

Introduction

Literary Circles and the Inscription of the *Querelle des femmes*

It is no insult . . . to say that the souls of women are not as purged of the passions as those of men or as versed in contemplation as Pietro has said those which are to taste divine love must be. Thus do we not read that any woman has ever received this grace, but we do read of many men who have

Signor Gaspare

But women would not be surpassed by men in the slightest as far as this is concerned: for Socrates himself confessed that all the mysteries of love that he knew had been revealed to him by Diotima, and the angel who pierced St. Francis with the fire of love has also made several women of our own time worthy of the same seal.

Magnifico Giuliano

Baldesar Castiglione, *The Courtier*¹

The roots of the literary quarrel known as the *Querelle des femmes* have been traced to Christine de Pizan's objection to the portrayal of women in the *Roman de la rose* (Guillaume de Lorris, ca. 1236; Jean de Meung's continuation, ca. 1276), which she voiced in her *Epître au dieu d'amours* (1399).² It is a debate that helped to nurture literary production throughout the early modern period. During the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the *querelle* continued unabated, with fresh skirmishes breaking out in Continental and English literary society. While numerous treatises, pamphlets, sermons, and poems directly address issues from the *querelle*, references to such issues also permeate literature that is not primarily polemical. In short, the *querelle* provided *topoi* for most genres of early modern writing. Moreover, during the period addressed in this study, approximately 1530–1650, it was inextricably related to perceptions of women defying traditional mores that included provocative behaviors by the *cortigiane oneste*, or honest courtesans, of Italy, the early Italian actresses, and the ladies of the French and English courts and literary circles. Such women were admired for their humanist educations and

¹ Baldesar Castiglione, *The Courtier* (1528), trans. George Bull (London: Penguin, 1976), 343–4.

² With this work and others, including *Le Livre de la cité des dames* (1405), Pizan participated in the early skirmish of the *Querelle des femmes* referred to as the *Querelle de la rose*. See Charity Willard, *Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works* (New York: Persea, 1984), 73–89.

their abilities as poets, musicians, orators, and conversationalists, but some were also reviled for their behaviors in matters regarding love and marriage and for their breaching of traditional gender boundaries.³ The combination of admiration and dismay acted as a catalyst for numerous writers of the period.

The agonistic tradition in rhetoric, both oral and written, fueled the “praise or blame” patterns in which such writers engaged.⁴ Women were typically praised for extraordinary merits or blamed for nefarious faults. The fame of those included among the traditionally “good” women who participated in salon and academic society or who were simply lauded for great learnedness spread widely during this period. Evelyne Berriot-Salvadore reminds us that in the catalogue of influential learned women in the argument on “l’excellence des femmes” from *Paradoxes* (1553), Charles Estienne includes two female academicians and poets, “une Marquisanna de Pesquière” (Vittoria Colonna) and “une Veronica Gambara.”⁵ Similarly, in his dedication of Pernette du Guillet’s *Rymes* (1545) to the women of Lyon, Antoine de Moulin attempts to spark a sense of “international rivalry” by telling them that “they should be inspired by Pernette’s example to ‘animate themselves in letters’ to compete for ‘the great and undying praise that the ladies of Italy have acquired for themselves today.’”⁶ Hilarion de Coste pronounces that “Madame de Retz” (Claude-Catherine de Clermont) and “la duchesse de Camerino Catherine Cibo” are the most learned ladies of their respective countries, France and Italy.⁷ Moreover, in a letter to his daughters, “À mes filles touchant les femmes doctes de nostre siècle,” Théodore Agrippa d’Aubigné (1551–1630) includes praise of the *maréchale* de Retz and Madame de Lignerolles (Louise de Cabriane de la Guyonnière), recalling an occasion when they debated with each other during a meeting of the French academy. He also includes “la Marquise de Pesquiere” (Vittoria Colonna) and the celebrated actress, poet, and academician, “Izabella Andrei” (Isabella Andreini), as well as other learned ladies in Europe and Queen

³ By “traditional gender boundaries,” I mean the idealized standards of behavior for women of the time, specifically that they were to be silent, chaste, and obedient to male authority.

⁴ The term *agon* indicates, in general, a contest. In the tradition of Greek tragedy, it refers to a debate in which the chorus takes sides with those arguing. For a discussion of the agonistic tradition, see Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Routledge, 1982), 110–11. Ong examines the antithetical nature of rhetoric, as well as the “praise or blame” pattern that develops in part from the tradition of the *agon* in Greek tragedy, 111.

⁵ Evelyne Berriot-Salvadore, *Les femmes dans la société française de la Renaissance* (Genève: Droz, 1990), 351.

⁶ Antoine de Moulin is quoted in Ann Rosalind Jones’s *The Currency of Eros: Women’s Love Lyric in Europe, 1540–1620* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 83.

⁷ Hilarion de Coste is quoted in Edouard Frémy’s *L’Académie des derniers Valois, 1887* (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1969), 159.

Elizabeth in England.⁸ By the mid-sixteenth to early seventeenth centuries, learned women across the Continent and in England had clearly earned international reputations, though not all of them were referred to as positive *exempla*.

John Calvin labeled the celebrated poet and *Lyonnaise* salon *habituée* Louise Labé a common prostitute (*plebeia meretrix*);⁹ Edward Denny called Lady Mary Wroth of the Sidney circle a “Hermaphrodite in show, in deed a monster.”¹⁰ Veronica Franco, indeed a courtesan, but one of the most famous for her learning, her poetry, and her association with the *Accademia della Fama* of Venice, was called a “Donna reduta mostro in carne humana” [a woman reduced to a monster made of human flesh] by Maffio Venier.¹¹ There were words for women who transgressed the boundaries of behavior considered appropriate by the moral majority of their times, usually “monster” or “whore.” Yet, the matter is complex. Labé’s *Oeuvres* (1555) include *Ecritz de divers Poetes à la louenge de Louize Labé*, a series of twenty-four poems written in praise of Labé. In his dedication of *The Alchemist* (1612) to Wroth, Jonson calls her “The Grace, and Glory of women.”¹² Moreover, some women who exhibited arguably transgressive behaviors, such as the actresses Isabella Andreini, Vittoria Pisimi, and Vicenza Armani, or the ladies associated with the French court, known for its scandals and intrigues, such as Claude-Catherine de Clermont, the *maréchale* de Retz, or Madeleine de L’Aubespine, Madame de Villeroy, received mainly praise and adulation. The same is true for Mary Sidney Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke, who is believed to have taken a lover in later years, yet whose literary reputation remained spotless.¹³ The historical reception of such women clearly varied

⁸ Agrippa d’Aubigné, “À mes filles touchant les femmes doctes de nostre siècle,” *Oeuvres*, ed. Henri Weber et al. (Bruges: Gallimard, 1969), 852–3.

