



## *Misogyny in Anne Sophie Swetchine (1782-1857)*

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In her treatise on old age, Mme Swetchine criticizes society's mistreatment of older women as the symptom of a deeper misogyny. Whereas older men are often recognized for their accomplishments, older women are dismissed as useless. A certain contempt denies older women their dignity: "There is no sadder spectacle than that of an old woman stripped of the consideration and respect attached to the dignity of a serious life" (1875: 57). Older women are routinely ignored by poets, artists, and philosophers, even by the clergy. The only virtue considered proper for them is abnegation: "The only social virtue for the elderly woman, the only virtue corresponding to her true role on earth, is self-abnegation" (1875: 59). Older women are expected to die to themselves and to make no claims on the attention of others because society considers them as without value. Self-effacement is the logical destiny of the sex society reduces to silence.

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**Keywords:**

abnegation, aging, misogyny, virtue, women