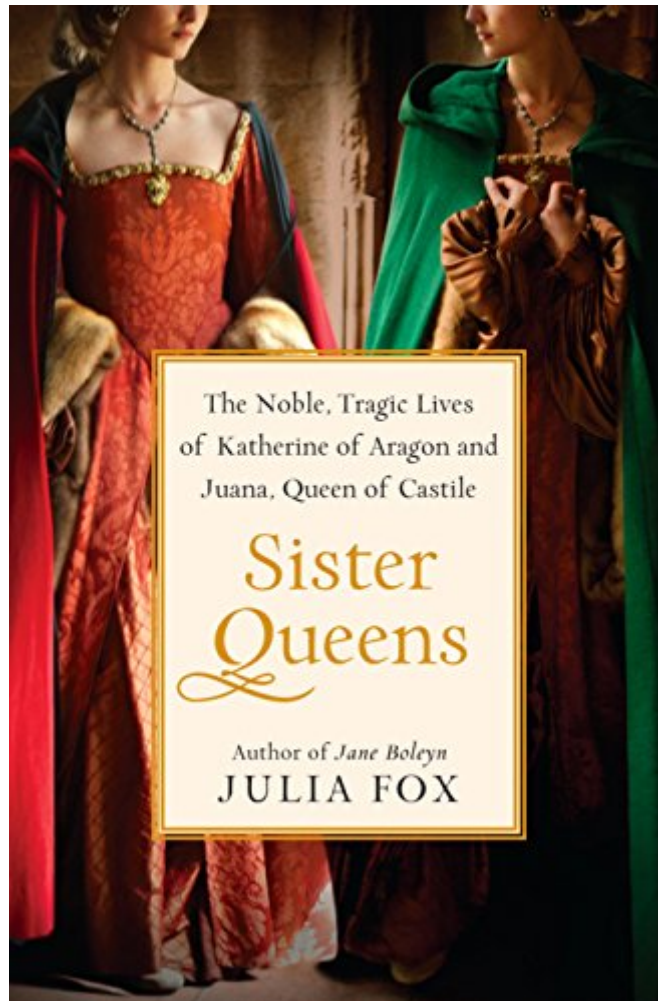


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Sister Queens: The Noble, Tragic Lives Of Katherine Of Aragon And Juana, Queen Of Castile



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 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

Catherine is well covered in Tudor literature. There is even fiction devoted to her plight (most recently in the *The Constant Princess* by Gregory). Juana, Queen of Castile, is usually referenced as a mother or grandmother, rarely as a Queen, and always as "mad". I chose this book from the Vine program to learn more about Juana, particularly why she met the fate she did. I was pleasantly surprised to learn a lot more about Catherine that was new to me. Most of the text is devoted to Catherine; hers is the better documented life. The background on the negotiations for Catherine's second marriage is covered with more dimension and sensitivity than I've seen elsewhere. You see how her father, Ferdinand, all but abandons her in England and how she learns from this experience. Other writers emphasize the gallant and thoughtful young Henry, Fox notes the execution of two of his father's ministers and his later beheading of the Duke of Somerset. She also reminds the reader that Henry's philandering life began well before his courtship of Anne Boleyn in 1526. Elizabeth Blount bore him a son in 1519. This is the most I've read of Queen Juana and how easily she was pushed aside by her father and son. It seems that she is her own worst enemy. Her first bad decision was to return to her husband in Burgundy in early 1504. If she had stayed in Spain as her mother requested, she could have learned to govern, made contacts and been visible to her subjects. Following this up with unqueenly behavior such as hunger strikes, refusal to speak/pray, and an assault on her husband's mistress made her an easy mark. She misread her imprisonment and seems almost resigned to her fate. I think Fox's opinion that she did this for her son to rule is not correct.

I really didn't know much about Katherine, Henry VIII's first wife and this book showed me a totally different side of her than what I've been led to believe. Katherine was definitely a "First Wife" ... that

terminology used in today's modern times, "First Wife, shoved aside to make room for the Trophy Wife." This book delves deeper into the lives and times of Katherine and her sister, Juana, more so than any other historical fiction novel would have you believe. And this book is NOT fiction, but rather a thoughtful and insightful treaty of the comparisons of the two sisters, both queens in their own rights, and their lives. I could not put this book down. It is well-written, drawn out and definitely not boring. This is why I adore history, especially women's history. What strikes me is here are two sisters, both of them raised under Isabella's rule and reign, and their mother, Isabella, is a mighty queen used to ruling and conquering lands. Both of the sisters are raised to be royals in every inch of the word, not only in material goods, but also in education and more. And yet, their lives are different as can be. It is very interesting to read this and compare the two. Yes, the book focuses more on Katherine since her life is more documented than Juana's life is, but there are similarities and differences between the two sisters. I also like how Ms. Fox writes about Henry, who historians have written so much about, sometimes fawning over how the delightful young man could end up so cruel, and yet Ms. Fox writes of an incident where Henry killed off two men (both noblemen) when he first took over the throne after his father's death.

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