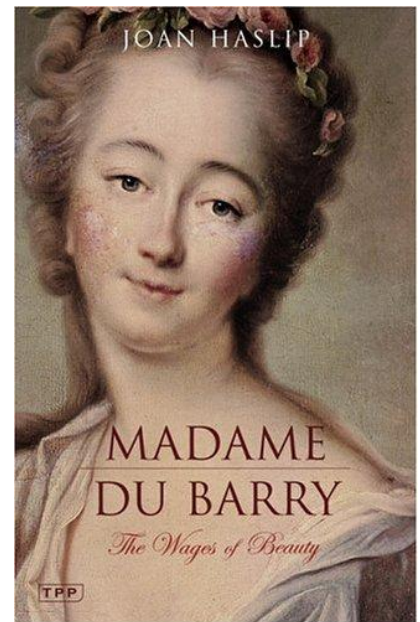


Reading Guide:
Madame du Barry:
The Wages of Beauty
Joan Haslip (2005)



1. For those of you that read *Queen of Fashion* by Caroline Weber, our January selection, do you have a difference perception of Madame du Barry?
2. We learn that Madame du Barry had influence over the affairs of the state: she encouraged the king to appoint the Duc d'Aiguillon, remove the Baron de Breteuil from his post in Vienna and replace him with Prince Louis de Rohan. Does this surprise you? Why do you think the King allowed for her to influence policy?
3. Throughout the text, Haslip notes the various artists that Madame du Barry purchased from or sponsored. Why is this important? Is this du Barry's lasting legacy? The cultivation of 18th century art?
4. In Chapter 12 we learn that a blackmailer, Théveneau de Morande, plans to sell *The Secret Memoirs of a Women of the Town: the Adventures of the Comtesse du Barry from the Cradle to the Bed of Honour*. Why would this have shocked the public? Were they not aware of her past? Did the roué really fool the public?
5. In Chapter 15, Haslip notes that at her exile from Versailles, it is one of the last times her humble origins are revealed. Why is this? Why was it convenient to remember them and then to forget?
6. Why do you think Madame du Barry was traveling between England and France? Was it to reclaim her jewels, or do you think she was a spy?

About Joan Haslip

Joan Haslip (1912-1994) was an author of historical books, often focusing on European royalty. She was born in London and educated in London, Paris and Florence. Her first book, *Out of Focus*, appeared in 1931; among her other notable publications are *Lady Hester Stanhope* (1934) and *Parnell* (1937). She also wrote for the *London Mercury*, the *Daily Mail* and *Evening News*, and the *Illustrated London News*.

She also worked for the Italian section of the BBC from 1940 to 1944. Her books were generally regarded as accurate and fairly complete although at times falling prey to "outdated interpretations".¹

Other related texts:

- ***Love and Louis XIV: The Women in the Life of the Sun King***, Antonia Fraser (2007) | The Sun King was known for his courtesans, and his sumptuous lifestyle. Fraser explores their influence on Louis XIV and the culture in France in the 17th century.
- ***Madame de Pompadour***, Nancy Mitford (2001) | Before Madame du Barry, there was the famous Madame de Pompadour, favorite mistress to the king.
- ***Madame de Pompadour: Mistress of France***, Christine Pevitt Algrant (2003) | The story of a woman groomed to become the mistress of a rich, high ranking man, and how she was able to enchant the king, as well as influence France.

¹ Courtesy of Wikipedia.org; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joan_Haslip