,

indeed, declared himself willing to consider it if the king would put aside his demands for the annulment of his marriage.'

No mention of Anne Boleyn. Only Wolsey. If Edwards believes that the plan to marry Mary to her half-brother originated with Anne, how about presenting some evidence? Isn't that what historians normally do when they put forward an original theory? Yet there is no citation at the end of this statement, or even at the end of the paragraph. A definitely false statement is made on p. 41:

'A second omen was Anne's miscarriage of her second child, which took place on the very day of Catherine's funeral at Peterborough. Despite her efforts to respond bravely, even suggesting that her child had died because it had been conceived during Catherine's life-time, Anne quickly found that her relations with her husband had deteriorated.'

Anne Boleyn did not suggest that she miscarried because her child had been 'conceived during Catherine's life-time'. Take, for example, this passage from p. 300 of Ives' *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*:

'Anne, for her part, recovered her resilience, comforting her attendants with the assurance that she would conceive again, and that no one this time would be able to claim that her son was illegitimate.'

It's clear that Anne was suggesting that none of Catherine's supporters would be able claim that the child would be illegitimate, since it would have been not only born, but also conceived, after Catherine's death. So how can these words possibly be used to substantiate Edwards' claim that Anne suggested her child had died 'because it had been conceived during Catherine's life-time'? I don't see how they can. So why make the claim? In order to portray her as a guilt-stricken usurper who believed that God was punishing her for having married Henry VIII while Catherine of Aragon was still alive? In an attempt to further ram down the reader's throat his partiality to Catherine and Mary, on p. 36 Edwards descends to this:

'Anne Boleyn wanted all this stopped, but some at least of Mary's servants seem to have been sympathetic to her, and when the new 'queen' came to Hatfield in February 1534, supposedly to conciliate her and restore order, her stepdaughter, as Mary was in the eyes of the English Church, refused her overture.'

Why put queen in inverted commas if not to suggest that this queen was a Mickey Mouse queen, and that Catherine of Aragon was and remained Henry VIII's true wife? Why write that Anne 'supposedly' wished to conciliate her stepdaughter when she is said to offered Mary a legitimate deal? For example, on p. 198 of his biography Ives writes:

'Mary was certainly frustrating to deal with, and this is a further reason for Anne's outbursts and her support for harsh treatment. On three distinct occasions Anne put out feelers for a better relationship. In February or March 1534, when on a visit to Elizabeth, she offered to welcome Mary if she would accept her as queen, and to reconcile her with her father. Mary's response was that she knew no queen but her mother, but that if the king's mistress would intercede with her father she would be grateful. Even after this offensiveness Anne tried again, before leaving the house in high dudgeon, vowing to repress such impudence.'

If Edwards thinks that Ives is mistaken, and that Anne Boleyn's attempts to conciliate her stepdaughter were not sincere, again, how about presenting some evidence? He does nothing of the sort. His incessant attempts to paint Anne Boleyn as A Wicked Stepmother Who Persecuted Poor Mary left me wondering whether he was trying to set up the reader to believe that some of Mary's later actions stemmed from maltreatment as a teenager (e.g. diminished responsibility). I suppose some people will protest that I must have a prejudice in favour of Anne Boleyn. No, I have a prejudice against flagrant bias in history books. Even though I don't



believe that Anne Boleyn was guilty of what are almost universally believed to be trumped-up charges of adultery, she sounds like a typical courtier-politician of Henry VIII's court, who rose to favour through a combination of intellect, charm and self-interest. That doesn't make her the incest-promoting pantomime villain she's made out to be here. Such prejudice against even one historical figure calls into question the impartiality and reliability of the whole book, and makes me wonder what the author's agenda is. In the preface he writes: 'I continue to hang on, despite everything and because of the deep and reasoned faith and decency which continue to distinguish it, in what has become known, somewhat arbitrarily and perhaps presumptuously, as the 'Catholic' part of the Anglican Communion.' It therefore doesn't sound as if this is a clear-cut case of Catholic propaganda. Maybe it's just poor history, which reduces real people to stereotypes and also foists factual errors on the reader. The following are some of the ones I noticed:

P. 22: 'This was a vital factor for the English, as was generally recognized in Europe, since the French King already had two sons to succeed him'.

At this time Francis I had three sons: Francis, Henry and Charles.

P. 25: 'This discreet phrase seems to refer to Anne Boleyn's older sister Mary, who had undoubtedly been Henry's mistress before she was married off to Sir William Carey.'

There is no evidence that Mary Boleyn was Henry VIII's mistress before her marriage in 1520. Some historians (e.g. Kelly Hart in *The Mistresses of Henry VIII*) believe the relationship didn't commence until 1522. And Mary's husband, William Carey, was not knighted (see Appendix B of Paul Friedmann's biography of Anne Boleyn and Alison Weir's biography of Mary Boleyn), and therefore was not 'Sir' William Carey.

