breakdown—war, revolution, religious transformation—have
transformed the role which women had a wider role and found a louder voice. Some of
these have been very specific, such as the recent discussion among medievalists such as
Susan Sussard and JoAnn McNamara about the twelfth century as period of signif-
icant change in ideas about gender and gender relations.36

This creation of new structures is only beginning, as we still—to stay within an
architectural metaphor—have only a small pile of bricks with which to work. But
many of us are steadily making bricks, mixing together different materials to con-
struct a small part of the past. Others have discovered, in demolishing other struc-
tures labeled “capitalism,” “Renaissance,” “Enlightenment,” or “Reformation,”
useful bricks which we could carry back to our building site. Others decided that
brick-making or brick-carrying was boring, and have designed structural plans, often
with little concern for the capabilities of the bricks to support such structures. Oth-
ers decided to carry their bricks to new building sites, labeled “the body,” “sexuality,”
or “the history of masculinity.” We need to continue to do all these things—but to
spend more time building on the work of others, and less time accusing others of
having chosen the wrong task or of doing something useless. We also need to worry
less about whether our structure will ultimately be labeled “women” or “gender” or
exactly what rooms it will contain. We understand now that the structure we have
labeled “history” is, to use a famous architectural metaphor, a City of Men, or to be
more precise, a city of some men. That structure now has a few holes in it, but it is
millennia old and very sturdy; we must make sure that our new structure, though
smaller, is just as sturdy, and that our City of Ladies welcomes all immigrants. We
may build high towers, but we need open gates.

36JoAnn McNamara, “The Herrnhutian: The Restructuring of the Gender System, 1050–1250,” in
Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages, ed. Clare Lees (Minneapolis: University of
Middle Ages,” in Becoming Visible: Women in European History, ed. Renate Bridenthal et al., 3rd ed. (Bos-

The Querelle des Femmes as
a Cultural Studies Paradigm

Margarete Zimmermann

I hesitated a long time over writing a book on women. The topic is irritating, particu-
larly for women, and it is not new: A lot of ink has been spent on the quarrel over
feminism. As present it is nearly ended, so let us not speak anymore about it. But it is
discussed nevertheless. And it does not seem as if the tumultuous studies turned out during
the last century have helped much to throw any light on the problem. Incidentally—is
there a problem? And what does it consist of?1

With these words Simone de Beauvoir opens her essay The Second Sex (1949), one of
the most famous feminist manifestos of our century. She quotes the long tradition of
that debate about texts, images, and gender identities which since the early twentieth
century has been known as the querelle des femmes, or occasionally as the more
compelling querelle des sexes, and which sometimes appears as polemica sul sesso
femminile (polemics on the female sex)2 in older Italian publications. With her “rev-
olutionary essay”3 and “foundational text of a materialist feminism for the twentieth
century,”4 de Beauvoir situates herself within that late-nineteenth-century phase of
the querelle, which she calls “the quarrel over feminism.” In Le deuxième sexe one can
detect a clear echo of older, even classic motifs of the historical querelle des femmes
when de Beauvoir deals with the alleged creative and artistic inferiority of women.
Toril Moi summarizes the discussion as follows:

As long as conditions for women are not equal to those of men, Beauvoir
declares, the production of their creativity will evidently be inferior to that

stated, all translations are by Gena Sedman.)
2As in G. Bartocci Marchesi, “Le polemiche sul sesso femminile nel secolo XVI e XVII,” Giornale ita-
3Toril Moi, Simone de Beauvoir: Confusion d'une intellectuelle (Paris: Didierot, 1995), 288.
4Moi, Simone de Beauvoir, 340.
gender history is considered a natural as well as an indispensable element.  

Let us therefore begin with a little Begriffsgeschichte, following the famous maxim by Marc Bloch: "The best way to avoid being fooled by a word is by looking at its history."  

