



# The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power

By Carole Levin

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In her famous speech to rouse the English troops staking out Tilbury at the mouth of the Thames during the Spanish Armada's campaign, Queen Elizabeth I is said to have proclaimed, "I may have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king." Whether or not the transcription is accurate, the persistent attribution of this provocative statement to England's most studied and celebrated queen illustrates some of the contradictions and cultural anxieties that dominated the collective consciousness of England during a reign that lasted from 1558 until 1603.

In *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, Carole Levin explores the myriad ways the unmarried, childless Elizabeth represented herself and the ways members of her court, foreign ambassadors, and subjects represented and responded to her as a public figure. In particular, Levin interrogates the gender constructions, role expectations, and beliefs about sexuality that influenced her public persona and the way she was perceived as a female Protestant ruler. With a new introduction that situates the book within the emerging genre of cultural biography, the second edition of *The Heart and Stomach of a King* offers insight into the continued fascination with Elizabeth I and her reign.

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**Bibliography**

- Rank: #140609 in Books
- Brand: Carole Levin
- Published on: 2013-11-07
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: .70" h x 6.00" w x 9.00" l, 1.00 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 264 pages

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Review

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"Levin breaks out of the usual stale biographical packaging of Elizabeth by using traditional sources in imaginative ways, as well as by incorporating a number of less usual texts."—*Shakespeare Quarterly*

"Written in a lucid, often witty prose style, Carole Levin's volume. . . promises to become a classic of enduring interest to specialists and general readers alike."—*Sixteenth Century Journal*

#### About the Author

Carole Levin is Willa Cather Professor of History and Director of the Medieval and Renaissance Studies Program at the University of Nebraska. She is author of *Dreaming the English Renaissance: Politics and Desire in Court and Culture* and *Propaganda in the English Reformation: Heroic and Villainous Images of King John*.

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