⁹ Calvin’s comment is from his pamphlet, “Gratulatio ad venerabilem presbyterum dominum Gabrielum de Saconay . . .” (1561) quoted in Charles Boy, “Recherches sur la vie et les œuvres de Louise Labé,” *Oeuvres de Louise Labé*, 2 volumes (Paris, 1887; reprint, Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1968), 2: 15, 101. See also Jones, *The Currency of Eros*, 157 and Jeanne Prine, “Poet of Lyon: Louise Labé,” in *Women Writers of the Renaissance and Reformation*, ed. Katharina M. Wilson (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 132.

¹⁰ See “To Pamphilia from the father-in-law of Seralius.” Denny’s poem is reproduced in Josephine Roberts’s introduction to *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 32–3. An alternative title given to the poem that appears in some seventeenth-century commonplace books is “To the Lady Mary Wroth for writing the Countess of Montgomeryes Urania,” 33.

¹¹ Venier is quoted and translated in Margaret Rosenthal’s *The Honest Courtesan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 188–9.

¹² See *The Alchemist* in *Ben Jonson*, 7 vols., ed. C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), 5: 289. See also Roberts, introduction to *The Poems*, 16.

¹³ In their introduction to Mary Sidney’s *The Tragedy of Antonie*, S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies write, “What we do know is that, when the Earl of Pembroke died in 1601, Mary Sidney chose not to remarry, taking on the role of virtuous widow. But even in this final piece of self-fashioning, the Countess continued to juggle orthodox and

according to the levels of anxiety that they induced in specific male writers who made public their judgments, or, in the cases of powerfully influential women, such as Retz and Pembroke, how much their favor was curried. On one hand, as the cases of Labé, Wroth, and Franco suggest, the act of publishing provocative original works seemed to tip the scales for some critics, who then seized the opportunity to rail; on the other, as Pembroke's and Andreini's cases illustrate, publication only increased the respect these women had already incurred. Criticism of learned women was, thus, intriguingly subjective. Moreover, it was inevitably couched in the rhetoric of the centuries old *Querelle des femmes*.

Scholarship and newly edited texts from the last two decades related to the phenomenon in England, including Constance Jordan's *Renaissance Feminism*, Linda Woodbridge's *Women and the English Renaissance*, and Katherine Henderson and Barbara McManus's *Half Humankind*, reveal that the stock issues of the *querelle* regarding women's worth, ability to reason, education, spirituality, sexuality, and place in family and society had a firm grasp on writers' imaginations. The same was true on the Continent, as many volumes in the University of Chicago Press's series *The Other Voice* illustrate.¹⁴ Writers of the period endeavored with varying degrees of seriousness to understand human nature, especially the realities of human behavior versus the received stereotypes specifically regarding women that arose from ancient literature, unrelenting waves of Petrarchism and Neoplatonism, and misogynistic interpretations of biblical texts. The proliferation of these debates during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries may be linked to many factors, but the one especially of interest for this study is the development of literary circles¹⁵ in which both men and women took part.

unconventional identities. For while she appeared to resign herself to a life of chaste mourning, in reality it seems that she took a lover, Sir Matthew Lister, a physician ten years her junior" [*Renaissance Drama by Women: Texts and Documents* (London: Routledge, 1996), 17].

¹⁴ The *Other Voice* series includes such volumes as *Collected Letters of a Renaissance Feminist* by Laura Cereta, *The Nobility and Preeminence of the Female Sex* by Henricus Cornelius Agrippa, and *The Education of a Christian Woman* by Juan Luis Vives, to note only a few examples.

¹⁵ I use the term *literary circle* in general to describe groups whose members are writers and whose main connections involve their mutual literary and philosophical interests. It is a term that I inevitably employ when discussing English coteries, but I occasionally extend my usage of it to describe literary groups of other nationalities. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth provide a particularly helpful definition that encompasses mine. They write, "Most often, the literary circle is defined as a coterie whose members are linked by shared social, political, philosophical, or aesthetic interests or values, or who vie for the interests and attention of a particular patron, or who are drawn together by bonds of friendship, family, religion, or location" [Introduction to *Literary Circles and Cultural Communities in Renaissance England* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press,

The first goal of this study is to examine how *querelle* issues are raised, contextualized, and debated in works by male and female writers who were familiar with each other's views, moved in the same circles, and, in some cases, were writing directly in response to each other's work. In the process, the serious play in which such writers engage is illustrated, revealing the ludic natures of both the *querelle* and literary circles. The main issues and rhetorical approaches addressed in the works covered include portrayals of women's abilities to reason and act on their own behalf, humanist education for women, attacks on character based on negative *querelle* stereotypes, disillusion with Neoplatonic love traditions, and general employment of both positive and negative *querelle exempla*.

The second goal of this study is to look at a selection of types of women who participated in literary society during this period and how their transgressing of traditional gender boundaries helped to fuel new waves of the *querelle*. To that end, I examine the interactions in literary circles of women who span the social classes, from the courtesan to the noblewoman. Italian actresses, whom scholars argue began their careers as *cortigiane oneste*, fascinated the noblewomen of the French court, many of whom, in turn were known for their eloquence and their gifted performances in court entertainments, as well as for demonstrating risqué behavior reminiscent of that associated with Italian actresses and courtesans. Knowledge of such Continental women was, moreover, implicated in contemporary critiques of the behavior of certain English courtly women. Perceptions of the trajectories of influence regarding women's participation in literary and courtly society are thus important to consider in light of the perpetuation of the *querelle* in literary circles across the Continent and in England. The multidimensional nature of the *querelle*—which was both a literary game and a resource for social critique or approbation of such women—becomes apparent when we consider contexts and texts associated with this array of women from various social strata taking part in literary circles.