The "Querelle des Femmes" as a Cultural Studies Paradigm

The Querelle des Femmes/ des Sexes draws on the sources' terminology but, as a more encompassing concept and a kind of technical term, it is a twentieth-century formation and as such refers to a much more complex phenomenon: an all-encompassing gender quarrel in which not only women but—and that has been insufficiently realized—men are at issue as well. It is a quarrel in word and image but also about words and images. The points of debate are the delimitation of an "imaginair," an imaginary space of masculinity and femininity, of gender hierarchies, and the stands taken in the relevant areas of the discussion that were topical during each period.

Those "allusions to topical discussions" in particular allow cross-references to social and cultural history: for example, the debate over women's access to reading, writing, and education in the sixteenth century; the assessment of marriage; the controversies.
Concerning the part played by Christine de Pizan, who is mentioned again and again in the context of the querelle des femmes and is often even considered its initiator, let me make only the following short remarks. The Pizan corpus of querelle texts comprises three works: the Épître au Dieu d’Amours (The Letter to Cupid) completed in May 1399; the letters against the Romance of the Rose, written between 1401 and 1402, which the author handed over to the French queen Isabeau de Bavière with a request for assistance in 1402; and the important defense of women Le livre de la cité des dames (The Book of the City of Ladies) (1404–5), whose title quotes Augustine's important apology for Christianity, De civitate dei. That it was Christine de Pizan who initiated the querelle is nowadays regarded as rather unlikely, since numerous clues have been found to indicate that querelle discourses existed prior to the debate over the Romance of the Rose which Christine sparked off.

Christine's keen awareness of the importance of texts and writing for the process of defining gender identities over the centuries, as well as her knowledge of the importance of canonized authors and texts within these processes is, however, notable. Thus, Christine makes it her business in the letters against the Romance of the Rose and in the City of Ladies to deconstruct such authors as Jean de Meun and Ovid, or at least to dethrone them from their previously almost unquestioned authorial positions. Furthermore, her texts are the first examples of the doubling of a feminine text-persona and an empirical female auctor-persona. And finally, all textual and argumentative strategies of the querelle des femmes are already unfolded in Christine's three central querelle texts. These strategies include composing defamatory pamphlets directed against men as counterparts to defamatory pamphlets directed against women, establishing catalogues of women centering on specific topics; resorting to gender-specific anthropologies, and invalidating and obliterating misogynist exempla and text traditions and replacing them with philologous traditions.

Let us now take a more precise look at the history of the term. Querelle goes back to the Latin etymon querellis, which means "lament" and "expression of pain," displeasure and "complaint" in the sense of a charge or criticism, and a legal charge. The lexeme querelle has been found in Old French texts since the twelfth century, mainly in the sense of "objection," "legal charge," and "case." It is in this sense—in relation to women who have been deprived of their lawful claim to land, property, and honor, and whose "justified cases and quarrels" have not been taken up by anyone—that Jean de Bouicaut uses the term in his memoirs Le Livre des faits du bon messire Jehan Maingre, dit Bouicaut (1409) (Book of the Excellent Deeds of the Good Lord Jehan Maingre, called Bouicaut). Surprisingly, although the phenomenon of the querelle as a gender debate can be observed at least since the early fifteenth century and since the time of Christine de Pizan, its terminological definition only occurs some decades later, namely in Martin Le Franc's Le Champion des dames (The Defender of Ladies), written around 1440.

In this immense allegorical poem, in the tradition of the Romance of the Rose as well as the City of Ladies, the querelle des dames is mentioned for the first time. But here the dames ("ladies") are only the objects of male discourses, those of the defender of women Franc Vouloir on the one hand, and those of the misogynist Malebouche and his infamous followers on the other. In this text, querelle des dames therefore relates to the "women's complaint" and the "quarrel over women" in which the women themselves do not actively participate. Women had already gained the status of subjects defending their own sex, as we have seen, in the works of Christine de Pizan; in this respect Martin decidedly falls behind Christine's example. He does follow her in the tradition of setting up catalogues of exemplary women, which he calls elégantes or grandes dames de France ("intellectuals" or "great French ladies") and

