

The Confessions Of Catherine De Medici

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catherine de medici 1519 89 was the wife of one king of france and the mother of three more the last sorry representatives of the valois who had ruled france since 1328 she herself is of preeminent importance to french history and one of the most controversial of all historical figures despised until she was powerful enough to be hated she was in her own lifetime and since the subject of a black

legend that has made her a favourite subject of historical novelists most notably alexandre dumas whose reine margot has recently had new currency on film yet there is no recent biography of her in english this new study by a leading scholar of renaissance france is a major event catherine a neglected and insignificant member of the florentine medici entered french history in 1533 when she married the son of francis i for short lived political reasons her uncle was pope clement vii who died the following year now of no diplomatic value catherine was treated with contempt at the french court even after her husband s accession as henry ii in 1547 even so she gave him ten children before he was killed in a tournament in 1559 she was left with three young boys who succeeded to the throne as francis ii 1559 60 charles ix 1560 74 and henry iii 1574 89 as regent and queen mother a woman and with no natural power base of her own she faced impossible odds france was accelerating into chaos with political faction at court and religious conflict throughout the land as the country disintegrated catherine s overriding concern was for the interests of her children she was tireless in her efforts to protect her sons inheritance and to settle her daughters in advantageous marriages but france needed more catherine herself was both peace loving and in an age of frenzied religious hatred unbigoted she tried to use the huguenots to counterbalance the growing power of the ultra catholic guises but extremism on all sides frustrated her she was drawn into the violence her name is ineradicably associated with its culmination the massacre of st bartholomew 24 august 1572 when thousands of huguenots were slaughtered in paris and elsewhere to this day no one knows for certain whether catherine instigated the massacre or not but here robert knecht explores the probabilities in a notably level headed fashion his book is a gripping narrative in its own right it offers both a lucid exposition of immensely complex events with their profound impact on the future of france and also a convincing portrait of its enigmatic central character in going behind the familiar black legend professor knecht does not make the mistake of whitewashing catherine but he shows how intractable was her world and how shifty or intransigent the people with whom she had to deal for all her flaws she emerges as a more sympathetic and in her pragmatism more modern figure than most of her leading contemporaries

catherine de medici was half french half italian orphaned in infancy she was the sole legitimate heiress to the medici family fortune married at fourteen to the future henri ii of france she was constantly humiliated by his influential mistress diane de poitiers when her husband died as a result of a duelling accident catherine became queen regent during the short reign of her eldest son when her second son became king she was the power behind the throne she nursed dynastic ambitions but was continually drawn into political and religious intrigues it had always been said that she was implicated in the notorious saint bartholomew s day massacre together

with the king and her third son who succeeded to the throne in 1574 but was murdered left standing with his assassin's dagger in one hand and his own entrails in the other her political influence waned but she survived long enough to ensure the succession of her son in law who had married her daughter margaret léonie frieda has returned to original sources and re read the thousands of letters left by catherine there has not been a biography in english of catherine for many years and she believes that the time has come to show her as one of the most influential women in c16th europe

in the identities of catherine de medici susan broomhall provides an innovative analysis of the representational strategies that constructed catherine de medici and sought to explain her behaviour and motivations through her detailed exploration of the identities that the queen her allies supporters and clients sought to project and how contemporaries responded to them broomhall establishes a new vision of this important sixteenth century protagonist a clearer understanding of the dialogic and dynamic nature of identity construction and reception and its consequences for catherine de medici's legacy memory and historiography

