



The Forbidden Queen

Anne O'Brien

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An innocent pawn

A kingdom without a king

A new dynasty will reign...

1415. The jewel in the French crown, Katherine de Valois, is waiting under lock and key for King Henry V. While he's been slaughtering her kinsmen in Agincourt, Katherine has been praying for marriage to save her from her misery. But the brutal king wants her crown, not her innocent love.

For Katherine, England is a lion's den of greed, avarice and mistrust. And when she is widowed at twenty-one, she becomes a prize ripe for the taking—her young son the future monarch, her hand in marriage worth a kingdom.

This is a deadly political game, one the dowager queen must learn fast. The players—the Duke of Gloucester, Edmund Beaufort and Owen Tudor—are circling. Who will have her? Who will ruin her? This is the story of Katherine de Valois.

The Forbidden Queen Details

Date : Published March 1st 2013 by Mira Books

ISBN : 9781848452152

Author : Anne O'Brien

Format : Paperback 619 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Romance, European Literature, British Literature

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From Reader Review The Forbidden Queen for online ebook

Tony Riches says

Isn't it great when you suddenly discover a fascinating historical figure you really know nothing about? It doesn't happen very often, so when it does it's quite special – and often unexpected. My current WIP is set during the time of Katherine of Valois (the 'forbidden queen' of Anne O'Brien's latest novel), so I'm very familiar with her story. No, the big surprise was her hero, the impressive Owen Tudor, (or Owain ap Maredudd ap Tewdwr as he would have preferred to be called) who of course gave his name to the Tudor dynasty. (There is a theory that the name 'Tudor' was actually a typo made by an English scribe who didn't know any better. We will never know if that is true, although I did read that Henry VIII never described himself as a 'Tudor').

The awful way King Henry V treated his new wife has been well documented but there was great secrecy about Katherine's relationship with Owen Tudor. This makes it all the more interesting, as we do have to 'fill in the gaps'. Anne O'Brien's relaxed style does this sensitively and convincingly through the eyes of Queen Katherine. Tricked by Duke Humphrey of Gloucester into a life of widowhood, she slowly becomes aware of the real man behind the role of 'Master of the Household'. (His real title may have even been 'clerk of the wardrobe'!)

There is a fascinating postscript at the end of the book where Anne discusses her inspiration for writing it. She says "I decided that Katherine deserves a re-evaluation. I hope I have done her justice in writing The Forbidden Queen, allowing us to see the woman behind the façade." Anne has certainly achieved that and more. I will admit to feeling quite emotional at the end of her amazing story. I highly recommend this book to anyone who would like to understand what life may have been like for this remarkable woman.

Pupottina says

È stata una lettura interessante e superlativa. Ritrovarsi d'un tratto a vivere la vita di Caterina di Valois e della sua corte è stata un'esperienza impareggiabile. Fantastica l'ambientazione e lo stile delicato e coinvolgente di Anne O'Brien che ha saputo ben amalgamare la componente storica con il genere romance. Caterina di Valois, figlia di Carlo VI di Francia e Isabella di Baviera, andò in sposa a Enrico V d'Inghilterra. Rimasta una giovanissima vedova divenne un trofeo ambito per molti contendenti, corteggiatori instancabili ed avidi. Lei, però, cercava l'amore vero, quello che il suo primo marito Enrico V non è stato in grado di darle, avendola sposata per interesse e non per un reale sentimento d'affetto nei suoi confronti.

Per la regina francese, Caterina, l'Inghilterra è un covo di vipere avaro e fraudolente, dove con ingordigia e inganno chiunque è pronto a danneggiarla o sfruttarla. Ecco perché lei deve fare della diffidenza il suo punto di forza, prima di coronare il suo sogno d'amore.

Come sappiamo già dalle pagine di storia, tra i tanti uomini che cercarono di possederla, Caterina sposò segretamente, in seconde nozze, Owen Tudor, unendo il suo nome alle origini della dinastia dei Tudor.

È un'opera preziosissima quella scritta da Anne O'Brien, la quale narra le vicende storiche inglesi, tra intrighi, scandali e passioni, con l'eleganza di uno stile ricercato, rendendo appassionanti anche le lontane emozioni che hanno lasciato traccia sulle pagine dei manuali storici.

