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A Queen of a New Invention: Portraits of Lady Jane Grey Dudley, England's Nine Days Queen

J. Stephan Edwards

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Lady Jane Grey Dudley was proclaimed Queen of England on 10 July 1553 following the untimely death of Henry VIII's only son and successor, King Edward VI. But sixteen-year- old Jane did not have the support of the majority of her would-be subjects. They rallied instead to Henry VIII's eldest daughter, Mary Tudor. Jane was deposed just nine days after her reign began, earning for her the sobriquet 'The Nine Days Queen.' She was imprisoned in the Tower for six months before finally being executed on 12 February 1554. Queen Jane remains the only English monarch of the past five centuries for whom no genuine portrait is known to have survived. Dozens of images have been put forward over those five centuries, but none has yet been conclusively authenticated. Neither has any comprehensive academic study of the iconography of Jane Grey Dudley ever been previously undertaken or published. Now, through almost a decade of research leading up to this volume, twenty-nine surviving portrait-images said to depict Jane have been carefully and systematically sought out, analyzed, and contextualized in an effort to determine whether any of them may be a reliable likeness. A handful of additional paintings all now lost are also discussed in detail. Finally, the single written account of Jane's physical appearance, an account upon which historians have relied over the past century, is analyzed for its own authenticity.

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