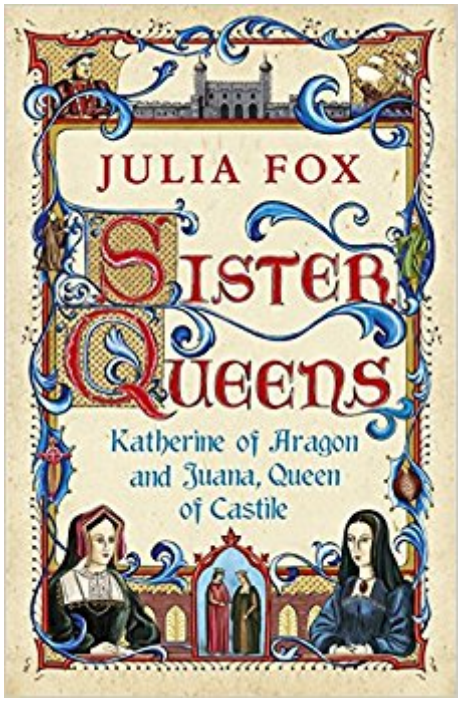
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Sister Queens: Katherine Of Aragon And Juana, Queen Of Castille



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Synopsis

Katherine of Aragon, Henry VIII's first bride, has become an icon: the betrayed wife, the revered Queen, the devoted mother, a woman callously cast aside by a selfish husband besotted by his strumpet of a mistress. Her sister, Juana of Castile, wife of Philip of Burgundy and mother of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, the most powerful man in Renaissance Europe, is still more of a legend. She is 'Juana the Mad', the wife so passionately in love with her husband that she could not bear to be parted from him even by death, keeping his coffin by her side for year upon year. They were Sister Queens - the accomplished daughters of Ferdinand and Isabella, the founders of a unified Spain. A gripping tale of love, sacrifice, the demands of duty and the conflict between ambition and loyalty - at a time when even royal women had to fight for their positions in society - Julia Fox's vibrant new biography teems with life. Linked not only by blood but by cruel experience, their dual stories enrich our understanding of them both, casting a searchlight onto the turbulent age in which they lived.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Julia Fox On Sister Queens Julia Fox is an author and historical researcher. She lives in London with her husband, the Tudor historian, John Guy. Her first book was Jane Boleyn: The Infamous Lady Rochford, a study of the lady-in-waiting at the court of Henry VIII of England and the sister-in-law of Anne Boleyn. This book evolved naturally from my last. Then, challenging the legends surrounding the life of Jane Boleyn, brought me face to face with the Boleyns' arch-enemy,

Katherine of Aragon, herself also a woman of myth. Endowed with almost saint-like qualities by her admirers, both in her own time and in ours, she is often seen as an icon of perfection as a wife, a mother and as a queen, someone too good to be true. Yet, behind all this hype and spin which turns her into a cardboard caricature, there is a real person struggling to emerge. She's the woman I set out to find; or at least, she's one of them! For when I began to explore Katherine's Spanish background, her sister Juana entered the picture, another figure of legend, a queen still known in her homeland as 'Juana the Mad.' When I found I couldn't get her out of my mind, the idea of bringing the sisters--whose lives were once so intertwined --back together again took root. A pivotal moment in my research was when I visited Granada. If one single episode influenced Katherine and Juana, it's the fall of the Moors' final bastion on the Spanish mainland, an event that was so momentous in its own time, it ranks with the D-Day landings and the end of the Second World War in ours. As young, impressionable girls, Katherine and Juana were present when, after years of bloodshed and suffering, the last Moorish king rode down the steep track leading from his great palace complex of the Alhambra to surrender the keys of his city to the sisters' parents, Ferdinand and Isabella. The girls were left in no doubt that they must fight for what they believed to be right, no matter what the personal cost. Even today, the Alhambra is magical. We can climb the paths into the intimate, intricately-carved rooms of the Moors' magnificent palace where the sisters would once have sat, wander through shady gardens, peer into subterranean dungeons which once held manacled captives; we can gaze up at the tower where the Christians raised their banners (amazingly, still preserved) to signal the triumph of their faith. We can go to the Royal Chapel in the city where Juana lies with her husband and her parents, each in narrow iron coffins, in a small, dimly-lit vault beneath the imposing mausoleums above. To see all this is to enter Katherine and Juana's world, and yearn to discover more. And the archival sources remain. Letters, contemporary records and first-hand accounts survive in abundance, allowing the sisters to speak to us with their own voices across the centuries. It was in that evidence that I immersed myself over the three years it took to research and write this book. I tried to approach it with a fresh eye, re-evaluating everything and sweeping away the cobwebs, aiming to portray these women, warts and all, as the flesh and blood figures they once were. I owe them that. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Hard to beat * Bookshelf (Spring 2012) *

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 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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