Se amate le intense e coinvolgenti rievocazioni storiche, soprattutto quattrocentesche, e le personalità affascinanti e sfaccettate, LA REGINA PROIBITA è un romanzo che vi conquisterà.

KarenV says

Ugh! This is the third book I've abandoned in as many weeks. I don't know whether I'm just not in the mood for a particular genre, I'm too distracted to get into a book properly or whether I'm just picking bad books but it's unusual for me to abandon so many at once.

Anyway, *The Forbidden Queen* actually started off quite well, although I thought the chapters could have been shorter - sometimes the focus of the story changed at a point when a new chapter would have been better, rather than continuing with the current one. The story was interesting though and provided a good insight into a period of history with which I'm unfamiliar.

However, once Henry V died and Edmund Beaufort came onto the scene, I was suddenly transported into a Mills and Boon romance, with page after page (after page) of gushy declarations of love between Katherine and Edmund. I tried to stick with it but it was just too much. I even skipped ahead a couple of chapters, only to find they were still madly in love and I wasn't in the mood for it. The author has been favourably compared to Philippa Gregory but having read several of Ms Gregory's works and thoroughly enjoyed them, I'd have to disagree.

Stacie (MagicOfBooks) says

I will also do a video review here at my channel: <http://www.youtube.com/magicofbooks>

"*The Forbidden Queen*" by Anne O'Brien tells the story of Katherine de Valois---Princess of France, wife of King Henry V, mother of King Henry VI, and the woman who would create the Tudor dynasty. Every since she was a young girl, Katherine was a pawn in everyone's political games, but she will be the one in charge of her fate for once, even if that provokes the ire of the English court and could put her very life in danger.

Yes! Some historical fiction love for Katherine de Valois! Okay, this isn't the first book dedicated to this remarkable woman, but still, I'm glad to see the historical fiction book treatment given to Katherine who history often ignores or brushes to the side. The more books about her, the better. Her life has all the makings of an incredible story: a princess of France with a father who has gone mad, a wife of a king who dies tragically, a mother of a future king who is only a baby when his father dies, and a creator of one of the most famous English dynasties. Plus, throw in political and court intrigue and romance and you are hooked on every page.

Anne O'Brien delivers a very well done book from start to finish. She basically divides Katherine's life up into three sections: Katherine's marriage to King Henry V, her infatuation with Edmund Beaufort, and her marriage to Owen Tudor. This certainly provides for a speedy narrative, but a narrative that holds your continuous attention, and never feels like it's moving so quickly that you're missing important moments. Katherine gets her fair share of character development, starting the novel as a naive lovestruck girl, to a flirtatious young woman, and finally to a woman who realizes the mistakes of her past and wants to love and be loved in the fashion that she so chooses and won't let the English court rule her every decision.

So who to recommend this book to? Obviously fans of historical fiction. And also to fans of the Tudor dynasty. Many people tend to only read about King Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth I, but I highly recommend picking this book up if you want to start right at the very beginning...the prequel if you will. We

don't know much about the real historical Katherine de Valois, but I like to think that this book is a true representation of her and I hope people see what a remarkable woman she was.

Erin says

Find this and other reviews at: <http://flashlightcommentary.blogspot...>

Katherine de Valois is a tantalizingly enigmatic historic figure. The daughter of Charles VI and Isabeau of Bavaria, Katherine married Henry V in June 1420 and was crowned Queen of England the following year. She welcomed a son in December 1421 and became a widow in August 1422. Still young and marriageable, the queen dowager planned to wed Edmund Beaufort, but intervention by Parliament quashed all hope of a possible marriage. Forced to live in her son's household, Katherine found happiness in the arms of one of her staff, a Welshman by the name of Owen Tudor. The facts of their relationship are rather sketchy, but the union resulted in the birth of at least three children if not more. The eldest of these was Edmund Tudor, father of Henry VII, founder of the Tudor dynasty.

Already fond of the story, I was eager to read Anne O'Brien's *The Forbidden Queen*, but my enthusiasm was unfortunately short-lived.