Like the group of characters in *The Book of the Courtier*, circles of writers enthusiastically carried on the *querelle* tradition, using it as a device in their writing. Sir Philip Sidney, writing *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* for his coterie of family and friends, has Musidorus scorn the "peevish imperfections" of the female sex, as he reprimands Pyrocles for his choice of Amazon costume, noting that the "effeminate love of a woman doth so womanize a man that, if you

2000), 1–2.] I also use the terms *salon* and *academy* in their relevant French and Italian contexts. Because associations with the word *salon* often best indicate social activities or rituals of groups, thanks to the late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century usage, I occasionally employ the terms *salon-like* or *salon style*. For the same reason, I also use the more familiar term *salon* to describe the gatherings at the homes of Tullia d'Aragona in Italy rather than classify them as *ridotti* (private, salon-like gatherings or retreats) or pseudo-academic gatherings. When I use the term *academic*, I refer to the type of meetings held by the groups of Renaissance intellectuals who attempted to imitate the academies of classical antiquity.

yield to it, it will not only make you an Amazon, but a launder, a distaff-spinner, or whatsoever other vile occupation their idle heads can imagine and their weak hands perform.”¹⁶ In this passage, Sidney refers to Omphale’s famous degradation of Hercules, a classic tale frequently recounted by traditional attackers of women in the *querelle*. In *Solitaire premier*, Pléiade member Pontus de Tyard has his character Solitaire take the part of a traditional defender of women who claims that women have far more “diverse perfections” than men. He points out that the revered Muses were made female in order to exhibit these wonders and to show that women, too, must therefore be “excellently constant.” Pasithée, his interlocutor, expresses relief at his conclusion and reminds him that her sex is often accused of inconstancy and flightiness.¹⁷ These passages from Sidney and Tyard recall the traditional polarization of the *querelle* which suggests that women are either perfect spiritual creatures who are quiet, if not silent, constant, obedient, and, above all, chaste, or that they are Satan’s minions—stupid, greedy, lustful, vain, and considered responsible for most of the ills that afflict humankind.

Another, less easily defined line of argument appears in texts by writers, usually women, who eschew the traditional dichotomy, presenting instead such arguments that might be summarized as “men *and* women have issues,” or, as Jane Anger puts it, “Our behaviors alter daily, because men’s virtues decay hourly.”¹⁸ In *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*, Mary Wroth, writing for a circle of female friends and relatives, recounts instance after instance of men’s inconstancy. Her characters Amphilanthus and Parselius vacillate between women, moving from one love to the next, and occasionally back to the first, wreaking heartbreak as they go. Louise Labé, an *habituée* of Lyonnais literary circles, scorns the Petrarchan swearing of eternal constancy by a male lover in Sonnet 23, as she dryly questions, “Where are you, tears that lasted so briefly, / And Death, which was supposed to guarantee / Your faithful love and oft-repeated vows?”¹⁹ It appears that at times women’s writing reflects something that might more accurately be called the *Querelle des hommes*. In her *Débat de Folie et d’Amour*, however, Labé shows the effects of Folly upon both men’s and women’s behavior in love, outlining the sometimes comic, sometimes tragic extremes that both men and women go to in love. Isabella Andreini does something similar in her pastoral tragicomedy *La Mirtilla* in which she features a traditionally cold, chaste Petrarchan beloved so

¹⁶ Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia (The New Arcadia)*, ed. Victor Skretkovicz (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 71–2.

¹⁷ Pontus de Tyard, *Solitaire Premier*, ed. Silvio F. Baridon (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1950), 46–7.

¹⁸ Jane Anger, *Her Protection for Women, Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540–1640*, ed. Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara F. McManus (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 179.

¹⁹ Louise Labé, Sonnet 23, trans. Ann Rosalind Jones, *The Currency of Eros: Women’s Love Lyric in Europe, 1540–1620* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 169.

vain that she can love only herself, as well as a wildly idealistic shepherd who comically tries to bribe his way into his beloved's affections. Thus, some writers take a broader view of the *querelle*, insisting that the behaviors of both men and women are to be judged. Nevertheless, the "official" or dominant literary quarrel, in which the majority of participants were male, remained resolutely focused on the nature of women.

Input from women on the questions that arose from the *querelle* was, relatively speaking, prolific, due in part to the venues that provided them outlets for their voices, such as the variety of types of literary circles. To understand the origins of such groups, we must look to the classical roots of the Renaissance. These groups who met for literary and philosophical discussion, as well as elegant dining, musical entertainments, and game playing, had their origins in the academies of classical antiquity via the early academies of the Italian Renaissance. Paolo Ulvioni, repeating Scipione Bargagli's observations from *Delle lodi dell'Accademie* (1564), notes that "le origini delle Accademie risalgono all'antica Grecia" [the origins of the Academies arise from ancient Greece] and that they were born in Athens, with the first *Accademia*, that of "divin Platone," constituting the prototype for all the others.²⁰ Making further reference to Bargagli, Ulvioni suggests that four conditions favored the birth and development of the Italian academies: a temperate climate in which "chiari e grandi ingegni" [illustrious and great geniuses] could easily live and sustain themselves; noble-minded princes and lords as exemplified by the Medici; beautiful and courteous women who inspire the soul and intellect; and virtuous men who guide and counsel.²¹ The notion of this ideal intellectual climate, perpetuated by genius, enlightened leadership, and virtuous men and women, inspired groups of intellectuals across Europe and England to create their own academies or more informal circles.

The activities that served as entertainments for such gatherings are important to consider in light of literary production and *querelle* concerns. In such gatherings, men and women carried out verbally the philosophical debates generated by Neoplatonic thought. They discussed the ideals of love, virtue, and honor much as do Castiglione's courtiers and ladies in *The Book of the Courtier*, a work replete with *querelle* references, as the epigraph suggests. Additionally, they recited poetry, told stories, listened to music, sang, and danced.²² These activities are reflected in their poetry, dialogues, plays, and romances and, we might say, participated in the production of these texts, if we accept the expanded notion of

²⁰ Paolo Ulvioni, "Accademie e cultura in Italia dalla Controriforma all'Arcadia, Il caso veneziano," *Libri e documenti: Archivio storico civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana* (Milano: Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, 1979), 21.

²¹ Ulvioni, 21. Regarding Ulvioni's statements, see also Scipione Bargagli, *Delle Lodi dell'Accademie Oratione* (1569), reprinted in *Dell'Imprese di Scipione Bargagli* (Venetia: Francesco de' Franceschi Senese, 1594), 512–13 and 530–41.

