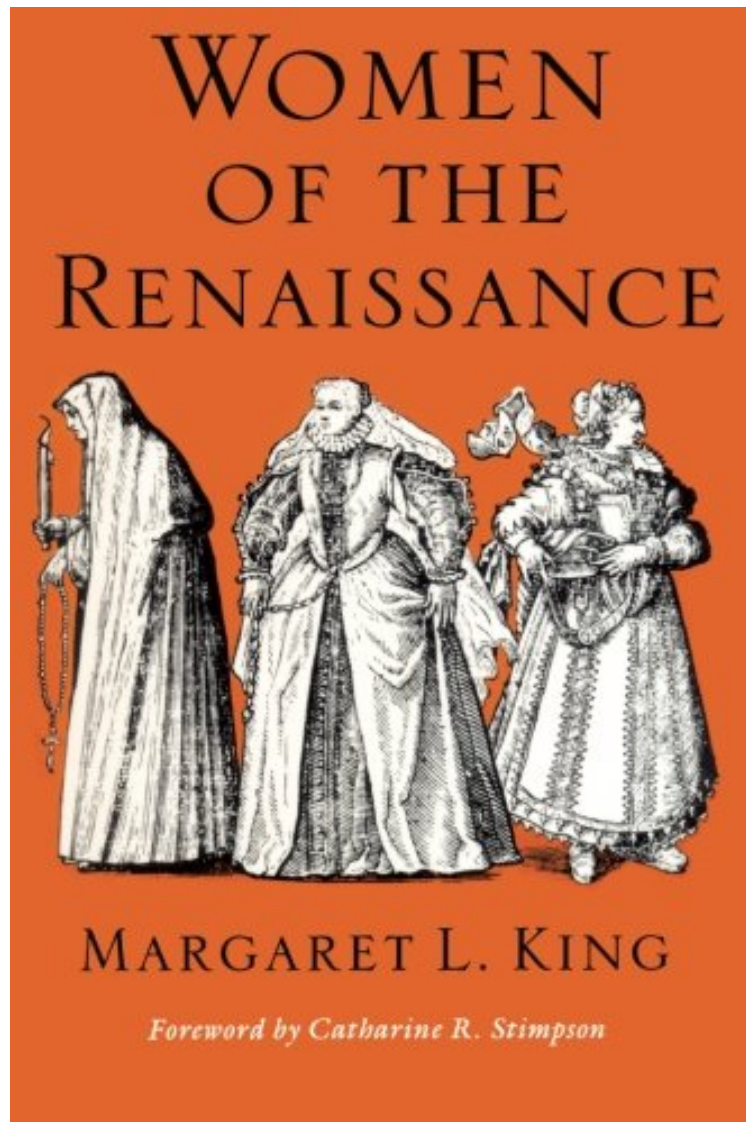


[FREE] Women of the Renaissance (Women in Culture and Society)

Women of the Renaissance (Women in Culture and Society)

Margaret L. King

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Margaret L. King : Women of the Renaissance (Women in Culture and Society) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Women of the Renaissance (Women in Culture and Society):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Authoritative, Readable Survey of Women During RenaissanceBy Mark LeeIt's a real treat to come away from being compelled to read a book feeling that you got more, much more, than you had expected. This was a required text for an upper division college course I took.Margaret King knows her stuff. I've studied the Renaissance in other classes, so had touched upon gender issues already, but King's work filled

in many empty spaces. Her thesis is that although socially women didn't gain much (or even lost ground), something important happened within women's minds during the Renaissance. Options were limited for women during fourteenth through seventeenth centuries. Roles were generally defined by men or faith (ostensibly controlled by men); wife, mother, celibate religious, spinster, witch. But even these categories, King shows, were full of complexities. Women, other than nuns, shouldn't be taught to read, rather spin and sew. Women couldn't be trusted with too much knowledge. Even the Greek term for "womb," hysteros, gave a clue to a woman's basic "hysteria." Often, women bought into this paradigm and were their own worst enemies. But King shows that the scene was more complex than that. Some fathers taught daughters Latin, Greek, philosophy. Heretic nuns wrote private treatises from within the shelter of their cells. Men marvelled at living s, such as Joan of Arc who walked the thin line between deification and devilment. Before Joan burned, Christine de Pizan wrote about a "City of Ladies" where femininity would be protected, and no man could cause hurt. This is a beautiful book and should be read by historians, feminists, and anyone who loves to see flowers grow through cracks in inhospitable terrain.

1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. I would look elsewhere....