For one, there is little atmospheric detail and no timetable by which the reader might make reference. Births, deaths, and various battles are occasionally mentioned, but the narrative is marked by the distinct absence of both physical and political ambiance.

The lack of authenticity also bothered me. Take for example Katherine's life after she is ordered to reside in her son's household. Am I truly to believe that outside the question of marriage, the queen dowager was allowed to live virtually free of Parliament, that she could uproot the royal youngster on a whim or that the child king wouldn't be surrounded by subordinates acting in the interest of the Lord Protector? I'm sorry, but I don't see it. Not during the intense power struggles of the Middle Ages.

O'Brien's attempt to explore Katherine as someone who suffered confidence issues showed promise, but the context made it difficult for me to see her as someone of independent strength. Her courage and spirit ebbs and flows exclusively on the romantic attentions of men, making her appear codependent rather than capable.

A difficult read, the only bits I truly enjoyed were the scenes in which Katherine questions her sanity. The allusion created a nice bridge between her father, Charles VI, and her eldest son, Henry VI, both of whom suffered some form of mental instability.

Historically speaking, it is an interesting piece, but I think O'Brien could have done a lot more with it.

Laurie • The Baking Bookworm says

*** This book review, as well as many more, can also be found on my blog, *The Baking Bookworm* (www.thebakingbookworm.blogspot.ca).

Disclaimer: My sincere thanks to Harlequin and NetGalley for providing me with a complimentary e-book copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.

My Review: Historical Fiction is one of my favourite genres. There's something awesome about reading a book that puts you back in time so you can learn a thing or two about an era long since gone. I love the historical tidbits and felt that learning about Katherine de Valois, the mother of King Henry VI, would be a wonderful way to spend the weekend. Unfortunately, I had a very hard time getting into this book.

I would characterize this book as much more of a romance than a historical fiction novel. I would have loved to have more historical detail incorporated into the storyline but the book just seems to follow Katherine's love life (which I didn't find very romantic to begin with, truth be told). Add to the fact that the character development and plot were both weak and one-dimensional and I just didn't enjoy this book.

In the beginning Katherine was a likeable, innocent young girl who has had a hard childhood (I actually would have liked to get more detail into her childhood but that time in her life was glossed over quickly). As the story progresses Katherine continues to be this innocent, naïve, flighty girl and her lack of character development grated on me quickly. She was defeatist from the get go and overall just had an utterly bleak feel to her. It's one thing to be naïve because she was just a teenager when she was sent to England but she came off as whiny, weak and immature throughout the book. She seemed shocked when Henry didn't have time for her. He's the KING OF ENGLAND! He's got countries to conquer and England to run, for goodness sake! For a girl who grew up never imagining that she'd one day get the chance to be married, let alone a Queen, she sure did have a lot of preconceived notions.

And for a girl who was raised in a neglectful (albeit royal) home and then sent to a nunnery you'd think that she'd have a lot more trouble fitting into her new life as the Queen of England. But Katherine seems to worry more about whether Henry loves her than learning about her new role and helping to rule a country. This issue continues as she is widowed and essentially looking for love in all the wrong places time and again. There were many times when the story could have gone into further detail to help the reader get a better idea of life during this time but more often than not the details were glossed over to make room for Katherine's beaux.

I love strong female characters but Katherine came off as weak and silly. Her happiness is solely dependent on her romantic life. She was very self-absorbed in her own little world and felt very meek, immature, whiny and just generally not a character I could get behind. If she started out weak and immature but then we got to see some growth in her character that would be one thing but it never felt like her character went through any substantial emotional changes throughout the book.

Another issue I had with this book concerned the writing style. Throughout the book it felt like I was being told things instead of being shown by the characters actually doing something. We got glimpses into Katherine's life but never really got down into the details. For example, Katherine initially has issues with her 'damsels' (ladies in waiting) but other than the odd comment about her damsels not liking her it's not dealt with. I would also have loved to get a feeling for the political and social issues of the time but instead the storyline felt like it just went from one bad relationship of Katherine's to the next.

