



Inventing Eleanor: The Medieval and Post-Medieval Image of Eleanor of Aquitaine

By Michael R. Evans

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Eleanor of Aquitaine (1124-1204), queen of France and England and mother of two kings, has often been described as one of the most remarkable women of the Middle Ages. Yet her real achievements have been embellished--and even obscured--by myths that have grown up over eight centuries. This process began in her own lifetime, as chroniclers reported rumours of her scandalous conduct on crusade, and has continued ever since. She has been variously viewed as an adulterous queen, a monstrous mother and a jealous murderess, but also as a patron of literature, champion of courtly love and proto-feminist defender of women's rights. *Inventing Eleanor* interrogates the myths that have grown up around the figure of Eleanor of Aquitaine and investigates how and why historians and artists have invented an Eleanor who is very different from the 12th-century queen. The book first considers the medieval primary sources and then proceeds to trace the post-medieval development of the image of Eleanor, from demonic queen to feminist icon, in historiography and the broader culture.

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Review

“*Inventing Eleanor* has much to offer both the historian and the interested public in its tightly focused study of Eleanor's enduring image ... An engaging examination of Eleanor's myth, legend and long-term image which is an excellent addition to scholarship not only on Eleanor, but also in terms of studies of the Middle Ages, Medievalism and queenship” *Reviews in History*

About the Author

Michael R. Evans has lectured in medieval history at several universities in Britain and the United States. He is currently a lecturer at Central Michigan University, USA. He published *The Death of Kings: Royal Deaths in Medieval England* (2003).

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