By Ball State Grad-RMN

The title of this monograph well describes its subject: the lives of women during the Renaissance. However, Margaret L. King pays close attention to the roles available to women in the family, church, and high society. This text's intended audience is the general academic community. This book's purpose is to clarify the nature of women's lives during Renaissance. King's primary thesis is that women did not have a Renaissance. The realms of family, church, and high culture all relegated Renaissance women to subservience in some way. In the family, women were essentially their husband or father's property. In most cases, the church viewed women in a similar fashion. Conversely, in high culture, Renaissance women had a chance of wielding power and receiving education. King relies on diaries, religious texts, trial transcripts, medical literature, and several personal letters to support this argument. This book examines the Renaissance, defined by the author as the period from 1350 to 1650. Subjects discussed include the cultural, economic, and political circumstances of women. The first chapter is titled "Daughters of Eve: Women in the Family." Here, King asserts that Eve's punishment in Genesis epitomizes the lives of Renaissance women. According to this story, the punishment for Eve's sin is that all women have to endure labor pain and remain subservient to men. Similarly, a Renaissance woman's worth is dependent on her ability to produce several children in succession and remain submissive to her male family members. King goes on to discuss a woman's progression from daughter, to wife, and eventually to a widow. She ends this chapter by discussing the woman as a worker. Here, King's main argument is that women's public labor was mostly menial and became increasingly restricted as time went on. In chapter two, "Daughters of Mary: Women and the Church," King examines Renaissance women's role in the church. Unlike women in the family, the lives of women in the church do not revolve around bearing children. However, women of this realm still remain nominally subservient to men. In discussing women and the church, King starts by examining women who live in convents and those who live in autonomous and uncloistered female religious communities. King also spends a moderate amount of time discussing women and the reformation. She argues that while Catholicism provided an alternative to family life in the form of a convent, Protestantism provides no such choice. King ends the chapter by discussing witch-hunts, which she likens to genocide. In chapter three, "Virgo Et Virago: Women and High Culture," King examines the role of Renaissance women in the upper class. These women enjoyed better access to education and some attended school. King also mentions a few rare Renaissance examples of female rulers. All of these educated and powerful women upset the gender roles for women in Renaissance society. Some of the words used to describe these women include , armed maiden, and crone. At the end of this chapter, King examines primary sources created by Christine de Pizan, Modesta de Pozzo, and Mary Astell. Using these sources, King finishes her book by examining the way women's ideas about themselves changed during the Renaissance. Specifically, they began seeing themselves as equal to men. This book does carry out its purpose of clarifying women's lives during the Renaissance. Some of the strengths of this book include extensive use of primary evidence and the author's knowledge of the existing literature on this subject. It also has an extensive bibliography and index. Nonetheless, this text has significant faults. The most significant fault is the complete lack of a proper conclusion. King's entire summary consists of two paragraphs on the last two pages of the third chapter. King also continually jumps from one side of Europe to the other. Occasionally, she even discusses women in America. This disorients the reader and inhibits the academic usefulness of this text. Due to these shortcomings, the reviewer is hesitant to suggest this book as a good resource.

15 of 15 people found the following review helpful. A great resource of women's history

By Rush Mitchell

I was required to read this book for a History of the Renaissance 1300 course. Far from a dry text, I found this book to be an enlightening view into the roles of women in Renaissance society, the social mores and opinions that restricted them, and the many ways in which some circumvented society in order to express themselves (there is a lot more there than you think!). It is full of primary data, some of which is only available in Italian and other original languages, and translated for this book by the author. One who reads this book will come away with a more complete and well-rounded view of Renaissance women's lives, (at their best and their worst) and a greater respect for those who lived them. In response to the previous reviewer, and as a warning to those looking for an "easy read". This is an excellent source of fact-based material on the time period and its inhabitants, not a pre-digested, dime-tour of the Renaissance. But for those who are open to a little intellectual stimulation will find this a

powerful, eye-opening experience worth their time.

In this informative and lively volume, Margaret L. King synthesizes a large body of literature on the condition of western European women in the Renaissance centuries (1350-1650), crafting a much-needed and unified overview of women's experience in Renaissance society. Utilizing the perspectives of social, church, and intellectual history, King looks at women of all classes, in both usual and unusual settings. She first describes the familial roles filled by most women of the day as mothers, daughters, wives, widows, and workers. She turns then to that significant fraction of women in, and acted upon, by the church: nuns, uncloistered holy women, saints, heretics, reformers, and witches, devoting special attention to the social and economic independence monastic life afforded them. The lives of exceptional women, those warriors, queens, patronesses, scholars, and visionaries who found some other place in society for their energies and strivings, are explored, with consideration given to the works and writings of those first protesting female subordination: the French Christine de Pizan, the Italian Modesta da Pozzo, the English Mary Astell. Of interest to students of European history and women's studies, King's volume will also appeal to general readers seeking an informative, engaging entrance into the Renaissance period.

From Library Journal King claims only to "visit" Renaissance women in their world, but she manages far more. She evaluates the evolution of Western European women's circumstances and their place in history. Although divided into three distinct chapters--Women in Families, Women in the Church, and finally Women in High Society--her narrative constantly correlates the status of the Renaissance woman to male society at large. She never allows the reader to lose sight of the larger historical picture, as she appraises evidence from the ninth to the 18th centuries. Even when immersing the reader in statistical data, the personalities of the period are not lost; King is dealing with real people and does so with sensitivity and purpose. The copious footnotes and extensive bibliography will aid scholars in pursuing any tangential avenue. This book is highly recommended for European history and women's studies collections in academic libraries.- Claibourne G. Williams, Bluefield State Coll. Lib., W. Va. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc.