



Margaret of York: The Diabolical Duchess

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The amazing life of Margaret of York, the woman who tried to overthrow the Tudors. Reared in a dangerous and unpredictable world Margaret of York, sister of Richard III, would become the standard bearer of the House of York and 'The menace of the Tudors'. This alluring and resourceful woman was Henry VII's 'diabolical duchess'. Safe across the Channel in modern-day Belgium and supported by the Emperor she sent Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck with thousands of troops to England to avenge the destruction of her brother and of the House of York. Both rebellions shook the new Tudor dynasty to the core. As the duchess and wife of the wealthiest ruler in Western Europe, Margaret was at the centre of a glittering court and became the patron of William Caxton. It was at her command that he printed the first book in English. Her marriage to Charles, the dour, war-mad Duke of Burgundy, had been the talk of Europe. John Paston, who was among the awe struck guests, reported in the famous Paston Letters that there had been nothing like it since King Arthur's court. Yet within a decade Charles was dead, his corpse frozen on the battlefield and within another decade her own family had been destroyed in England. Childless and in a foreign land Margaret showed the same energetic and cautious spirit as her great-grand-niece Elizabeth I, surviving riots, rebellions and plots. In spite of all her efforts, the Tudors were still on the throne but Margaret, unlike the Yorkist kings, was a great survivor.

Margaret of York: The Diabolical Duchess Details

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Author : Christine Weightman

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Verity Hopkinson says

It gives a lot of detail about the politics involved in administrating the Duchy of Burgundy in the late C15th and Margaret's role in this. I thought it was a cut above some the bio's Ive read of Fifteenth century personalities.

Éowyn says

Interesting, although I still felt that Margaret herself was something of an enigma, this was a good insight into the politics of the time and what a pivotal part she played in Europe, possibly impacting down to the present day!

Girl From the North Country says

Weightman has clearly done an incredible amount of research, yet I still have no sense of Margaret. She's still the elusive, shadowy figure She's always been, and likely always will be, bc there simply isn't enough history to weave into a picture. I commend the author's efforts, as Margaret is fascinating, but in the end, this was just an accounting of the things happening to and around her- a tableau vivant of Burgandy, France, and England under the York & Tudor dynasties. No index also makes it less useful, though there are copious notes & a bibliography.

Jakki Newton says

I hesitated giving this book only two stars because obviously years of research had gone into it, and how difficult it must be to research someone from the Middle Ages I can only imagine. But reading Margaret of York's life made a dramatic existance seem overwhelmingly boring.

The writer focused not on Margaret herself and what it must have been like to be her: the things she might have seen, heard and felt. Instead she focused on the complicated politics that surrounded Margaret's life: the suppression of the Yorks, and the victory of the Tudors through a myriad of royals all named Edward, Richard or Margaret.

It just wasn't personal enough, and the book had an awkward structure which lent itself towards repetition.

Joy says

Margaret Duchess of Burgundy outlived all her brothers, and once she overcame her enemies she was in many ways more powerful than either of her brothers Edward IV and Richard III. The death of her cunning enemy Louis XI of France left Margaret one of the most successful politicians of Western Europe. She formed strong family bonds with the Habsburg emperors and earned permanent respect in her cities north of France. Her lifelong influence with Emperor Maximilian made her dangerous to the new Tudor dynasty which had destroyed the rest of her family.

Author Weightman says there is so much documentary evidence for most of Margaret's life that her problem was choosing what not to include. Every chapter is packed with details of Margaret's crisis-filled life.

Susan Abernethy says

Jam packed full of details. Weightman is very thorough although it can be dry and not a fun read. So far the only definitive biography of Margaret.

Temashana says

Full of information but a bit dry. I'd recommend only if you are well versed in this time period and the players involved, as otherwise you might get lost.

Stevie Carroll says

A dense, and highly detailed story of a powerful woman who mostly appears in other people's histories. The book also gives a superb account of how the Burgundians thrived at the height of their power, and hints at how it went wrong. Wonderfully illustrated too.

Georgianna Price says

Very interesting book on a lady I didn't know very much about. Well written and not difficult to read, this book brought Margaret of York alive in the facts, remembrances and the documents which have survived her time.

Joanne says

Although this book is a bit dry at times, I found it fascinating. The character of Margaret of York, the 'Diabolical Duchess' of the title, was fantastic: pious, astute, courageous, generous and loving. I was particularly impressed by her relationship with her step-daughter and her family and the detailed descriptions of the Burgundian Court and the struggle for power in Europe at the time. There are not many (if any) other books about Margaret, but she was a wonderful personality and deserves more attention. I recommend it to anyone who is interested in the culture, politics and events of the late fifteenth century.

