

[PDF] Elizabeth And Mary: Cousins, Rivals, Queens

Jane Dunn - pdf download free book

Books Details:

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Author: Jane Dunn

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Description:

Jane Dunn's *Elizabeth and Mary: Cousins, Rivals, Queens* offers a blend of history and biography that traces the "dynamic interaction" between two of the most powerful women in Western history. Dunn remains ever aware of the uniqueness of her two central figures: both women ruled as divinely ordained monarchs in a male dominated power structure; and both women were from the same family (Elizabeth I was the granddaughter of Henry VII, and Mary Queen of Scots the great-granddaughter of King Henry).

By focusing not on pure biography but instead on relationships, Dunn is able to narrow her book (still mammoth in scope) to the most salient and interesting events in the two queens' lives. The book begins in 1558, the year in which Mary first wed and Elizabeth assumed the throne of England.

Almost immediately the cousins were embroiled in a conflict that would endure for the remainder of Mary's life. A restless, sexually-active Catholic, and leader of the Scottish people in alliance with France, Mary was ever a conduit for rumors of rebellion. The "Virgin Queen" Elizabeth used Mary as a dark reflection to underline her own celibate constancy as a ruler of law and order.

The pair never met face to face, but as Dunn reveals, their lives were closely intertwined. After holding Mary in Fotheringhay prison for nearly two decades, Elizabeth ordered her cousin executed in 1587. Mary had chosen martyrdom in favor of a confession to complicity in the Babington assassination plot. In court, she declared: "I would never make Shipwreck of my Soul by conspiring the Destruction of my dearest Sister." Though the ostensible victor, Elizabeth (who had struggled to find a way to release her cousin while still upholding her own power as queen) confessed, "I am not free, but a captive." In *Elizabeth and Mary*, Dunn has built a rich world that underlines the tragic struggle between private emotions and the public faces history puts on them. --Patrick O'Kelley

From Publishers Weekly This is not so much a dual biography of Elizabeth Tudor and Mary Stuart as a cross-section of the royal cousins' lives as they intersect in fact and in theme. As a successful, ultimately beloved monarch, Elizabeth has been granted the upper hand by history, but here the mirror images of the two queens' experiences suggests how differently their stories could have ended. The opposing trajectories of their lives - Elizabeth rising from a politically and personally precarious childhood to become a powerful ruler and Mary descending from undisputed Scottish heir to prisoner and self-styled martyr for Catholicism - elucidate the problems of early modern queenship more fully than a single biography would. Opening accounts of Elizabeth's coronation and Mary's wedding serve as an emblematic introduction to their experiences of education, religion, family, marriage and leadership. Unfortunately, these accounts are clearly cut from chapter four, where their loss creates a jarring leap. The dual narrative also leads British biographer Dunn (*Moon in Eclipse: A Life of Mary Shelley*) to overdo her interpretation and to repeat incidents and reintroduce characters, seemingly not trusting her readers to keep them straight. However, she does Mary a service by digging more deeply into her childhood and evaluating her more rigorously than many authors have. Her emphasis on Elizabeth's insecurities heightens the comparison between the two queens and renders the decision to execute Mary the turning point in Elizabeth's reign. While this may slightly exaggerate the centrality of the rivalry to Elizabeth's thinking, it nicely captures the intertwined lives of these two women. 24 pages of color illus., not seen by PW.

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