

Marie Antoinette



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出版者:Routledge

出版时间:2003-03-07

装帧:Paperback

isbn:9780415933957

Marie-Antoinette is one of the most fascinating and controversial figures in all of French history. Married to the heir to the French throne at age fourteen, Marie-Antoinette was at the center of public attention during the final tumultuous years of the Old Regime and the French Revolution. For a variety of reasons explored in this volume - all of which revolved around her gender - Marie-Antoinette came to represent the monarchy as it came under increasing attack. As both a woman and queen, she became a privileged site of the political contestation and criticism that characterized the end of the eighteenth century in France.

Rather than retell the story of her life, the contributors to this volume reveal how crucial political and cultural contests were enacted "on the body of the queen" and on the complex identity of Marie-Antoinette. They explore the difficulties of Marie-Antoinette's position as a woman, a foreigner, and a queen in the final decades of the eighteenth century and help us to understand the waves of pornography and accusations of lesbianism, incest, and treason launched against her. Taken together, these essays suggest that it is precisely because Marie-Antoinette represented the contradictions in the social, political and gender systems of her era that, through her, we can both learn about the French past and shed new light on questions of gender,

sexuality, and female power that continue to trouble us today.

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