Finally, one of the main reasons I requested to review this book was the fact that it dealt with Owen Tudor. I was eager to get a peek at the early days of the Tudor dynasty but it was overshadowed by the 'will they won't they?' romantic banter between Katherine and Owen and that got old for me fast.

If there was more historical detail, intrigue and character development it would have made for a really good read. Unfortunately, this book came off as a romantic novel with a weak historical framework that focused more on Katherine's love life and less on the political intrigue and historical details of the time.

My Rating: 2 stars

Samantha says

The Forbidden Queen starts out in a very promising way. Poor little Katherine is a princess, yet destitute. Her mother, Isabeau of Bavaria, has resources but not the desire to raise her children. She is too caught up in her own selfish desires to concern herself with the dirty little girls scurrying around the castle. Katherine's father, Charles VI of France, is insane and may or may not remember who Katherine is when he does run into her. If they chance to interact and he believes that she is indeed his daughter, he makes an effort to provide for her, but his mind is too far gone for her to rely upon him.

This tragic picture of childhood is a far cry from the expected pampered royal upbringing that most princes and princesses of Katherine's day enjoyed. Once her mother realizes the state of her daughters, she removes them to a cold, stern convent to be educated and disciplined. Katherine grows up never learning what it is like to love or be loved. Her only comfort is her sister Michelle, who of course is lost to her upon her marriage.

When Katherine is married to the legendary Henry V, she envisions a new life of love and happiness. However, her husband is too distracted by his quest to rule over France in addition to England to spend much time wooing his young bride. She is in love nonetheless because he is all she has. At this point in the story, I could still feel sympathy for Katherine. I cared about what happened to her and felt sorry for the girl who wanted so much to give herself to someone and be truly loved in return. After Henry's death, the whole story fell apart.

Katherine is understandably crushed by her husband's death and the circumstances surrounding it, but she descends into depression, self-pity, and insipidness that she never (ever) seems to fully recover from. The rest of the book includes her relationships with Edmund Beaufort and Owen Tudor, who are about as two dimensional as characters can be. Meanwhile, Katherine is naïve, selfish, and has a little too much of her parents in her.

Edmund is the seducing rogue who everyone realizes is a bad boy except Katherine. Owen is the brooding, strong, quick-tempered, yet perfectly handsome and sensitive Welshman. Katherine spends so much time doubting herself, her relationships, and the motives of the King's council which rules her life. She makes, or attempts to make, several major decisions without consulting with whichever man she is deeply in love with at the time. She was just so unlikeable.

What I was really bothered by in this novel was the repetitiveness. Over and over, the reader was reminded: Henry only married Katherine to gain France, Edmund is sexy but it would be a horrible decision to sleep with him, Owen is a servant! My uncorrected proof copy of this book is 613 pages, while I see that Goodreads lists it as 464, so maybe much of this was edited out. I hope so. The other problem that I had was that we aren't told much of what is going on other than Katherine's inner thoughts, which are pretty much only about men. England is battling for the crown of France and all we know is that Owen has glossy black hair. It's just a little too fluffy for me. However, if you are more of a fan of romance than history, it may be just the book for you. I like a little more history in my historical fiction.

Jo Barton says

The Forbidden Queen is the story of how a beautiful young woman was manipulated into a loveless marriage, and then forced to live her life in the shadow of powerful men. Katherine's story draws you in from the very beginning as we rejoice to see her as an innocent bride and gently protective mother, but then

grieve as she learns to live her life as a beautiful young widow, but what really brings the novel to life is the way in which this gentle, charismatic Queen was treated by the powerful men who were appointed as the young King's protectors.

Anne O'Brien has a great skill with words and undoubtedly makes history come alive, so much so, you are easily transported back in time to an age when women were largely seen but not heard, and as the 21st century begins to fade and the echoes of the past resonate within your imagination, you feel the cold of the castle walls and sense Katherine's unease as she finds herself caught between love and duty.

There is no doubt that history has much to thank Katherine de Valois for, as this largely forgotten queen was not only the mother of a King of England, but was also the grandmother of the Tudor dynasty, in this novel Anne O'Brien more than does justice to a story that needed to be told.

There is no doubt that Anne O'Brien's historical narratives just get better and better, and this is one of my favourite of her novels to date.

