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The Pirate Queen: Queen Elizabeth I, Her Pirate Adventurers, and the Dawn of Empire

SUSAN RONALD. HarperCollins, \$26.95 (496p) ISBN 978-0-06-082066-4

When Elizabeth Tudor became queen in 1558, her religiously fractured kingdom was in financial chaos and under constant threat from superpower Spain. How the iron-willed, financially astute monarch utilized piracy and plunder as a vital tool in guaranteeing English independence from foreign domination and in transforming a backwater nation into a nascent empire is the tantalizing focus of Ronald's (*The Sancy Blood Diamond*) latest effort. To wreak vengeance on the Spanish perpetrators of the Inquisition, Elizabeth granted swashbuckling John Hawkins permission for his first slaving voyage to Guinea in 1562. On a 1577 mission to raid Spanish shipping in the Pacific, Francis Drake became the first European commander to sail around the southernmost tip of South America from the Atlantic into the Pacific, and in 1588, he destroyed the

invading Spanish Armada. Charismatic, massively ambitious Walter Raleigh founded Virginia, popularized smoking tobacco and spent the 1590s in a futile search for the fabled El Dorado. Authoritative, assiduously researched and with a knack for making the intricacies of sea skirmishes accessible and absorbing, this is a surprisingly fresh perspective on one of the most popular subjects of royal biography. 16 pages of b&w illus.; maps. (*July*)