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Book Reviews

Theresa Earenfight, *Catherine of Aragon: Infanta of Spain, Queen of England, University Park, Pennsylvania*: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2021, pp. xiv + 251, £26.75, ISBN: 9780271091648

Even before the BBC released its television series *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* in 1970, the women who were married to England's most famous king were the focus of widespread popular interest as well as scholarly attention. At the present time of writing, *Six The Musical*, a high-spirited feminist defense of each of Henry's wives, is a hit on both sides of the Atlantic. The sympathetic portrayal of Henry's second wife in the late Eric Ives's *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn: 'The Most Happy'* (2008), has provided her with an enthusiastic following, but probably none of the queens has received more long-term attention than has Catherine of Aragon (1485-1536).

The dignified protest that she made to defend her marriage in mid-1529 at the meeting of the legatine court at Blackfriars has guaranteed her fame. Her words were featured by George Cavendish in his life of Cardinal Wolsey (which was completed in 1558 and often shared in manuscript). Cavendish was ultimately a source for the Henry VIII play by William Shakespeare and John Fletcher, *All is True* (1613), and through it, Catherine has been defined as a heroic figure for all time. The recent accounts of her life include Garrett Mattingly's influential *Catherine of Aragon* (1941); Giles Tremlett's *Catherine of Aragon: The Spanish Queen of Henry VIII* (2010); and the entry about her by C. S. L. Davies and John Edwards in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004/2011).

Now Theresa Earenfight has entered the familiar field with her study *Catherine of Aragon: Infanta of Spain, Queen of England.* Her book provides a half-dozen chapters as portraits of the queen at various stages of her life. Her approach takes advantage of recent trends in the scholarship of women's studies. Earenfight does not simply review events, but she provides fresh background and contextualization, particularly from the vantage point of the material culture of the queen's life. Most especially, Earenfight redefines what power meant as it relates to Catherine.

Earenfight represents power as agency. She considers the queen's political, and especially her cultural relevance, in terms of what she wore, and how she transformed the culture of early modern England by bringing to the Tudor court the sophistication she knew from her parents' realms of Aragon, Castile, and Granada.

Thus, we learn that Catherine introduced the hoop skirt to England at her arrival in 1501. The *verdugado* of Iberia was Englished as the farthingale, and it remained the standard dress for women of the ruling class long past the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. Even more influential was the embroidered Spanish blackstitch, which Catherine introduced. It set an elegant trend for linen garments that persisted for centuries. That Catherine was a real woman with desires of her own we learn from her velvet and bejeweled platform shoes, known as *chapines,* a type of Hispano-Muslim footgear, preferred by women of the elite to wear or give as gifts. And Catherine took as her personal symbol the exotic pomegranate, a fruit that was associated with the Muslim Nasrid kingdom of Granada, which her parents Isabella and Ferdinand had conquered in 1492. The pomegranate was a symbol of triumph and fruitfulness, and it was the ultimate sign of Catherine's hope for many children. From the time of her arrival in England, the pomegranate began to be displayed widely, on furniture, on fabric, in art, and then in stone. It appears on the tomb, in Worcester Cathedral, of her first husband, Prince Arthur of Wales.

That Catherine was uniquely powerful as queen consort can no longer be easily overlooked, Earenfight argues. Although Arthur's untimely death in 1502 stranded Catherine, as a virgin widow, in a precarious legal limbo, after her marriage to Henry in 1509, she emerged as her father King Ferdinand's ambassador to England. In 1513, when Henry was at war in France, she sent troops northward to defeat and kill the Scottish king James IV at the Battle of Flodden. Always, Catherine managed the difficult art of being queen consort of England, and loyal to her husband. And yet simultaneously, she presented herself as a daughter of Spain, whose interests included her extended family, and especially her powerful nephew, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V.

In her first chapter, Earenfight is right to discount recent suggestions that the paintings of Michel Sittow, which portray Mary Magdalen, are actually portraits of the young Catherine. It is much more likely, as Earenfight suggests, that Sittow's paintings represented an ideal of the saint, rather than a likeness of the princess.

Earenfight's book is aimed not only at scholars, but it is priced also to appeal to a wide readership. Therefore, it might have been better had its chronologies appeared before, instead of after each of the chapters that they accompany. Greater nuance in her discussions might also be desired. Some sections of the book could have been unpacked for greater detail and effect. Eight months after Catherine died in January 1536 (and five after Anne was executed in May), the north of England rose against Henry in the Pilgrimage of Grace, which was one of the most dangerous threats that the Tudor dynasty ever faced. For many months, Henry was on the defensive. Catherine's

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daughter Mary might have become the chief beneficiary of sustained opposition to the royal policies that had eclipsed her mother, and that had severed England from the papacy and the Roman Catholic Church. In 1536, the existence of the religious houses now became threatened, and the north rose in protest. Why had Catherine not endorsed even greater resistance when she might have done so? That she did not would still reward further examination.

At her own suggestion, after Catherine's death, some of her sumptuous silk damask dresses, woven with patterns of pomegranates, were remade into vestments. Earenfight remarks that a chasuble and a cope that perhaps can be associated with her, have recently come to light. Thomas Cromwell, a target of the 1536 uprisings for his role as one of the architects of royal religious policies, was scandalized, because he believed England already had enough vestments. Earenfight's book shows that the queen's intelligence and her wide political experience meant that of all Henry's wives, Catherine of Aragon was the only one he truly needed to fear.

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Ana Sáez-Hidalgo and Berta Cano-Echevarría, eds., *Exile, Diplomacy and Texts: Exchanges between Iberia and the British Isles, 1500–1767*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2020, pp. xi + 232, €105.00, ISBN: 978-90-04-27365-8.

Studies which deal with British, Irish, and Iberian relations in the early modern period have traditionally been characterised by the dichotomic lens of an inescapable Anglo-Spanish enmity which developed alongside a steadfast Anglo-Portuguese friendship. As the editors, Ana Sáez-Hidalgo and Berta Cano-Echevarría, remind us in the introduction, much of the scholarship surrounding British-Iberian relations has uncritically followed the conclusions of contemporary polemicists. Using philological, historiographical, and cultural approaches, the authors in this novel and exciting interdisciplinary volume seek to bring nuance and to provide texture to our understanding of a complex topic. Without neglecting the relationships between England and the Iberian kingdoms, the book also treats Ireland's place within this network independently, rather than as an English or Spanish sidekick. The work, which deals with the concept of the 'other' and the process of 'othering' in the early modern British-Hiberno-Iberian contexts, provides a colourful and fascinating account of the multifaceted aspects of exchanges, collaborations and conflicts between subjects and exiles from England, Ireland, Portugal and Spain, whilst staying aloof of the binary approaches traditionally employed in their study.

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