My thanks to Netgalley and Harlequin (UK) for an advance ecopy of this book to read and review.

Sarah says

Katherine de Valois was a French princess married off to King Henry V of England in return for the promise of a French crown. She successfully produced a male heir within the first two years of their marriage, but was suddenly left a young widow when Henry V died whilst his son was still a baby. Katherine then became Queen Dowager, a figurehead for her son, the child King Henry VI.

In this novel, Anne O'Brien paints a picture of a lonely, duty-bound Queen who wants nothing more than to love, and be loved. Yet Katherine does not have the authority to decide when (or if) she will remarry, nor to whom. The story becomes a wonderfully romantic tale of Katherine de Valois and Owen Tudor - master of the Queen Dowager's household. Owen was a disinherited Welshman in a role of servitude, but O'Brien's Katherine is completely smitten by him. The union between Katherine de Valois and Owen Tudor would eventually result in the Tudor Dynasty (Katherine being Henry VII's grandmother).

I couldn't help but like and admire O'Brien's interpretation of Katherine and Owen, and the relationship that existed between them. Their resilience and determination to be together in the face of constant opposition is what I enjoyed most about this novel. Why else would a Queen marry a servant, if not for love?

A sad story overall, but with sweet interludes.

Lisa - (Aussie Girl) says

A very readable telling of the story of Catherine de Valois, Princess of France, wife and mother of English Kings and one of my favourite historical loves stories between Catherine and Owen Tudor, the ancestors of the current British monarchy. Anne O'Brien does a good job of combining the historical facts and the romantic elements of the story of one of England's most unknown but fascinating Queens.

★★★? (3.5 stars)

Ashley Nichole says

I literally just finished this book. It was absolutely amazing. I may be a bit biased because I love historical fiction, but this was probably one of the best books I've ever read. It really puts a spotlight on Catherine of Valois, but not all of the information in here is historically accurate. Still a good story, though. The plot was pretty good, but the time spacing was a bit off. I feel like it was in fast forward and I couldn't tell if it was supposed to be days or years between some events. Besides that, the character development and realism was astonishing. I felt like this was an authentic story, like the author really felt a connection with some of the characters. Most of this book was dialogue, and not much attention was given to scenery, setting, or any small details. It was very much a "bigger picture" novel. While this story was good, I'm not completely sure if I would read another book by this author, but to each their own. Definitely worth a read if you're into historical fiction.

Stacey says

[I did find it very interesting that

Cynthia Mcarthur says

One of my favorite stories in English history is the story of Katherine of Valois and Owen Tudor's marriage. So romantic, so unexpected, so honest.

But this book is not just about that particular story. This book is about Katherine of Valois, beginning from her neglected childhood in a French court ruled by a mad King and an absent Queen. Katherine is telling the reader her story, from her point of view, naive and foolish as it may have been at times. Katherine is heartbreakingly honest with both the reader and herself as she rises to become Queen of England to the great warrior King Henry V, the man she dreamed would be her hero and true love, but died before the dream could even be touched upon. Katherine is straight forward and remorseful as she tells the reader of her depression and melancholy after the death of Henry, and then angry when her lonely heart falls victim to the schemes of an ambitious courtier. Katherine is truthful, never sugar-coating her actions, even when she happens to accidentally fall deeply in love with her servant, Owen Tudor. Katherine makes no excuses for herself as she grasps for the happiness that she has always sought, fighting tooth and nail with council and country for what she believes her family deserves.

Anne O'Brien has written a beautiful, bittersweet novel. This story deserved to be told, in exactly this manner. Katherine's story, on Katherine's terms. Highly Recommended.

Amy Bruno says

Woo Hoo...just scored a eGalley at NetGalley!

Kiesha ~ 1Cheekylass says

Wow. This was probably my favorite out of all of all of Anne O'Brien's books. Katherine, while naive at

times was very enduring. You can't help but to be in her corner. Also, I loved Owen. I loved the portrayal of their love--I like to think it was similar to what O'Brien has written. She got stronger as she matured and decided that love was worth fighting for. The epilogue made my eyes well with tears.

5 stars for story and narration.