²² Fiora A. Bassanese, *Gaspara Stampa*, Twayne's World Authors Series 658 (Boston: Twayne, 1982), 9.

textuality reflected in Clifford Geertz's theory of a "continuum between texts and the textuality of behavior."²³ The idea that an action and the inscription of the action perpetuate each other is especially well-illustrated by the activities and works of literary circle members who, as Margaret Ezell points out, "wrote their responses to the texts of others in a continual literary flow."²⁴ The concepts of debate, point and counter-point, and of writers writing in response to the ideas, as well as actions, of familiar others, then, are intrinsic to this study.

That the debates often moved from orality to textuality is clear as both male and female writers bring salon and academic discourse into their written arguments. The sense of orality shadowing the arguments employed by the writers in this study underscores the immediacy of the orality/textuality relationship. Intertexts are taken for granted, as is the understanding that audiences will be familiar enough with the "formulas and themes" in use that they will be amused and perhaps instructed by the permutations of them deployed in the textualized arguments.²⁵ In his important study on John Donne as a coterie poet, Arthur Marotti points out that "Donne expected his audience to have the literary and social sophistication enabling them to *contribute cocreatively* to the dramatic and rhetorical realization of his poetic texts (my emphasis)."²⁶ The same is true of any author writing for a coterie audience. That author has in mind a context that is intrinsically connected with the world of intellectual inquiry and debate, a great deal of which is generated through oral encounters among salon, academic, or literary circle gatherings.

Walter J. Ong notes that "[t]hrough Renaissance humanism invented modern textual scholarship and presided over the development of letterpress printing, it also harkened back to antiquity and thereby gave new life to orality."²⁷ As groups of Renaissance intellectuals, both male and female, sought to imitate the academies of ancient Greece by forming their own so-called academies and more informal salons or literary circles, issues from the *querelle* became standard fixtures, or *loci communes*, in their discussions and debates. The popularity of commonplaces from the *querelle* had continued from the Middle Ages on, but a heightened sense of interest in *querelle* topics during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries may be attributed to the fact that the status of women was in such a fascinatingly unstable place, thanks to differing notions about women's education and abilities,

²³ Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretative Anthropology* (New York: BasicBooks-HarperCollins, 1983), 31; W. B. Worthen, "Disciplines of the Text/Sites of Performance," *The Drama Review* 39, no. 1 (1995): 14.

²⁴ Margaret Ezell, "Reading Pseudonyms in Seventeenth-Century English Coterie Literature," *Essays in Literature* 21 (1994): 23.

²⁵ For a discussion of manuscript culture, rhetorical formulae, and intertextuality, see Ong, 133.

²⁶ Arthur F. Marotti, *John Donne, Coterie Poet* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 58–9.

²⁷ Ong, 115.

and, not least, the fact that more women than ever before were taking active roles in intellectual society, adding their voices to the debates.

Questions about women often arise in the context of discussing the *questioni d'amore*, the questions about love frequently used as commonplaces to spark discussion in medieval courtly circles and later in Renaissance literary circles. Since such groups, especially the salons, were often hosted or co-hosted by women who participated in discussions and circulated their writing in manuscript among the group members, a dynamic evolved which paradoxically underscored and confounded Renaissance notions about the place of women in such circles. Were they to be present to inspire men with their beauty, spirituality, and chastity, rather like Petrarch's Laura? Were they to be like the *hetaerae* of ancient Greece? If so, were only highly educated courtesans, such as those in Renaissance Italy to be included in such groups? Should noblewomen be so educated and similarly allowed entry into such elite circles? Would that make them adopt courtesan-like behaviors? Did education for women promote their promiscuity? We may observe the rapid development of anxieties such lines of questioning produce and readily understand the proliferation of the *Querelle des femmes* during this period of shifting social relationships between women and men.

Writing of late seventeenth- through early nineteenth-century literary society, the members of the Folger Collective on Early Women Critics call early modern salon culture a "border space between private and public life"²⁸ in an attempt to label this social, liminal space in which women interacted with each other and their male contemporaries. Such liminal "border spaces" clearly provided the developmental grounds for many women's participation in literary society during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries as well, but the diversity of venues and participants in them defies easy categorization in terms of public and private life. These spaces emerged in academies and salon-style gatherings in Italy, salons and, to a limited extent, the court academies of France, and English coteries. In recent years, the concept of public and private spheres in the context of late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French salons has been rigorously questioned by scholars, especially in relation to their considerations of Jürgen Habermas's "bourgeois public sphere," and such arguments are valid to consider in the broader context of this study as well. Steven Kale suggests that salons were "useful to aristocrats" because they perpetuated the feudal tradition of placing noble women "at the center of a family's public responsibilities."²⁹ Dena Goodman simply calls the use of public and private sphere theory in this period a "false opposition."³⁰

²⁸ Folger Collective on Early Women Critics, *Women Critics 1660–1820* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), xv.

²⁹ Steven Kale, "Women, the Public Sphere, and the Persistence of Salons," *French Historical Studies* 25.1 (2002): 146.

³⁰ Dena Goodman, "Public Sphere and Private Life: Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches to the Old Regime," *History and Theory* 31.1 (1992): 1.

Norbert Elias, in *The Court Society*, argues that the concept of Victorian public and private spheres is not particularly relevant in the seigniorial society of the *ancien régime* because in that historical moment a noble household was a very public one.³¹ Facets of these observations also hold true for the households and social positions of female and male members of the sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century literary circles.

