

Madame du Châtelet Newtonian Physicist

Learning Leaflet: Women in Science

Lynx Open Ed

History of Science Collections

University of Oklahoma Libraries



Francesco Algarotti, *Il Newtonianismo per le dame* ("Newtonianism for Women"; Naples, 1737)

Exhibit: Galileo's World | Gallery: New Physics | No.: 34

Download learning leaflets at lynx-open-ed.org; read more in the Exhibit Guide (iBook Store).

Are they talking about physics as they stroll through the garden?



Madame du Châtelet: Newtonian Physicist

Madame du Châtelet's full name was *Gabrielle-Emilie le Tonnelier de Breteuil, Marquise du Châtelet*. At a time when few people could read Newton's masterwork of physics, the *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, with understanding, she translated it into French.

Madame du Châtelet also defended Newton in the Newton-Leibniz controversy. She submitted a work on the nature of fire to a contest sponsored by the *Académie des Sciences*. Voltaire, her lover, also prepared an entry. Although neither won the prize, both of their contributions were published with those of the winners in 1739.

Madame du Châtelet is shown on a frontispiece in Algarotti's popular introduction to Newtonian science. Algarotti went through many editions and aided in the dissemination of Newtonian ideas on the European continent. Like Fontenelle's *Plurality of Worlds*, which popularized the earlier science of Descartes, this was written as an entertaining dialogue.

How did women at this time learn Newtonian science?

Kerry Magruder and Brent Purkapple

PRINCIPES
MATHÉMATIQUES
DE LA
PHILOSOPHIE NATURELLE,
Par feue Madame la Marquise DU CHATELLET.
TOME PREMIER.



DISSERTATION
SUR LA NATURE
ET
LA PROPAGATION
DU FEU.

*Ignea convexi vis, & sine pondere caeli
Emicuit, summâque locum sibi legit in arce.
Ovid.*



lynx-open-ed.org
[@lynx_open_ed](https://twitter.com/lynx_open_ed)

[#galileosworld](https://twitter.com/galileosworld)
[@ouhoscollection](https://twitter.com/ouhoscollection)

