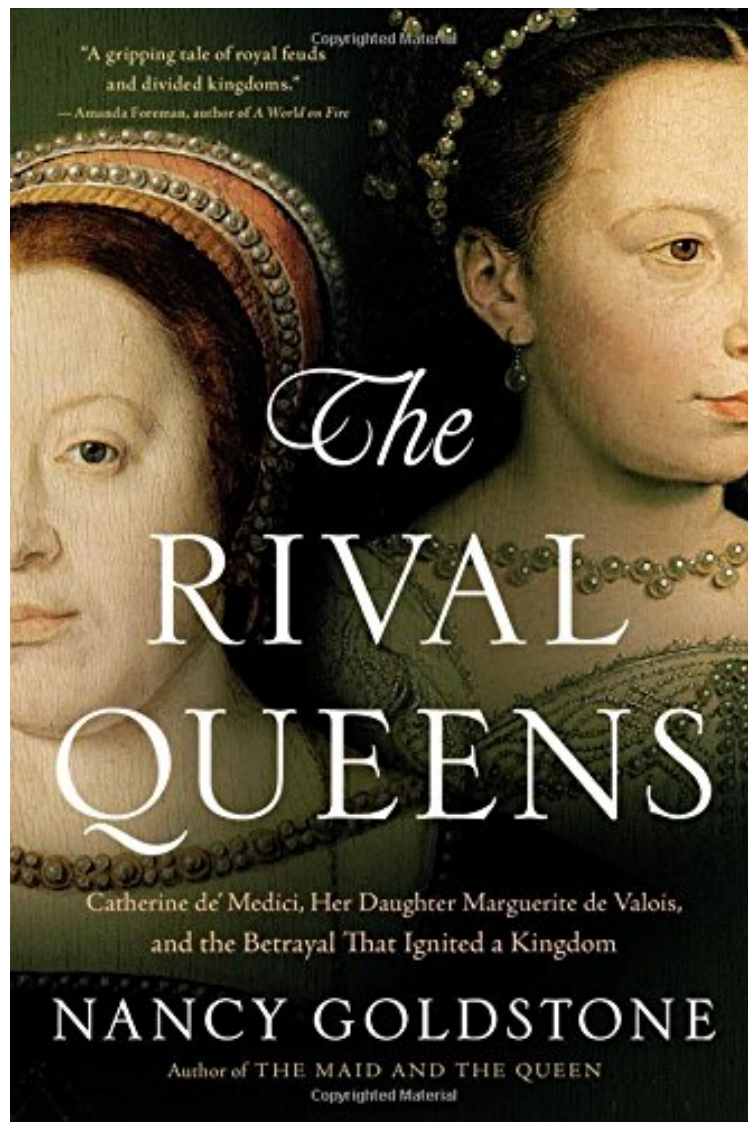


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## The Rival Queens: Catherine de' Medici, Her Daughter Marguerite de Valois, and the Betrayal that Ignited a Kingdom

*Nancy Goldstone*

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**Nancy Goldstone : The Rival Queens: Catherine de' Medici, Her Daughter Marguerite de Valois, and the Betrayal that Ignited a Kingdom** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Rival Queens: Catherine de' Medici, Her Daughter Marguerite de Valois, and the Betrayal that Ignited a Kingdom:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A wonderful book...By eledavf VivianThe author writes in a lively fashion, always taking care to be understood by the reader. The historical characters are clearly delineated, sometimes in only a few well-chosen words, and among the many Henrys and Henriess she is careful to distinguish one from another at all times, which most historians neglect to do. Her sardonic humor adds to the liveliness and the enjoyment of this history. This book gives an understanding of the rivalries among the French royal family, the Guise branch of the family, and the Navarre royal family, all of them contending bitterly either for the throne or to control the direction of the country particularly as to the struggle between Catholicism and Protestantism. Interestingly, the relationships among siblings in the French royal family itself were full of duplicity and jealousy. This history sets all of that out in far more detail than one perhaps ever encounters elsewhere. That is the great value of this book. Catherine de' Medici is usually depicted as meticulously and malevolently planning her every move, but here she is presented as tacking constantly to adapt to circumstances beyond her control, at first a survivor more than master of her fate. She became duplicitous from necessity rather than from enjoyment of double-dealing, but in the end she became a monster of duplicity. Particularly interesting is this author's contention that the young King Charles IX did indeed sanction the first, unsuccessful attempt upon Admiral Coligni's life but that he did not wish to order the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre. Heretofore I have always believed that he was not only implicated in that horror but was the chief culprit in collaboration with his mother, Catherine de' Medici. Yet this historian states that the massacre of thousands of Huguenots, though ordered by him, occurred only after many hours of unceasing insistence by his mother. Many of the details in this book are derived from Marguerite Queen of Navarre herself whose own writings provide so much of the substance and color. She reveals that she had never wanted to marry Henry of Navarre and that he much preferred his many lovers to her. This present biographer's view of the King of Navarre is exceedingly interesting. He is shown as a flawed human being and as a leader with many faults rather than as the peerless champion of Protestantism. I was totally surprised to learn the true story of Marguerite, so different from the version given in other history books where she is described in a paragraph or two as the center of a circle of cultivated ladies who created a society for poets and courtly lovers. This, in reality, was a relatively brief interlude in a tumultuous life; Marguerite's astonishing and often misguided existence was quite different. The turmoil and danger she suffered through is astonishing, and the fact that at last her own mother, Catherine de' Medici, wanted her to die for political reasons merely adds to the tragic dimensions of Marguerite's life as well as to the horrible reputation of her unnatural mother. The last quiet, happy years of Marguerite's life fill the reader with gratification. It is surprising and pleasing to learn that after a lifetime of storms and danger she was able to return to Paris, to the dignity she was born to. There she lived peacefully as an honored subject of a king, her former husband, who knew well how to show gratitude when it was richly deserved.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. I'm so glad i found this book. By wandaI've studied this time period a lot over the years but this is the first book on this subject in a long time that was so easy to read and kept my interest so much so that I got blurry-eyed staying up all night reading this. I couldn't put it down. This historical period is difficult to follow because there is so many political and military changes in a relatively short amount of time. Plus, there are numerous powerful men women who gain the military advantage through cunning, military talent, diplomatic expertise or downright lying only to lose their advantage due to lack of finances, promoting the wrong leader, or various and many other happenstances. Margot was no dummy; she constantly suprised me how she came up with a new ally or tactic to survive and she overcame any and all the odds she was up against. When she got backed into a corner she'd quickly rally and find not just a simple lifeline but a powerful alliance that allowed her to trump her opponent~and she had many virtually invincible enemies mainly her mother, Catherine De Medici, and her brother Henry III of France.

71 of 75 people found the following review helpful. Drops Reader Into Middle of 16th-Century French Court Politics By Lynne E. What really sets THE RIVAL QUEENS apart, is the readability. Far too many historical biographers write plodding, strictly chronological narratives that leave out nary a discovered fact. Not so with biographer Nancy Goldstone! Her introduction drops the reader immediately into the middle of 16th-Century French politics, by describing the arranged marriage of Marguerite de Valois, a devout Catholic, to Henry de Bourbon, a Huguenot; and by hinting at the assassinations of many members of the wedding party that are only days away. This biography really explains--quite painlessly--how court politics worked in the 16th century. It brings home to the reader just how hard it was, even for those of royal status (e.g., Queen of France Catherine de' Medici; Princess Marguerite de Valois) to maintain any semblance of power, or even to stay alive, amidst the constant espionage and intrigues of the French wars of religion. Even members of the royal family--brothers and sisters, parents and children--spied on and turned against one another on the basis of spies' reports, both true and false. Marguerite, in particular, suffered from a false report of her liaison with a courtier that ruined her reputation shortly after she left the royal nursery to attend the French court. Despite the importance of religion (Catholic or Protestant) to the devout rulers and populace of France, the 16th century French court was quite permissive about morality. Thus this dual biography entertains with accounts of various influential royal mistresses (e.g., Diane de Poitiers). Dianne de Poitiers actually coached Catherine de' Medici to help her provide King Henry II with the requisite heirs. The biography also shows with clarity what it was like to be a female member of a ruling family, a woman whose only perceived value lay in her ability to be married off in an advantageous-to-the-family political union. Only the most extraordinary women, like Queen Catherine and

Queen Marguerite, managed to escape that role and actually wield political power. This is a biography that makes you care about the characters, and about the unfolding nonfiction "plot". The writing is excellent, and I thoroughly enjoyed reading it. The fully-footnoted dual biography is supplemented by a useful map of France circa 1572, by a genealogical chart of the French royals, and by an excellent set of illustrations of paintings that depict the most important members of the French court, including the kings' mistresses.

The riveting true story of mother-and-daughter queens Catherine de' Medici and Marguerite de Valois, whose wildly divergent personalities and turbulent relationship changed the shape of their tempestuous and dangerous century. Set in magnificent Renaissance France, this is the story of two remarkable women, a mother and daughter driven into opposition by a terrible betrayal that threatened to destroy the realm. Catherine de' Medici was a ruthless pragmatist and powerbroker who dominated the throne for thirty years. Her youngest daughter Marguerite, the glamorous "Queen Margot," was a passionate free spirit, the only adversary whom her mother could neither intimidate nor control. When Catherine forces the Catholic Marguerite to marry her Protestant cousin Henry of Navarre against her will, and then uses her opulent Parisian wedding as a means of luring his followers to their deaths, she creates not only savage conflict within France but also a potent rival within her own family. Rich in detail and vivid prose, Goldstone's narrative unfolds as a thrilling historical epic. Treacherous court politics, poisonings, inter-national espionage, and adultery form the background to a story that includes such celebrated figures as Elizabeth I, Mary, Queen of Scots, and Nostradamus. *The Rival Queens* is a dangerous tale of love, betrayal, ambition, and the true nature of courage, the echoes of which still resonate.

"A highly dramatic dual biography.... If serious history readers believe that Tudor England is the only place where family and religious conflict at the highest level makes riveting reading matter, those folks need to take a close look across the English Channel and see what was transpiring at the same time in the French court.... The French contemporary to Elizabeth I was Queen Catherine de' Medici, widow of King Henri II and mother to three kings after him.... Tudor struggles pale in comparison! Read this along with Antonia Fraser's classic *Mary Queen of Scots*." Brad Hooper, *Booklist* (Starred) "This is a story of espionage, assassination, intrigue, and chicanery but also one that poignantly reminds readers of the vulnerabilities faced by women of the age.... Readers are sure to be captivated by the lush details of these women's lives." *Library Journal* "Goldstone's witty comments make this historical family drama as easy to read as the best fiction, but it's all the more tragic for being true.... Goldstone upends conventional thought with this well-researched and well-written book." *Publishers Weekly* (Starred) "A thrilling tale packed with historical details and shocking revelations. Nancy Goldstone writes with cinematic clarity and eloquently brings to life two indomitable women whose ambitions changed the course of European history." Ivana Lowell, author of *Why Not Say What Happened?* "Nancy Goldstone leads her reader with a very sure hand through the most dramatic events of Renaissance France. Her narrative is so gripping that *The Rival Queens* unfolds like a thriller." Anka Muhlstein, author of *Monsieur Proust's Library* "The *Rival Queens* is a gripping tale of royal feuds and divided kingdoms. Goldstone has lovingly restored the reputation of Marguerite de Valois; revealing her to be a woman of passion and drive whose fierce loyalties burned bright until the day she died." Amanda Foreman, author of *A World on Fire* and *Georgiana* "[Goldstone] spins a tangled tale of rivalry, ambition, and, especially--for the rare women leaders of the time--sheer self-preservation... Goldstone has a remarkable handle on these often Byzantine royal machinations. History brought to vivid life in the characters of these women of purpose." Kirkus **SPRAISE FOR THE MAID AND THE QUEEN:** "A dual biography of two fascinating medieval women with the descriptive energy of a novel." *USA Today* "Attention, 'Game of Thrones' fans: The most enjoyably sensational aspects of medieval politics---double-crosses, ambushes, bizarre personal obsessions, lunacy and naked self-interest---are in abundant evidence." Laura Miller, *Salon* "A lively, fast-paced and fascinating account of Joan's story, weaving together the labyrinthine intrigues of medieval politics, the real story behind a medieval fairy tale and the astonishing events that led a young peasant girl from the command of an army to a fiery death at the hands of the English." *BookPage* "With compelling storytelling, Goldstone colorfully weaves together the tales of these two women... whose powerful personalities and deep allegiance to France helped shape the country's future." *Publishers Weekly* "Vivid...astounding...as gripping as ever . . . [A] knowledgeable and accessible account of a turning point in French history." Kirkus s "Goldstone's entertaining narrative will intrigue general readers interested in the Middle Ages...or biographies of royal figures or women in history." *Library Journal* "Goldstone adds an enlightening new chapter to a legendary saga and rescues another unjustly neglected woman from the dust pile of conventional history." *Booklist* About the Author Nancy Goldstone's previous books include *The Maid and the Queen: The Secret History of Joan of Arc*; *Four Queens: The Provenal Sisters Who Ruled Europe*; and *The Lady Queen: The Notorious Reign of Joanna I, Queen of Naples, Jerusalem, and Sicily*. She has also coauthored five books with her husband, Lawrence Goldstone. She lives in Sagaponack, New York.