



## The Merry Monarch's Wife

*Jean Plaidy*

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## **The Merry Monarch's Wife** Jean Plaidy

Charles II is restored to the English throne, and his court is lively and even scandalous. The country is eager for succession to be clear and certain: The next king will be the son of Charles II and his queen, Catherine of Braganza. Yet Catherine, daughter of the king of Portugal and a Catholic, has never been popular with the English people. She is also having great difficulty conceiving an heir, even as many of Charles's well-known mistresses are bearing his children with ease. Catherine is aware that courtiers close to Charles are asking him to divorce her and take another wife—yet she is determined to hold her title in the face of all odds.

The ninth novel in the beloved Queens of England series, *The Merry Monarch's Wife* brings Catherine of Braganza to life and plunges readers into the tumultuous world of Restoration England.

## **The Merry Monarch's Wife Details**

Date : Published January 22nd 2008 by Broadway Books (first published 1991)

ISBN : 9780307346179

Author : Jean Plaidy

Format : Paperback 352 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, European Literature, British Literature, Literature, 17th Century, Romance, Stuart, History, European History, English History, Tudor Period

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## From Reader Review The Merry Monarch's Wife for online ebook

### HBalikov says

Captain Renault:

What in heaven's name brought you to Casablanca?

Rick:

My health. I came to Casablanca for the waters.

Captain Renault:

The waters? What waters? We're in the desert.

Rick:

I was misinformed.

This is my first encounter with Jean Plaidy's Queens of England Series. I thought I might be getting Hilary Mantel; I was misinformed.

This book dramatizes the life of Catherine of Braganza. She, a good Catholic, married Charles II of England whose good fortune it was to be available at the restoration of the British monarchy after the great Civil War. Charles' father was beheaded in that conflict. Catherine was married to Charles to cement a relationship between England and Portugal and provide some buffer between the warring parties in the Iberian peninsula.

Catherine's father got what he wanted in the deal, and was willing to pay a substantial price for it. Aside from the money in the dowry, England got concessions in north Africa and India --- items that led to Britain's later domination of India and other places in Asia.

Plaidy, instead, chooses to caste Catherine as a "pawn in the game of life." Everything happens to her. She seems to do nothing, take no initiative on her own.

The "Merry Monarch" of the title had romantic involvements both before and during his marriage to Catherine. Perhaps because of his bride's miscarriages and inability to produce an heir, Charles fathered and recognized many out of wedlock progeny. The book takes us on a long journey through Catherine's fidelity to Roman Catholicism. The English people had difficulty warming to her because her religion stood in the way. She was accused at various times of treason and other offenses. Charles, to his credit, was her strong defender. When he died, she stayed in England.

It was the Portuguese who, being among the first Western sailors to Asia, brought back tea. It became popular among their nobility. It was Catherine who, as part of her dowry, brought several chests of tea with her to England. She made it fashionable at Court and from there to the general public. Plaidy makes little note of this, and other things less titillating.

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## **Alex says**

I have read to-date all of the Plaidy books that are currently available. This book was not a favorite. Catherine of Braganza, while an interesting woman in her own right, played out in this novel as helpless woman who did not take an active interest in the events surrounding her. If you are interested in her and the people in this time period, The Loves of Charles II: The Stuart Saga is a much better read as it is told about many people with many different points of view. If you want to focus solely on the relationship between Catherine and Charles, this book is for you, but realize...Charles was a cad, it appears as a limited relationship.

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## **Heather C says**

The Merry Monarch's Wife by Jean Plaidy

Genre: Historical Fiction

Catherine of Braganza is a quiet, reserved, and innocent young lady when she comes to marry the Merry Monarch at the licentious court of Charles II. Her eyes are rather quickly opened when she is introduced to her new husband's mistress, Barbara Palmer. Catherine would have to figure out how to handle her husband's many mistresses: Barbara Palmer, Louise de Kerouaille, Nell Gwyn and many others. Catherine also has to handle the many plots that implicated her in attempts on the King's life, hatred toward her for her Catholic religion, and failure to conceive an heir.

Plaidy does a great job at describing the many mistresses that Charles II has. We get to see not only how the court and countrymen reacted to these many women but also have an insight into what Catherine might have felt about them. She is a character that you can find much sympathy for, especially as another woman. I can imagine that it would be hard enough to handle one mistress, never mind several at once.

Prior to reading this book I had no experience with the court of Charles II. Charles is quite the interesting person. He was always lively and jovial and quick to brush off personal problems. It is amazing how carefree his life seems to be. While he cares about how his dalliances with other women affect his wife, he also expects her to handle them with decorum and not pay any attention to it (the nerve!).

Of the few Plaidy novels that I have read so far this is one of my favorites. The characters are very well developed and I could really feel for Catherine. Enough background information is given for a solid understanding of these people without having to look anything up to feel comfortable in that time period.

Plaidy is definitely becoming one of my favorite authors!

4.5 out of 5 stars

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## **Kelly A. says**

Guess what?! I have a new favourite Queen. Sorry Tudor queens, but Catherine of Braganza has taken your

place. For being a rarely talked about person in English history, she sure was a fascinating person. She may not have conducted scandalous affairs or had her head chopped off, but she is memorable in her own way.