a financial times book of the year a new biography of catherine de medici the most powerful woman in sixteenth century europe whose author uses neglected primary sources to recreate the life and times of a remarkable and remarkably traduced woman history is rarely kind to women of power but few have had their reputations quite so brutally shredded as catherine de medici italian born queen of france and influential mother of three successive french kings during that country's long sequence of sectarian wars in the second half of the sixteenth century thanks to the malign efforts of propagandists motivated by religious hatred history tends to remember catherine as a schemer who used witchcraft and poison to eradicate her rivals as a spendthrift dilettante who wasted ruinous sums of money on building and embellishment of monuments and palaces and most sinister of all as instigator of the st bartholomew's day massacre of 1572 in which thousands of innocent protestants were slaughtered by catholic mobs mary hollingsworth delves into contemporary archives to discover deeper truths behind these persistent myths the correspondence of diplomats and catherine's own letters reveal a woman who worked tirelessly to find a way for catholics and protestants to coexist in peace a goal for which she continued to strive until the end of her life who was well informed on both literary and scientific matters and whose patronage of the arts helped bring into being glorious châteaux and gardens priceless work of art and magnificent festivities combining theatre music and ballet which display the grandeur of the french court

now the tv series the serpent queen starring samantha morton the bestselling revisionist biography of one of the great women of the 16th century orphaned in infancy catherine de medici was the sole legitimate heiress to the medici family fortune married at fourteen to the future henri ii of france she was constantly humiliated by his influential mistress diane de poitiers when her husband died as a result of a duelling accident in paris catherine was made queen regent during the short reign of her eldest son married to mary queen of scots and like many of her children he died young when her second son became king she was the power behind the throne she nursed dynastic ambitions but was continually drawn into political and religious intrigues between catholics and protestants that plagued france for much of the later part of her life it had always been said that she was implicated in the notorious saint bartholomew s day massacre together with the king and her third son who succeeded to the throne in 1574 but was murdered her political influence waned but she survived long enough to ensure the succession of her son in law who had married her daughter margaret

in catherine de medici honoré de balzac delves into the life and political machinations of one of history s most enigmatic figures this historical novel written in balzac s characteristic detailed and vivid prose intricately weaves the tapestry of 16th century france against a backdrop of court intrigue religious strife and the quest for power balzac s exploration of the psychological depths of catherine from her fierce determination to defend her children s claims to the throne to her use of manipulation in a male dominated world is underscored by richly developed characters and acute social commentary characteristic of the author s broader literary project known as la comédie humaine which seeks to provide a comprehensive portrait of french society honoré de balzac a seminal figure in french literature drew upon his keen observations of society and politics to craft catherine de medici having lived through the tumultuous changes of 19th century france balzac s lifelong interest in the complexities of human nature and societal structures sparked his fascination with historical figures who shaped france s destiny his approach reflects not only a deep understanding of the historical context but also a critique of contemporary societal norms this novel is highly recommended for readers who are interested in historical fiction political intrigue and character driven narratives balzac s penetrating insights into power dynamics and the human condition offer a profound understanding of how a woman despite the constraints of her era wielded formidable influence over a nation catherine de medici is an essential read for anyone captivated by the intersections of history and literature

miss sichel is an accomplished historian who draws her characters with spirit and skill her volumes are the result of much diligent

research and the material is fully sifted and illuminated by a trained imagination it is recognized by all critics that miss sichel s pictures of catherine and the actors in the drama of which she was the central figure are trustworthy transcripts of the life of the time the story of catherine is replete with sensational interest and full justice is done to her in miss sichel s volumes edith sichel was also the author of the household of the lafayettes women and men of the french renaissance and catherine de medici and the french reformation

catherine de medici has become almost a legend as the queen mother of france who was responsible for the massacre of st bartholomew in 1572 she has incurred the odium of centuries and her enemies held her guilty of other more subtle individual murders perpetrated with the help of her alchemist astrologer dust jacket flap

describes the life and accomplishments of the queen who worked to achieve peace between french protestants and catholics during the reigns of her husband king henry ii of france and her sons

originally published in 1968 this book is an unforgettable portrait of an impoverished orphaned daughter of the medici pitchforked at the age of fourteen into her royal destiny and having to bear the rivalry of diane de poitiers and the description the florentine shopkeeper who nevertheless became one of the most powerful characters in the shaping of sixteenth century europe

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