



Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen and Legend

D. D. R. Owen

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This fascinating new biography tells the story of one of the most influential figures of the twelfth century, Eleanor of Aquitaine, successively queen of France and of England. First married to the future French King Louis VII, she later married Henry, Count of Anjou and Duke of Normandy. After invading England in 1154, and following the death of Stephen, he became King as Henry II, Eleanor was Queen of an empire stretching from the Scottish borders to the Pyrenees. Of Eleanor's eight children, two were future kings of England: Richard the Lionheart and John. Her behaviour and political motives have always been open to question, and the intrigues of herself and her children against Henry are notorious. Supported by Eleanor (believed by many to be the prime mover in the affair), the three eldest sons soon openly rebelled against their father. The rebellion collapsed and as a result Eleanor was imprisoned for sixteen years. Nevertheless, after Henry's death, her efforts successfully assured Richard's accession, and later John's own. Professor Owen's portrait separates the true historical Eleanor from the legend. In tracing her life he reassesses her political importance in the reigns of Henry, Richard and John, her role as a literary and cultural patron and her influence in the twelfth-century renaissance. Even in her own day, she caught the imagination of commentators, and the final parts of Professor Owen's biography examine the legend that built up around her life and in twelfth-century epic and romance.



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