P. 41: 'The future Queen Jane was the daughter of Sir Thomas Seymour of Wolf Hall'.

Jane Seymour's father was Sir John Seymour.

P. 49: 'This spiritual loophole cannot have given much consolation to Mary, if any, in the agony in which she found herself in the second half of June 1536. She was ground between Cromwell's pressure on one hand, and Chapuys's on the other, with God her only refuge, except possibly for her distant cousin, Cardinal Reginald Pole, of whom much more will be heard.'

In June 1536 'Cardinal Reginald Pole' was not a refuge for Mary, since Reginald Pole was not created a cardinal until 22 December 1536.

P. 58: 'In France, the main candidates were King Francis's daughter Margaret, and Marie, the youngest sister of the duke of Guise and the cardinal of Lorraine.'

At this time (1538) Marie de Guise was not 'the youngest sister of the duke of Guise and the cardinal of Lorraine'. Her father was still alive, so that her eldest brother was not yet Duke of Guise. She was also the eldest of her parents' four daughters and their eldest child full stop, and her brother Charles had not yet been created a cardinal.

P. 62: 'Things would, however, be different when, on 12 July 1543, Henry married his sixth and last wife, Catherine Parr, also known by her former surnames of Green and Latimer.'

Catherine Parr's first husband was Edward Borough (or Burgh). Her second was John Neville, Baron

Latimer. Her former surnames were therefore Borough and Neville, not Green and Latimer (although she was Baroness Latimer at the time Henry VIII courted her). Green was the maiden name of her mother, Maud Green.

P. 63: 'If none of these plans was successful, there should be resort to the heirs of Henry's sister Mary, no mention being made of his other sister, Margaret, or her daughter Mary, queen of Scots.'

Mary, Queen of Scots, was the granddaughter, not daughter, of Margaret Tudor.

I think these are enough mistakes to show just how sloppy some of the research for this book was. If an amateur reader of Tudor history found all these, who knows how many more there are? Historians have the option of checking their facts. Some choose not to, and instead rely on guesswork, memory (often faulty) and copying other people's statements (sometimes mistaken). As for the readability of the book, my goodness, is it boring. There's no wit. No style. No short, sharp sentences. Lots of sentences that go on and on, with yet \*another\* comma right where a full stop would be much better. It's the opposite of a book such as David Starkey's *Six Wives*, which looks as if it's going to be an effort to get through but turns out to be riveting from first page to last. I know for a fact that history doesn't have to be as boring as it is here. Even if the content were impeccably scholarly - and, after identifying so many mistaken and unsubstantiated statements, I'm far from convinced that it is - what's the use in writing history that's so dull it's unreadable? It's not a crime to write history that's scrupulously accurate and at the same time entertains the reader. This book succeeds at neither. After nearly two weeks of reading it at an agonisingly slow pace I found myself stuck in the fourth chapter, so bored that I couldn't go on. Nearly a month later I still can't bear the thought of picking up where I left off, and trying to persist with something so painfully dull and prejudiced.

In conclusion, this book greatly reminds me of John Guy's *A Daughter's Love: Thomas More and His Dearest Meg*: the sort of sleek, dark, hardback history book that looks oh-so scholarly and impartial on the outside but that contains a filling of slow-moving, biased, hagiographic pap. I'm not enough of an expert to recommend a better one, but I do recall that I was fascinated by David Starkey's study of Mary in *Elizabeth: The Struggle for the Throne*.

7 of 29 people found the following review helpful.

For Academics Only

By Darlene M Cox

I am a Tudor addict; I read everything involving that dynasty. At least that has been my main interest of British history for quite some time. Maybe next week I'll search the Plantaganets (sp?). But, who cares about that? This review regards the novel "Mary I," by John Edwards. When I discovered this book, I was so looking forward to learning more about this poor woman, who probably would have made a better nun (and been a happier person) than a queen.

Edwards has done a remarkable job of researching this period of British history. I give him five stars for his research alone. However, what I was searching for was a more personal Mary. What I got was pages and pages of the conflict among the Hapsburgs, the various Popes, and the French for control of the European Continent. The book is fraught with the years and the personalities involved in this power struggle. While Poor Little Mary sits as a figurehead, wanting only to pursue her goal of (1) bringing her country back to Catholicism, and (2) bearing an heir to the throne. What a terribly lonely life she must have lead, but the reader never knows this. All we really discover is that she was a pawn to the powerful male leaders of Europe and the Catholic church. Title of book should have been "Power Struggles Among the Catholic Church and European dynasties for control of Europe in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries. Darlene Cox, author

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