

SONJA GRECKOL

## Emilie Explains Newton To Voltaire

Gabrielle Emilie le Tonnelier de Breteuil  
du Chatelet (1706–1749)

Matter puzzled me—gravity, the universe  
I explained fire, bodies in motion, proposed  
From experiment that matters' force  
Is something greater than equal and opposed.  
We made what was to be; seared in intellect  
Multiplied forces, inspired our passion  
But did not anticipate my body's project,  
When without recourse but with conviction,  
I face mere months to parcel this work.  
Then dark, I will sluice the leak that drains  
Women from this earth, diseased in childbirth  
There is no special pleading; it wastes my gains  
When on the clock face of this belly's girth  
This mind, our coupling, go to earth.

*Emilie Du Chatelet translated and commented upon Newton's Principia. She completed the manuscript three days before she gave birth and died five days later.*