Jean Plaidy's book, *The Merry Monarch's Wife*, is written in the form of Catherine's memoir (J.P. likes to do this a lot...it's not really my favourite writing technique). I knew very little about her life in Portugal as an Infanta, so that was really interesting to read about. Her Portuguese relatives were rather...um, eccentric. I think I want to learn more about her crazy brother Alfonso. Catherine comes to England as an old lady of 23 and marries Charles. As the years pass, she must deal with Charles's numerous mistresses and bastard children, and also threats against her for being Catholic. When Charles dies, we learn about how she deals with the disasters of the succession and the Monmouth rebellion, and also the mounting prejudice she faces when William and Mary came to the throne. Fed up with England, she spends her remaining years back in Portugal.

Charles's and Catherine's relationship is my favourite part of the story. Catherine never had any children, thus skewing the succession (in favour of the Catholic James II). Charles was pressed by his advisors to divorce Catherine; he refused this suggestion and kept her safe, even though it was at the risk of the country. Also, he always defended her against his mistresses, she would always take precedence in his eyes. How adorable is that? It's certainly different than what I've read about with other English monarchs (ahem, Henry VIII).

Some interesting tidbits I found out about Catherine: she was the person who introduced the custom of drinking tea in England. The practice was virtually unheard of before she arrived. Can you imagine the country without its tea?! The English can also thank her for bringing the fork to tables. It is also speculated that Queens, the New York City borough, is named after her, though there is some debate about that.

This book just further reinforces the fact that I love Jean Plaidy! I recently bought *The Loves of Charles II*, which has another POV from Catherine (along with his mistresses, of whom you learn about in this book too). I'd even recommend this book to those who don't normally read historical fiction. It's a great book with plenty of action, culture, and a rather unconventional love story. 5 stars!

For those of you who have seen the Harry Potter films, remember Moaning Myrtle? Who can forget her whiny, simpering voice? Well, in *The Last King*, a British television series that chronicled Charles II's life as King, Catherine of Braganza was played by the same actress who played Moaning Myrtle (I also saw her in *Bridget Jones's Diary*....she sure has a wide range of characters). Surprisingly, she was AMAZING! Her portrayal of the queen is what truly made Catherine a favourite. (Speaking of Harry Potter nerdisms, Filch, Narcissa Malfoy, teenaged Tom Riddle and Oliver Wood are also in this series). Anyways, the entire mini-series about Charles II is wonderful, I highly recommend it.

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### **Margo Penhall says**

I found the historical detail and background fascinating, but Catherine was irritatingly insipid. Many times I felt like shaking her and telling her to wake up - really, she is Queen, isn't she? I find it hard to believe that anyone can be so naïve during the whole time she is Queen of England and then suddenly take over as Regent of Portugal. She comes across as an impossibly innocent victim of the entire Court of England, including her husband Charles II. So it was interesting but disappointing. I would love to read something about this Queen which really shows how she kept her position. She must have had some political instincts, understanding, followers or ability to manipulate. In this book she was too good to be real.

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### **Cayleigh says**

This is the story of Catherine of Braganza, the wife of King Charles II. I read a lot of novels about English I do believe I have read some stories of King Charles II and his (many) mistresses but this is one of the only ones I've read solely from Catholic wife Catherine's point of view. I liked it, and I will definitely be picking up another of Plaidy's many Queen's of England books but I didn't 100% connect with Catherine. How she was written it seemed as if every event was happening to her, but that she had absolutely no impact on which way the event would go. Typically I read books with much stronger female characters and Catherine's placidity grated my nerves a bit. Which is why I will try another of Plaidy's books, perhaps it was this particular Queen herself and not the writing. I suppose if one did not have too much of a presence in her time it can't be faked in a historical novel.

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### **A Miuda Geek says**

Li este livro com uma certa curiosidade em saber o que é que uma escritora inglesa teria a dizer ácerca de uma rainha inglesa, de origem portuguesa, e para mais uma rainha tão marcante quanto Catarina de Bragança. Após ler o romance de Isabel Stilwell, quiz fazer essa comparação.

Os livros são similares na sua perspectiva da relação de Carlos e Catarina, que, apesar da insaciabilidade do rei, era uma relação de amor e companheirismo: ela amava-o e ele procurava nela a calma, a devoção, o bom-senso que faltavam a tantas das suas amantes.

Só tive pena que não desenvolvesse um pouco mais em algumas partes, porque a infancia dela foi passada "a correr", as gravidezes e o sofrimento associado á perda de cada um dos bébés, a vinda dela para Portugal,no fim da vida, e a fase em que foi Regente, enquanto seu irmão estava doente.

É um livro de fácil leitura e compreensão, mesmo que não se saiba muito ácerca da época da Restauração em Inglaterra.

Gostei, mas só dei 3 estrelas porque me pareceu que faltou algo mais.

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### **Juliew. says**

I enjoyed this story of Catherine of Braganza's life. As the book begins we learn that Catherine is proposed as a bride for the prince of wales in England. But the government in england rises up to overthrow the monarchy making the marriage impossible for the now exiled Charles II. Yet Catherine's mother and Catherine herself hold out hope and after some years of waiting the marriage takes place. Catherine soon finds herself in a court without morals and with a husband who seems to have the least of them all. But Catherine slowly comes to realize through intrigue, deceit, plots and death she wishes to be no where else or with anyone else. I loved the ending.

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### **Judy says**

I am new to the Stuarts, and the previous novel I read (*Myself My Enemy*) was a tragic introduction to the Charleses. Catherine of Braganza is an unlikely heroine, the contrast between her innocence and Charles II's widespread experience could not be greater. She had some adjustments to make - but with all their efforts, she could not produce an heir, which fact endangered her position. After all, Anne Boleyn and Henry VIII weren't all that long before...

In spite of myself, I like Plaidy's first person narratives. This technique works well for Henrietta Maria in the previous reign described by the abovementioned novel, and is equally effective for Catherine of Braganza even though two women could hardly be more different. One can only have a lot of respect for Catherine in how she comports herself and faces the dangers that have arisen from the uncertainty of the succession. Charles is sympathetically portrayed through her eyes, and here we have a wonderful love story as well.

This may be among my top five Plaidys.

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### **Becky says**

I enjoyed reading Jean Plaidy's *The Merry Monarch's Wife*. Catherine of Braganza was the queen of Charles II. For those familiar with the reign of Charles II, you can imagine what a life she led for better or worse. The book seeks to capture her personal perspective of her husband, of her marriage, of her adopted country. (She's coming from Portugal to England.)

Plaidy's depiction has Catherine truly in love with the King, and oh-so-aware of his shortcomings. In her reckoning, Charles II could not help himself at all, he was completely incapable of fidelity. Readers catch glimpses here and there of Charles' many, many mistresses. But not as much as you might imagine. That is, the focus is on HER and not truly on him and his activities. She is aware of his favorites at any given time, and at times she's sought out in conversation by mistresses in and out of favor.

There is definitely a lot of POLITICS in *Merry Monarch's Wife*. Readers learn about various plots and threats and conspiracies. Readers meet men and women who are ambitious and manipulative and power-hungry.

I was familiar, in a way, with some of the details of his reign. But not of what life was like for her before and after. Before her arrival in England and after Charles II's death. This book tells a fairly complete story.

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### **Sonya Wanvig says**

Poor Catherine of Braganza. Considering the arguably most important job of an English queen hundreds of years ago was to produce a male heir, she was a failure. She carried none of her babies to term and there was no doubt that Catherine was the one to blame. Her husband, King Charles II had over a dozen children with

no less than four mistresses. However, God gave her chance to be the mother of her native country Portugal. After surviving the death of her husband and the abdication of the Catholic James II, she returned home after 30 years in England to rule as regent during the incapacitating illness of her brother, King Pedro. She defeated the Spanish and was loved in Portugal as the savior of the country from their ancient enemy, Spain. A terrific read.

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### **Hannah Wilkinson says**

I like historical fiction, but the way this story was told seemed more like a history book than a novel. It is a perfect example of the author telling me what is going on rather than showing me. The main character, Catherine from Portugal, repeats many of the same thoughts until I started scanning pages just to get through. She really doesn't do anything, or grow as a person. She is simply Charles II's wife and lets him do what he pleases. I know this is historically based, but there just didn't seem to be enough story to it. Some of the historical references, Captain Blood, and other events were interesting but nothing that really held my interest or kept me in any suspense.

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### **Vasilena says**

This one a bit deficient in comparison to the others, I felt like I couldn't "get" Catherine at all since all these inner emotions were so literal, there was no depth or nuance to anything. Same goes for the rest of the historical characters ... they were sadly without any personalisation, different from what we already know they literally said or did from historical docs.

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### **Sara G says**

I really enjoyed this book about Catherine of Braganza, the Portuguese wife of King Charles II of England. It's written in the form of a fictionalized memoir where she reflects on her long and interesting life. She's definitely a lesser known queen (I confess I didn't know much about her other than little bits from reading Forever Amber as a teenager!) and it was fascinating to read about everything happening during her life. After reading the really dull Sweet Lass of Richmond Hill by Plaidy recently, it was nice to read some of her better historical fiction.

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### **S says**

I did not finish this book - after 247 pages of practically nothing happening, it did not seem worth any more of my time. Much of the so-called plot takes place only through narratives that Charles tells Catherine in retrospect. She seems to live through nothing, experience nothing, do nothing, feel nothing, and think nothing. She is intensely dull as a character. Even Catherine's somewhat well-known loyalty to Charles is bland and feels hollow.

The first third or so was alright. After that, Ms. Plaidy would remind readers continually about the same facts. This is one of my pet peeves as far as novels go. We don't need to be reminded so very often that

Catherine is barren, or James becomes Catholic, or Charles dotes over this or that person. It simply felt to be an anemic tale about a queen whose story could say much about interpersonal relationships, but ended up saying nothing of interest or import at all.

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