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Death & the Virgin Queen: Elizabeth I & the dark scandal that rocked the throne, Chris Skidmore (book review)

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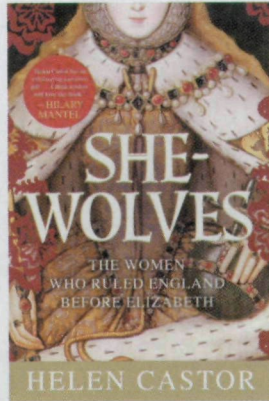
British Royal Lore

Castor, Helen. **She-Wolves: The Women Who Ruled England Before Elizabeth.**

Harper: HarperCollins.

Mar. 2011. c.480p. illus. maps. bibliog. index. ISBN 9780061430763. \$27.99. **BIOG**

Castor (fellow in history, Univ. of Cambridge; *Blood and Roses: One Family's Struggle and Triumph During the Tumultuous Wars of the Roses*) readably recounts the lives of six women who exercised—or tried to exercise—political power in England prior to Elizabeth I: Matilda, granddaughter of William the Conqueror; Eleanor of Aquitaine; Isabella of France; Margaret of Anjou; Jane Grey; and Mary Tudor. The story of Elizabeth I's ultimate accession can be fully appreciated only when viewed in the context of these women's earlier struggles to hold power in a society where female rule was seen as grotesque and an immoral aberration. In light of source limitations and the bias of contemporary chroniclers, Castor has done a masterful job of outlining the burdens these women faced—public scrutiny and ridicule, imprisonment, incorrigible husbands, political manipulation—as they attempted to secure the political prizes that should have fallen to them had not their gender been an impediment to rulership. **VERDICT** Genealogical charts and maps will help general readers follow a narrative lacking scholarly apparatus or historiographical debates, which will be thus of less interest to specialists. Readers of popular history of British royals will enjoy their immensely human stories and applaud the indomitable will of these strong protofeminists.—Marie Marmo Mullaney, Caldwell Coll., NJ



Farquhar, Michael. **Behind the Palace Doors: Five Centuries of Sex, Adventure, Vice, Treachery, and Folly from Royal Britain.** Random. Mar. 2011. c.304p. bibliog. ISBN 9780812979046. pap. \$15. **HIST**

Historical scandal aficionado Farquhar (staff writer, *Washington Post*; *A Treasury of Royal Scandals*) turns again to the British monarchy. Beginning after the Wars of the Roses (e.g., with the Tudors), Farquhar chronicles the marriages, betrayals, scandals, and successes of rulers of the last 500-plus years. Humorously titled chapters like "A Fool and his Crown" are arranged chronologically, and each is devoted to a single ruler, although in many cases stories overlap. Even though he has a lot of material to work with, Farquhar keeps the chapters manageable, providing enough context for those who are not very familiar with the British royals and focusing on the lesser-known episodes and monarchs. **VERDICT** While not written for scholars of British history, this is a well-researched popular retelling of some outrageous periods in the lives of perennially intriguing rulers. A good selection for lighter history reading on the lives of British

monarchs and really good scandals.—Elizabeth Nelson, UOP Lib., Des Plaines, IL

Skidmore, Chris. **Death and the Virgin Queen: Elizabeth I and the Dark Scandal That Rocked the Throne.**

St. Martin's. Jan. 2011. c.448p. illus. bibliog. index. ISBN 9780312379001. \$27.99. **HIST**

The relationship between Elizabeth I and her favorite courtier, Lord Robert Dudley, was one of the more infamous aspects of Elizabeth's reign—and it became an even greater controversy when in 1560 Dudley's wife, Amy Robsart, was found dead at the bottom of a staircase, her neck broken. The strange circumstances provided fuel for speculation then and now: Was it an accident? Suicide? Or a murder arranged to leave Dudley free to marry the queen? Drawing extensively on historical documents, including the original coroner's report, only recently uncovered in the UK's National Archives, Skidmore (history, Bristol Univ.; *Edward VI: The Lost King of England*) not only examines the various theories surrounding these long-standing questions but also provides an in-depth look at how Amy's death and Elizabeth and Dudley's relationship affected the early years of the Virgin Queen's reign. **VERDICT** Those hoping for an answer to this mystery will be disappointed, as Skidmore affirms that potential solutions rely too heavily on conjecture to be definitive. Nonetheless, owing to the wealth of detail, both academics and general readers with an interest in Tudor history will find much of interest.—Kathleen McCallister, Univ. of South Carolina Lib., Columbia

The likeliest audience is readers who already believe that Limbaugh is racist, sexist, and homophobic. Wilson (*Patriotic Correctness: Academic Freedom and Its Enemies*) has spent hours listening to Limbaugh broadcasts and reading transcripts. To illustrate how dangerous and extreme Limbaugh's ideas are, he examines the language he uses to describe women and minorities, dissects "Limbaughnomics," and documents the misinformation broadcast on health-care reform. Wilson decries Limbaugh's impact on civil political discourse. **VERDICT** With over 2000 footnotes, this book almost serves as a reference tool to document Limbaugh's extreme views. It provides more description than analysis and, with its extensive documentation, can be slow reading. Of interest to liberal readers and scholars concerned about Limbaugh's influence on American society and politics.—Judy Solberg, Seattle Univ. Lib.

ECONOMICS

Brandon, Ruth. **Ugly Beauty: Helena Rubinstein, L'Oréal, and the Blemished History of Looking Good.** Harper: HarperCollins. Feb. 2011. c.304p. photogs. bibliog. index. ISBN 9780061740404. \$26.99. **BUS**

Beauty became a huge business in the last century, largely through the pioneering efforts of Helena Rubinstein and L'Oréal creator Eugène Schueller. Brandon (*Governess: The Lives and Times of the Real Jane Eyres*) provides a deep, probing account of how their companies grew to dominate the market and how their merger combined not only products but the founders' opposing philosophies. Rubinstein never quite left behind her humble origins in the Kraków ghetto of late 19th-century Poland during her incredible evolution into the world's first-ever, self-made woman tycoon. Her competitor and ultimate purchaser of her empire Schueller was himself of "humble" origins but through formal science study followed a very different path. Brandon skillfully proceeds from individual histories to explore the improbable phenomenon of bringing together the life's work of these business giants, whose goals, ethics, and backgrounds could hardly have been more incompatible. The final result was an enormously lucrative global enterprise. **VERDICT** This engaging book should appeal not only to beauty enthusiasts but also to students of corporate histories, who will relish the compelling aspects of the unlikely crossing of paths of two hugely successful entrepreneurs.—Richard Drezen, Brooklyn, NY

★Buffett, Mary & David Clark. **Warren Buffett and the Art of Stock Arbitrage: Proven Strategies for Arbitrage and Other Special Investment Situations.** Scribner.

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