During this period, literary circles gathered in such venues as the home of the courtesan, Tullia d'Aragona, in Florence, arguably a commercial space masquerading as a private space, and the provincial home of the Mesdames des Roches in Poitiers, members of the robe elite, who cultivated an atmosphere of chaste exceptionality for themselves, even as they, like Aragona, opened their home for gatherings of learned men. Literary circles also met in the great houses of nobles. At his Venetian home Ca' Venier in Santa Maria Formosa, Domenico Venier's hospitality extended to "writers, artists, musicians, and patrician scholars,"³² as well as the courtesan Veronica Franco and the *virtuosa* Gaspara Stampa. At the Retz's country house at Noisy and their Paris quarters, the *hôtel de Dampierre* in the Faubourg St. Honoré, elite French nobles and royals gathered. The *château* of Pontus de Tyard called Bissey-sur-Fley was popular with Lyonnais literary circle *habitués* who ranged from French nobility to the *bourgeoise* Louise Labé; similarly, the Countess of Pembroke's Wilton House in Salisbury was open to her noble friends and relatives as well as aspiring writers of lower circumstances, such as the poet and playwright Samuel Daniel and the lawyer Abraham Fraunce. An especially favored few met in the abodes of royalty, such as King Henri III's chamber for meetings of the court academy at the Louvre and the royal residence at Ollainville.³³ These illustrations of settings and the classes of women and men who inhabited them clearly range widely and contradictorily in terms of their private and public aspects, rendering a blanket statement about women's emergence from a generic private sphere into a generic public one via

³¹ Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 50–53. Elias argues that "[a]s court aristocrats had no professional life in our sense, the distinction between professional and private life is inapplicable," 53. See also Kale on Elias's views, 146.

³² Rosenthal, 177.

³³ For further descriptions of these locales and gatherings, see the following: Georgina Masson, *Courtesans of the Italian Renaissance* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), 91–92, 98–102, and 115; Rosenthal, 17, 89, 177; Anne Larsen, *From Mother and Daughter: Poems, Dialogues, and Letters by Les Dames des Roches*, The Other Voice Series (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming); L. Clark Keating, *Studies on the Literary Salon in France (1550–1615)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941), 105; Madeleine Lazard, *Louise Labé, Lyonnaise* (Paris: Fayard, 2004), 105; Roberts, introduction to *The Poems*, 15; Frances Yates, *The French Academies of the Sixteenth Century*, The Warburg Institute: University of London 1947 (Nedeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1968), 31–3.

participation in literary circles problematic. The Folger Collective's observation, however, that literary circle society "gave women unprecedented opportunities to participate in shaping a critical discourse" may be seen in the earlier context considered in this study, especially regarding the discourse of the *querelle*.

Regarding the *Querelle des femmes*, the presence of educated, opinionated women in these circles gave a fresh immediacy to the arguments, and the nature of these venues permitted women to join in the debates that arose. Moreover, excluding meetings of academies, hostesses often presided over the activities of such groups. The result was a fascinating friction that inspired, both positively and negatively, many writers of the period. Instead of calling literary circles border spaces between private and public life, in the scope of this study we might more profitably see them as liminal rhetorical spaces that facilitated women's involvement in the humanist play of ideas. Depending upon their class and social status, the women in this study attained their humanist educations in a variety of ways, but in each individual case, her education was her entrée into the world of humanist intellectual and philosophical inquiry and literary production, a world traditionally considered men's domain.³⁴ The literary circle thus provided a rhetorical space in which women could participate in this world, an idea that I adapt from Susan Broomhall's recognition of the published rhetorical spaces available to sixteenth-century women writers. Broomhall borrows the term *rhetorical space* from Lorraine Code, who calls such spaces "fictive but not fanciful or fixed locations, whose (tacit, rarely spoken) territorial imperatives structure and limit the kinds of utterances that can be voiced within them with a reasonable expectation of uptake and 'choral support'. . . ." She also calls them "textured locations" in which "it matters who is speaking and where and why, and where such mattering bears directly upon the possibility of knowledge claims [and] moral pronouncements . . ."³⁵ These descriptions of rhetorical space resonate with the dialogic atmosphere cultivated in Renaissance literary circles. In such rhetorical spaces, women and men could interact in ways circumscribed by cultural manners and mores and influenced by philosophical ideals, yet, at the same time, critique and transgress those very boundaries, thanks to the scope for play inherent in such spaces.

The ludic nature of literary circle interaction is part of the creative matrix that such circles provided for their members, especially those influenced by issues arising from debate topics. A paradigm useful to consider when discussing the

³⁴ See Larsen's article, "Reading/Writing and Gender in the Renaissance: The Case of Catherine des Roches (1542–1587), *Symposium* 41.4 (1987–1988): 292–307, for a discussion of educated women's tenuous position between traditionally gendered spheres represented in polemical statements about them by the distaff and the pen.

³⁵ Susan Broomhall, *Women and the Book Trade in Sixteenth-Century France* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 71. Lorraine Code's theory of rhetorical spaces is articulated in her book, *Rhetorical Spaces: Essays on Gendered Locations* (New York: Routledge, 1995), ix–x.

ludic nature of salons or literary circles may be derived from Michael Bristol's *Carnival and Theater*. In it, Bristol takes his cue from sociological and anthropological studies by Victor Turner, René Girard, and Michel Foucault as he explores the cultural significance of the theater in Renaissance England. He asserts:

Theater is an art form; it is also a social institution. By favoring a certain style of representation and a particular etiquette of reception, the institutional setting of a performance informs and focuses the meaning of a dramatic text and facilitates the dissemination of that meaning through the collective activity of the audience Because of its capacity to create and sustain a briefly intensified social life, the theater is festive and political as well as literary—a privileged site for the celebration and critique of the needs and concerns of the polis.³⁶

Similar consideration of the characteristics of Renaissance literary circles provides insight into the context for the *querelle* literature they produced. The Renaissance literary circle was certainly a social institution, and, when we consider the performative nature of its gatherings, it might be said to constitute an art form that favored specific styles of self-representation by those who frequented it. It fostered a particular etiquette of the reception of the writing, conversation topics, and musical entertainments presented at its gatherings. Like theater, there was an audience who listened, watched, and judged, assimilating into their consciousness the debates, readings, story-telling, and musical presentations. Additionally, there were specific roles for the participants. All were to be masters of the art of conversation. Some played musical instruments and sang. Some danced, told stories, and read or composed poetry. These characteristic activities of group ritual informed the literature of the period and were further perpetuated by their reproduction in it. Episodes of debate, poetry or singing contests, poetry composition, and musical interludes permeate much literature of the time. Of course, the dialogue genre itself was extremely popular. These devices clearly echo both classical sources and salon ritual, illustrating the interest in the period for imitating classical texts and classical pastimes, such as those that might have taken place in an academy of classical antiquity. Men and women, however, appropriated these traditions according to their own literary and philosophical agendas, and some women, especially, rewrote the traditional gender roles and ideology regarding women.

In *Impersonations*, Stephen Orgel asserts that “the ideology of a culture does not describe its operation, only the ideals and assumptions, often refracted and unacknowledged, of its ruling elite.”³⁷ The context for Orgel's statement is his

³⁶ Michael Bristol, *Carnival and Theater: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England* (New York: Routledge, 1985), 3.

³⁷ Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 125.

commentary on the public activities of early modern women in England. The truth in it, however, may be applied to the operation of both Continental and English early modern women's literary endeavors, and it is especially applicable to women's place and performance in Renaissance literary circles. Traditional Renaissance ideology as formulated by male fantasy and desire³⁸ says that women are encouraged to be part of salon society to provide beauty and inspiration for their male counterparts and to be something of a moral barometer for their discussions. The ideal is illustrated in Book Four of *The Courtier* (1528), in which Castiglione has Elisabetta Gonzaga suggest, "if the activities of the courtier are directed as they should be to the virtuous end I have in mind, then I for one am quite convinced not only that they are neither harmful nor vain but that they are most advantageous and deserving of infinite praise."³⁹ With that prompt to guide the interlocutors, the Duchess fulfills her role as the Neoplatonic ideal feminine influence, guiding the male speakers to higher planes of thought on the concept of virtue for the courtier. Of course, near the end of *The Courtier*, Pietro Bembo is so inspired by the discourse that he gives a treatise on Neoplatonic love that concludes with his experiencing for a moment the very essence of such love, and he must be called back from his reverie.⁴⁰ The group at the Court of Urbino thus provides an ideal form for traditional Renaissance ideology regarding literary circles, such as those that Bargagli describes in which women are to be present to inspire men. The reality, however, often deviates from the ideal. In reality, some women actively took part in such circles and provided much more than inspiration.

When we look at the literary circle as a rhetorical space created through social ritual out of which literature is generated by both sexes, especially if we hypothesize that the women involved acted as more than ornaments to the proceedings, several things become clear. First, like theater, we could argue that the literary circle, too, holds a privileged place in social life where events of social and political importance occur. The literary circle presents a venue for debate and critique of social, political, and philosophical concerns by both sexes and, thus, gives the literary circle "an importance of its own."⁴¹ Second, the contention that the institutional setting "informs and focuses the meaning of a . . . text and facilitates the dissemination of that meaning through the *collective activity* of the audience" (my emphasis) suggests that in order to appreciate fully whatever "meaning" we derive from reading Renaissance literature produced by members of literary circles, we ought to consider the works and activities of the group as a

³⁸ For a discussion of the shaping powers of male fantasy and desire on Renaissance ideology regarding women, see "A Perfect Gentleman: Performing Gynophobia in Urbino" and "A Perfect Lady: Pygmalion and His 'Creature'" in Harry Berger, Jr.'s *The Absence of Grace: Sprezzatura and Suspicion in Two Renaissance Courtesy Books* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 63–86; 87–115.

³⁹ Castiglione, 284.

⁴⁰ Castiglione, 342–3.

⁴¹ Here, and in the following two points, I paraphrase Bristol, 3.

whole to achieve anything resembling the institutionalized arena of thought which influenced the production of the text.⁴² Third, to examine literary works by men and women writers who “collectively” take part in such groups is to explore the products of artists who are assimilating their salon roles as well as those of their friends into their works, a consideration that further illuminates the sources of such a writer’s sense of authority and purpose as he or she brings the philosophical issues of interest at large in society into the controlled spaces of his or her own arguments.⁴³

With this critical framework in mind, I place Claude-Catherine de Clermont, the *maréchale*, and later *duchesse*, de Retz, at the center of this study by exploring the influence of her salon persona in her own literary circle, as well as the ways in which her career in courtly and salon society both reflects and deflects *querelle* issues. Moreover, I indicate the ways in which Retz’s literary and performative activities place her at a central point in the transmission of Renaissance literary and performative trends for women from Italy to England, thus making her “career” a critically important one to observe when contextualizing the writing and literary circle activities of the other women writers in this study. In keeping with the goal of putting texts by men and women who took part in the same or closely related literary circles into dialogues that reveal the influence of the *querelle*, I examine texts by the Italian writers Tullia d’Aragona, Sperone Speroni, Isabella Andreini, and Torquato Tasso; the French writers Louise Labé and Pontus de Tyard; and the English writers Mary Sidney Herbert, Elizabeth Cary, Mary Wroth, Anna Weamys, Samuel Daniel, and Philip Sidney.

In Chapter One, I focus on how the celebrated courtesan Tullia d’Aragona writes with considerable familiarity of her opponent as she engages Sperone Speroni in a debate in which impressions of her own character are at stake. In her *Dialogo della infinità di amore* she depicts herself as an articulate, intelligent woman whose humanist education arms her with sharp, insightful arguments that keep her male interlocutor *en garde*. She writes her dialogue in response to that of Speroni, entitled *Dialogo di amore*, which was inspired by his encounters with Aragona at salon gatherings in Venice around 1535. Speroni casts his dialogue in such a setting and makes her a key figure in the debate about the nature of love. While he gives a passing nod to the idea that Tullia should enjoy her Diotima-like status as a *cortigiana onesta*, that status is not reflected in his portrayal of her. On the contrary, his version of her character is a stereotypically lustful, jealous, wheedling courtesan who begs to be enlightened by the men in the group. Aragona, too, places her dialogue in a salon setting and gives herself the role of hostess, but that, more or less, is where the similarities in their portrayals end. Aragona’s dialogue provides many rich counterpoints to that of Speroni as she cannily interweaves debate after debate in which she shows her wit and knowledge to an

⁴² Bristol, 3.

⁴³ Bristol, 3.

advantage before giving Speroni, by name, a resounding reprimand at the end of her piece by having other male interlocutors defend her rare intelligence and her universally lauded literary academy.

Aragona's reputation for extraordinary musical talent and eloquence foreshadows the gifts for which early Italian actresses are praised. Scholars usually argue that early actresses were first courtesans, and, although none have ever directly proven that Isabella Andreini started her career that way, her gifts for singing and eloquence and her facility with languages suggest that she indeed was given the rudiments of a humanist education similar to that given courtesans. In Chapter Two, I look at reflections of the courtesan/actress attributes in the characterization of *innamorate* and explore the ways in which Andreini's female characters in *La Mirtilia* contrast with those of Torquato Tasso in his *Aminta*. Although they were probably not as often in social contact with each other as were Aragona and Speroni, Andreini, who was made a member of the *Accademia degli Intenti*, and Torquato Tasso, a frequenter of courtly and academic gatherings, were acquaintances and unquestionably aware of each other's work. Both were also influenced by the academic tastes of the courtly society in which they mingled. As a veteran performer of roles in Tasso's play, *Aminta*, Andreini's response to that play, her pastoral, *La Mirtilia*, is a study in imitation and subversion, with special attention given to illustrating the strength and resourcefulness of women—an area of her play which contrasts sharply with Tasso's traditional damsel in distress. Although Tasso's play does not fall neatly into the category of a misogynistic attack on women, as manifested in some polemics in the *querelle*, his stereotypical portrayal of women as weak, helpless, and easy sexual prey for male predators of both the human and satyr varieties provides Andreini with grounds for launching an intertextual debate over those particular *querelle* issues. Ultimately, her play brings into question the concepts of women's supposedly innate helplessness, jealous natures, and inability to reason and act on their own behalf, as she writes directly in response to Tasso's *Aminta*.

Italian players held an enormous fascination for those associated with the French court. Andreini's popularity with French royals and nobles is reflected in her acclaimed performance for the wedding festivities of Christine de Lorraine and Ferdinando de' Medici in 1589, as well as in Henri IV's patronage of her from about 1601 to 1604.⁴⁴ While Italian players in general were very popular, Italian

⁴⁴ Louise George Clubb, in *Italian Drama in Shakespeare's Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), discusses Andreini's performance of *La pazzia d'Isabella* for the Medici wedding. Regarding Andreini's performances in France, Clubb points out that Isabella and Francesco Andreini "enter the history of the stage in 1578" after a tour in France, which suggests that they may have been performing with the Gelosi during their tour in France in 1577, 262. Anne MacNeil traces some of Andreini's and the Gelosi's performances in France in an extensive chronology in *Music and Women of the Commedia dell'Arte in the Late Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 187–263. See also MacNeil, "Music and the Life and Work of Isabella Andreini: Humanistic Attitudes

actresses especially made profound impressions on those who saw them perform, and the noblewomen associated with the French court were rumored to imitate them.⁴⁵ Known for their learnedness, wit, and alleged risqué dealings with gentlemen of the court, the ladies-in-waiting who attended Catherine de Medici were, like Italian actresses, known for their performances of various kinds. On one hand, the women of the French court were associated with tales of marital infidelity and political intrigue; on the other many were acclaimed for their writing, their dancing in court spectacles, and their witty participation in salon society. In Chapter Three, I explore the performative nature of Retz's exchanges in academic and salon society, as well as her participation in court spectacles. To that end, I note the lawyer Estienne Pasquier's memories of her participation at a salon gathering in her home, the accounts of her debate before the *Academie du palais* and her Latin oration for Polish ambassadors who, in 1573, came to request the *duc d'Anjou* for their king, and her association with and performance in court spectacles, including the *Balet comique de la Royne* (1581). I especially emphasize Retz and her circle's fostering of the use of positive *querelle* rhetoric in the form of Petrarchan, Neoplatonic encomiastic poetry to buttress her and her female friends' reputations in literary society, and I point out the ways in which Retz's witty salon banter, her learned orations, and her dancing are all reminiscent of the performative traits valued in the actresses of the Italian stage. These observations indicate the ways in which such activities were coming to be considered arguably acceptable behaviors for noblewomen, as well as illustrate the spread of Continental culture.

Toward Music, Poetry, and Theater During the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1994), 172.

⁴⁵ Pierre de l'Estoile, an *audiencier* or "clerk-in-chief" for the Parlement, writes in his *Mémoires-Journaux* (1574–1611), on June 26, 1577, that "the Court assembled and issued an order forbidding the Italian comedians, *I Gelosi*, to perform any more in Paris. Some said . . . that their comedies taught nothing but fornication and adultery, and served as a school of debauchery for the youth of Paris of both sexes. And in truth their influence was so great, principally among the young ladies, that they took to showing their breasts—like soldiers—which shook with perpetual motion and served as a bellows to their forge." In spite of outrage from some quarters over the licentiousness of the Italian troupe, they held sway with the right person, namely, Henri III. On July 27, L'Estoile writes that "having presented to the court letters patent from the King authorizing them to perform despite the court's decision," the *Gelosi* "were refused appeal and charged not to bring the question up again on pain of a fine . . . but at the beginning of September following they opened again at the Hotel de Bourbon in defiance of the court, with the express permission of the King, the corruption of the times being such that clowns, buffoons, prostitutes, and *mignons* have all the credit and influence." L'Estoile also notes some scandalous performances by Catherine de Medici's ladies-in-waiting that he seems to associate with Italian influence. See L'Estoile's *Mémoires-Journaux. The Paris of Henry of Navarre as Seen by Pierre de L'Estoile*, ed. and trans. Nancy Lyman Roelker (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 58–60.

The conflation of activities common to the women of French salon society and Italian courtesans, *virtuose*, and some noblewomen indicates the fertile grounds for a skirmish in the *querelle* that erupted initially in the 1540s in France and remained popular throughout the rest of the century. Called the *Querelle des Amyes*, it was inspired by such writers as Bertrand de la Borderie and Antoine Héroët who, in their respective works, *L'Amye de Court* (1541) and *La Parfaicte Amye* (1542), started a trend in pamphlet writing that exalted or deplored the character of the courtly woman and argued hotly about the nature of love. The early phase of this *querelle* was a critical part of the backdrop for the career of Louise Labé, the daughter of a ropemaker whose social ambition was realized through her interaction in literary circles. She became one of the early modern women writers whose works have never been as thoroughly “lost” as those of others. In Chapter Four, I discuss literary society in Lyon and the anxieties that women such as Labé produced in it, even while being considered central to it. Then I examine how Labé’s writing interacts intertextually with that of Pontus de Tyard (1521–1605), her friend and a staunch Neoplatonist. They shared the same publisher, Jean de Tournes, who was known for his interest in and publication of *querelle* literature, including that made popular by the *Querelle des Amyes*. Read together, Labé’s dedication to her *Œuvres* and her dialogue and Tyard’s preface to *Solitaire premier*, along with passages from it, illustrate the tensions between a nontraditional and a traditional *querelle* stance. Although Labé was not writing her *Débat* directly in response to Tyard’s *Solitaire premier*, she no doubt had such Neoplatonic treatises in mind while writing it, and the two dialogues read together provide an excellent encapsulation of the friction between men’s and women’s views of ideal relationships in love. As in the cases of Aragona and Speroni, as well as Andreini and Tasso, an intertextual conflict arises between Labé’s and Tyard’s dialogues regarding portrayals of women, in particular, and of lovers in general. Tyard’s depiction of the ideal Neoplatonic beloved Pasithée is greatly at odds with Labé’s critique of human behavior in love that explores and occasionally skewers the actions and beliefs of both women and men. While Tyard portrays a man in the grip of divine poetic fury who seeks to educate a beautiful, brilliant, and highly circumspect young woman who adores him, giving his readers a glimpse of the ideal Neoplatonic relationship, Labé allows one of her narrators to slip, at one point, into a first person diatribe by Folly on the painful realities of men’s and women’s behaviors in and expectations of love. She spares neither sex in her rousing critique and thus throws down the literary gauntlet before faithful disciples of Petrarchism and Neoplatonism.

