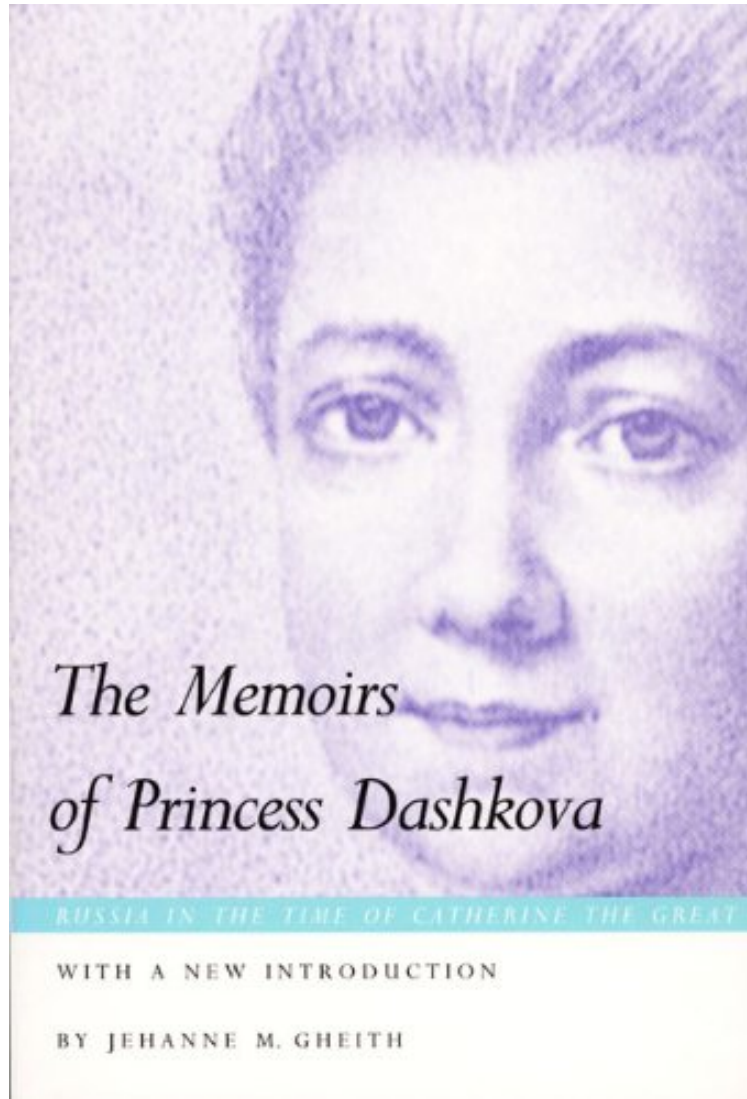


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The Memoirs of Princess Dashkova

Ekaterina Romanovna Dashkova
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Ekaterina Romanovna Dashkova (1743–1810), Russian princess, playwright, author, President of the Academy of Sciences, and founder and Director of the Russian Academy, was one of the first women in Europe to hold public office. Her memoir, among the earliest examples of autobiography in Russia, is part of what has become a long and powerful tradition of autobiographical writing by Russian women. It offers a rare glimpse into the life of a strong and outspoken public figure who was well recognized in much of her own time for her potent intellect but who died in isolation and has largely been forgotten today. Originally written in French, first published in English, and long out of print, Dashkova's *Memoirs* tell the story of a woman who at age eighteen played an important role in the coup that brought Catherine the Great to the throne. The relationship between these two women, often tense, is a central theme throughout this story. Dashkova, occupying the highly unusual position of both stateswoman and mother, also reveals her own path between the demands and limitations of the "private" and "public" spheres of her society. She provides a view of the expectations of Russian aristocratic women, the possibilities available to them, and the ways in which gender roles were conceived in the eighteenth century. With a new introduction by Jehanne M Gheith, *The Memoirs of Princess Dashkova* will renew interest in the life of a fascinating woman for students of Russian history, women's studies, and eighteenth-century studies. It will be a significant text for those engaged in the cross-cultural study of the traditions of women's autobiographical writing.

"Dashkova's life of extremes—fame and oblivion—and her candid self-revelation make this work interesting to all readers of female autobiography and Russian history."—Barbara Heldt, University of British Columbia