



# Women in Eighteenth Century Europe

By Margaret Hunt

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## Women in Eighteenth Century Europe By Margaret Hunt

Was the century of Voltaire also the century of women? In the eighteenth century changes in the nature of work, family life, sexuality, education, law, religion, politics and warfare radically altered the lives of women. Some of these developments caused immense confusion and suffering; others greatly expanded women's opportunities and worldview – long before the various women's suffrage movements were more than a glimmer on the horizon. This study pays attention to queens as well as commoners; respectable working women as well as prostitutes; women physicists and mathematicians as well as musicians and actresses; feminists as well as their critics. The result is a rich and morally complex tale of conflict and tragedy, but also of achievement.

The book deals with many regions and topics often under-represented in general surveys of European women, including coverage of the Balkans and both European Turkey and Anatolia, of Eastern Europe, of European colonial expansion (particularly the slave trade) and of Muslim, Eastern Orthodox, and Jewish women's history. Bringing *all* of Europe into the narrative of early modern women's history challenges many received assumptions about Europe and women in past times, and provides essential background for dealing with issues of diversity in the Europe of today.

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#### Review

*Margaret Hunt has given us a fascinating picture of the lives of women and men in eighteenth-century Europe, all the richer because she draws examples from Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and the Caribbean colonies. Women emerge from her pages in all their variety: slaves, merchants and queens; Protestant reformers, Jewish storytellers, and Sufi mystics. A wonderful read!*

Natalie Zemon Davis, Princeton University

*This is a comprehensive and deeply perceptive study of women's experience across the European continent into Russia and the Ottoman Islamic East. Its richly learned exploration of women's lives across religions and cultures offers a persuasive argument for the reality of early modern Europe as 'Big Europe'. This is a landmark work.*

**Madeline Zilfi, University of Maryland**

*Hunt's book offers a fascinating and enriching picture of women in eighteenth century Europe. The study...provides a vivid fresco of the social, economic, cultural, religious and political life of women from all social groups: from queens and aristocrats to women from the middle and lower classes.*

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#### From the Back Cover

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### About the Author

Margaret R. Hunt is Associate Professor of History and Women's and Gender Studies at Amherst College.

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