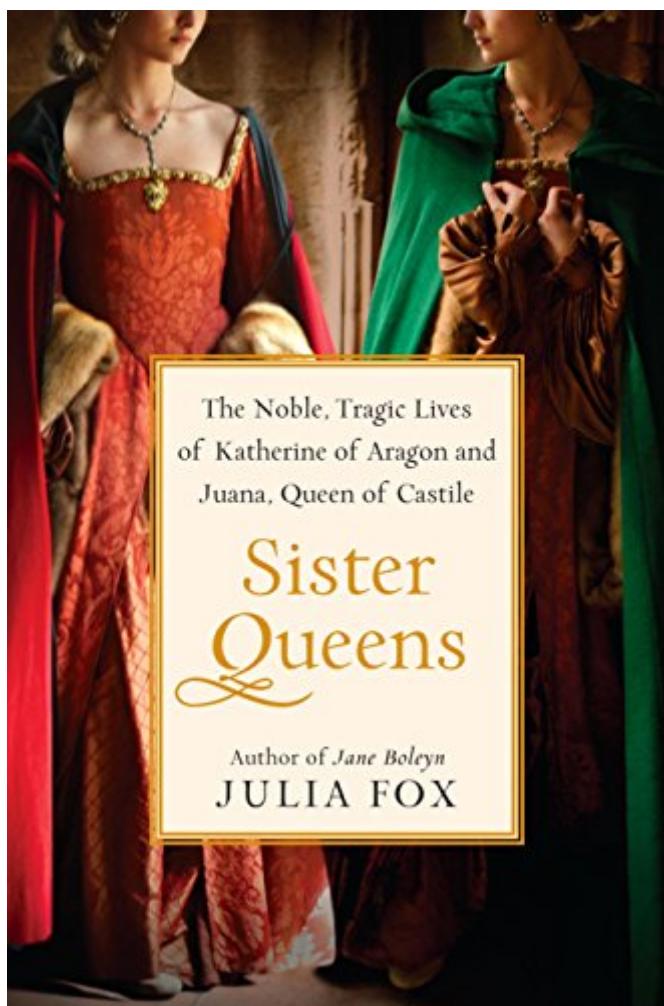


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Sister Queens: The Noble, Tragic Lives Of Katherine Of Aragon And Juana, Queen Of Castile



Synopsis

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLERThe history books have cast Katherine of Aragon, the first queen of King Henry VIII of England, as the ultimate symbol of the Betrayed Woman, cruelly tossed aside in favor of her husband’s seductive mistress, Anne Boleyn. Katherine’s sister, Juana of Castile, wife of Philip of Burgundy and mother of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, is portrayed as “Juana the Mad,” whose erratic behavior included keeping her beloved late husband’s coffin beside her for years. But historian Julia Fox, whose previous work painted an unprecedented portrait of Jane Boleyn, Anne’s sister, offers deeper insight in this first dual biography of Katherine and Juana, the daughters of Spain’s Ferdinand and Isabella, whose family ties remained strong despite their separation. Looking through the lens of their Spanish origins, Fox reveals these queens as flesh-and-blood women—equipped with character, intelligence, and conviction—who are worthy historical figures in their own right. When they were young, Juana’s and Katherine’s futures appeared promising. They had secured politically advantageous marriages, but their dreams of love and power quickly dissolved, and the unions for which they’d spent their whole lives preparing were fraught with duplicity and betrayal. Juana, the elder sister, unexpectedly became Spain’s sovereign, but her authority was continually usurped, first by her husband and later by her son. Katherine, a young widow after the death of Prince Arthur of Wales, soon remarried his doting brother Henry and later became a key figure in a drama that altered England’s religious landscape. Ousted from the positions of power and influence they had been groomed for and separated from their children, Katherine and Juana each turned to their rich and abiding faith and deep personal belief in their family’s dynastic legacy to cope with their enduring hardships. Sister Queens is a gripping tale of love, duty, and sacrifice—a remarkable reflection on the conflict between ambition and loyalty during an age when the greatest sin, it seems, was to have been born a woman. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

There have been many books written about Catherine of Aragon, and there's not much new here about the first wife of Henry VIII. There is much less information, however, about her sister, Juana. Thus, this book will satisfy the curiosity of those who have wanted to know more about her. There are some insights, in particular, surrounding whether the moniker "Juana the Mad" was in fact deserved. But in general, I saw this book more as a collection of historical details about these two siblings, presented in the broadest sense, to illustrate sociological points about the role of women born to European royal families of that era. That might have been my own individual take on it though. The one thing I did find a bit lacking, was any true in-depth examination of the relationship between the two women. I would have liked to learned more about that.

This book is easy to read. Much of its information is contained elsewhere, but it does go into some detail about court life of the times. I liked the fact that the author concentrated on Katherine's early life prior to the appearance of Ann Bolyen. It is often forgotten that she did have eighteen years as Queen of England before her troubles started. The author also details the years between King Arthur's death and her marriage to Henry. Less is said about Juana who eventually came to her mother, Isabella's, throne, but was never allowed to really govern. I really knew nothing about her even though I have visited Tordesillas, the town where she was virtually held under house arrest as she was cast as insane. I presume less is said about her because not much is known as she was locked away for so many years. Sister Queens certainly portrays the status of women, even royal ones, as geopolitical pawns, not an easy life. It also shows how quickly death intervened and

changed the whole course of nations in those days. Even the rich and famous were not immune.

Sister Queens tells the story of the two daughters of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain. Catherine of Aragon, who was Henry VIII's first wife, is a familiar story. Rarely, if at all, has it been told from the female point of view. Her sister, Juana, married Philip II. Her husband and her father made up the story of her madness so they could rule and reap the riches of the lands left to her by her mother, Isabella. She was kept a virtual prisoner in Spain so she could not rule in her own right. Both women were the victims of scheming men. Their intellect and political acumen overshadowed by the men who oppressed them. Now we know the "other side" of the story, thanks to Julia Fox.

This is a great book to read if you have already read a lot of Tudor history and want to find out more about the peripheral families that shaped their world. I have read a number of books about Henry VIII and his wives. Of course Katherine of Aragon was a main character and her sister, Juana, was mentioned in passing. But I never knew anything much about their upbringing or Juana's fate. I now really doubt if she was mad, or just the pawn of the men in her life. Julia Fox provides all the details in a readable style. Women wielded limited power in the 1500's and the author brings out the methods that were open to them. I would recommend this book to fans of Tudor history and my feminist friends.

Although this is a documented biography of two of Fernando and Isabella's daughters, it almost reads like historical fiction as the author attempts to guess how the two princesses (later queens) felt. Katherine, first wife of Henry VIII, had a happy period before Henry decided to get rid of her in favor of Anne Boleyn. In contrast, her sister Juana actually became queen of their mother's territory, but was shut away by her husband, her father, and her son as mad so they could rule in her stead. In summary, it was not a good period to be female, even if you were royal. I appreciated the chance to get a handle on some of the relationships between the various royal families of Europe during that period.

This book is hard to read because of all the meaningless detail; cloth used for ceremonies, three pages of castle detail that could be the 15th century Home and Garden article names and relationships of people attending various balls and ceremonies. Hard to get thru.

I love the Tudor era and will read anything even remotely touching on that time in history. This book

was fascinating with not only Katherine of Aragon but her sister Juana, of which I knew next to nothing. It was a well-done look at women in history and the dangers and intrigue they faced.

Fascinating book, very well written. The history appears very well researched but is presented in highly readable form- I couldn't put it down! It really makes Katherine of Aragon and Juana, Queen of Castile come alive! Highly recommended. I hope this author writes more books!!!!

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