Skirmishes in the *querelle* surface in England, as does women’s involvement in literary circles and performances in court entertainments, activities associated with Continental women. In England, the Sidney circle provides something of an Anglicized version of a Continental literary circle, due in part, no doubt, to Sir Philip Sidney’s encounters during his grand tour. Like her French counterparts who hosted literary salons, wrote and circulated their work in manuscript, and

avidly patronized the poets of their time, Mary Sidney Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke, played hostess, muse, and patron to a group of writers interested in imitating Continental literary trends, activities assiduously imitated by her kinswoman Lucy Harington Russell, the Countess of Bedford. Like the Morel circle, hosted by Jean de Morel and his wife, Antoinette de Loynes, which especially encouraged composition in classical languages, or the Retz circle, which supported a revival of Petrarchism, the Sidney circle is especially known for experimentation with closet drama, in addition to Petrarchan poetry and romances. In Chapter Five, I introduce the background of the English *querelle* under Queen Elizabeth and King James. Next, I explore the development of the Sidney circle's imitative practices regarding Continental literary trends, in particular focusing on the ways in which *querelle* issues and national religio-political issues become conflated. Finally, regarding texts that engage in *querelle* debate, I look at two ways in which closet dramas produced by members of the Sidney circle engage in intertextual debate with plays written for the public stage and popular pamphlets that debate the nature of women. Specifically, I discuss treatments of women who woo and depictions of women in tragedy, especially regarding their options for heroic status. From examining the macrocosm of imitative practices and the microcosm of a specific genre of literature adopted and adapted by Mary Sidney Herbert and other members the Sidney circle from Continental and classical precedents, we may see how this group recalls those of French salon society in the sixteenth century, as well as how they demonstrate a solidarity regarding nontraditional stances on *querelle* issues.

An examination of how Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, Mary Wroth's *Urania*, and Anna Weamys's *Continuation* of the *Arcadia* reflect the engagement of three generations of literary circles in the *Querelle des femmes* is the subject of the Chapter Six. For each author, the *querelle* is central to the shaping and, we could say, marketing of his or her romance. Sidney makes use of the stances of both traditional defenders and attackers of women in many instances in his romance, depicting young, beautiful heroines of surpassing virtue, and young, dashing heroes who are eternally faithful to their chosen beloveds. He also makes use of a villainess and a depraved stepmother of middle age, and assorted other female characters whose appearances, personalities, and stages of experience are related in terms of *querelle* rhetoric. As a male writer constructing a fantastic and often comic pastoral world for his coterie audience, Sidney received little but praise for his endeavor from his contemporaries, and the *Arcadia* in its revised, "new" form, or, more recently, in its "old" form, has enjoyed scholars' attention ever since.⁴⁶ Although the nature of that attention has varied, criticism has focused on the text or

⁴⁶ In her introduction to *The Old Arcadia* (Oxford World Classics [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999]), Katharine Duncan-Jones traces the reception of the "New" *Arcadia*, which she refers to as a "literary centaur" and compares this disjointed text to the "Old" *Arcadia* and its reception after its rediscovery in 1907 and publication in 1926, viii–x.

texts; the author himself has maintained a positive, even cherished, reputation in English literary history. Sidney's niece, on the other hand, writing in response to her uncle's romance for a circle of her own contemporaries, produced a romance significantly darker in tone and rife with exposés of relations between men and women. As a consequence, she was reviled in courtly circles and labeled a hermaphrodite and a monster for her temerity to allow her work to appear in print. Issues from the *querelle* pervade both her work and the public's reception of it and her as a writer, demonstrating that the *Querelle des femmes* was far more than a literary game. Weamys's *Continuation* recalls the traditional *querelle* atmosphere of Sidney's *Arcadia*, a stance no doubt endorsed by her circle of royalist readers, and the careful emphasis on her position as a writer, specifically as a young woman writer, is worthy of note. The numerous poets of her circle who write laudatory poems for the prefatory matter of the romance hasten to illustrate that she is a woman of utmost respectability who is, in effect, channeling the great Sir Philip Sidney and not actually writing the work by herself. Instead, his guiding spirit is claimed to be the true author. To that end, his political views, too, are shown to undergird their royalist agenda. As a result, Weamys receives mainly praise for her literary efforts. In each of these three romances, written for different literary circles but connected by the thread of Sidney's influence, the authors and their circumstances provide a compelling look at the influence of the *Querelle des femmes* in reality and in print.

This series of examples of literary circle *habitués* and their engagement in the *Querelle des femmes* illustrates in part why the reexamination of works by Renaissance women writers in light of feminist and new historicist criticism has been a key component of Renaissance scholarship for nearly three decades now. Inclusion of women's texts in "the big picture" of early modern literature reveals fascinating intertextual connections that shed new light on the rich context in which writers were engaged. It also suggests the importance of reading works by male and female writers together, in pairs or groups, instead of isolating texts by either sex in survey courses or segregating work by women into special topics courses, such as those focused specifically on women's literature. Ultimately, the exploration of men's and women's approaches to topics from the *Querelle des femmes* in the context of writing produced by literary circle members provides a window on the debates perpetually sparked by these issues as they traverse national, cultural, and, especially, gender boundaries and sheds new light on the "ideals and assumptions" that Orgel argues are only a fraction of the historical whole.