



A Serious Proposal to the Ladies

By Mary Astell

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Mary Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* is one of the most important and neglected works advocating the establishment of women's academies. Its reception was so controversial that Astell responded with a lengthy sequel, also in this volume. The cause of great notoriety, Astell's *Proposal* was imitated by Defoe in his "An Academy for Women," parodied in the *Tatler*, satirized on the stage, plagiarized by Bishop Berkeley, and later mocked by Gilbert and Sullivan in *Princess Ida*.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Patricia Springborg has given us a thoroughly contextualized edition of Mary Astell’s *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies: Parts I and II*. Her explanatory annotations as well as her knowledgeable exposition of Astell’s philosophical positions make available again these landmark texts...and the well-chosen supplementary materials demonstrate Astell’s immediate impact on the intellectual circles of late seventeenth-century London.” ? **Ruth Perry, MIT**

“This new edition of Astell’s *A Serious Proposal* offers readers welcome access to the eloquence, argumentative skill, and wit of Astell’s powerful defense of women’s education and of their intellectual abilities.” ? **Martine Watson Brownley, Emory University**

“Springborg’s introduction clearly places Astell’s work in the context of two important early eighteenth-century crosscurrents, the ‘woman’ question and the debate over empirical rationalism. She grounds Astell’s writings in the tradition of imagining intellectual communities of and for women but Springborg also usefully sets them in the context of the larger philosophical debates over Locke’s epistemology of environmental conditioning and psychological sensationalism. Thus, Astell takes her place again among the voices of the Cambridge Platonists and the supporters of the Port Royal School in this defining debate touching education and politics, both national and domestic. The inclusion of four appendices (Drake’s “Essay in Defence of the Female Sex,” Defoe’s “An Essay upon Projects,” and two essays from the *Tatler* commenting on Astell) make this a splendid package.” ? **Margaret J.M. Ezell, Texas A & M University**

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