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13An impressive study on this topic is found in Linda Zimmermann's Lucid des femmes à la culture (1508–1715): Un débat d'idées de Saint François de Sales à la Marquise de Lambert (Paris: H. Champion, 1993).
15Edited in Christine de Pizan, Œuvres poétiques, ed. Maurice Roy (Paris, 1886–90), 2: 1–27. In 1402, this text was translated into English by Thomas Hoccleve as The Letter of Cupid.
17The Middle French text and an Italian translation are available in the edition supervised by Patrizia Caralli and Erle Jeffery Richards, La città delle dame (Milan: Luna, 1997).

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20Some information on the history of the word can be found in O. Zénovas, "Querelle," Revue de philologie française 30 (1917–18): 35–40.
21Jean de Bouicaut, Le Livre des faits du bon messire Jehan Maingre, dit Bouicaut, ed. Denis Lalande (Geneve: Droz, 1985), 160–61. "It so befell that some charges were brought before the King that several ladies and girls, widows and others, were oppressed and put upon by some powerful men who with their force and power wanted to disinherit them of their land, their property and their honour, and indeed disinherited some of them. In that manner the women suffered a great deal and no knight, no squire, no gentleman and no one else stood up to defend them nor took up their justified cases and quarrels." Bouicaut further speaks of the "champions and defenders of their quarrels" (162), which the women lacked.
Margarete Zimmermann

whose embedding in cultural memory he assists by constructing numerous memorial portraits.

The term querreille des dames et femmes, however, did not really catch on during the early modern period. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when this gender debate in word and image reached its apogee all over Europe, the term's usage strangely tended to diminish. This holds true, for example, in the widely read misogynist tract of the sixteenth century, the Controversus des sexes masculin et feminin (Controversies of the Male and Female Sexes), written in 1536 by the lawyer Gratien Du Pont of Toulouse.22 The text is remarkable in that it is an apology for the male sex. In that respect it clearly resembles Boccaccio's Il Corbaccio (The Raven) (1360), which focuses on a Dante-esque dream-vision experienced by the male narrator. He is a scholar suffering from unrequited love for a widow whose deceased husband he meets in his dream. Between both men a kind of teacher-pupil dialogue develops. It focuses on the transmission of knowledge concerning feminine perfections, and most of all a systematic deconstruction of feminine beauty. The female body as a projection space for male desire is replaced by a view of the female physique as a space for male disgust.

In Gratien's Controversus, the male first-person narrator also dreams of an encounter with a belle seillard, a handsome old man, in this case a decidedly rundown specimen. He is an allegorical representation of the male sex, who complains that he is constantly mistreated by the sexes feminin, the female sex, and therefore urgently asks for succor. An illustration from this enormous compendium, the "chessboard in the shape of Eve" (Échecquier en forme de veue), provides a graphic impression of this form of heavily formalized attacks on women: the white squares contain moral and physical viliifications ending on the feminine syllable -ante, whereas the black squares contain those ending in -esse. The enormous textual edifice of the Controversus des sexes masculin et feminin is erected on the fictional foundation of the above-mentioned male pact. Within the overall context of the querreille, this treatise occupies an exceptional position, for it is only the example of a male voice taking up the defense of the sexe masculin under threat.

On the one hand, contemporary tracts, also of male origin, taking up the opposite position, such as Symphorien Champier’s La Nef des dames vertueuses (The Ship of Virtuous Ladies) (1515) and Jean Bouchet’s Jugement poétique de l’honneur feminin (Poetic Judgment on Female Honor) (1536), act against the misogynist polemical force of the Controversus. On the other hand, the frequency of female interventions into this debate increases in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; in France with women writers such as Marie de Roux, Madeleine and Catherine des Roches, Hélisienne de Crenne, and Marie de Gournay; in Italy with the tre corone, Moderata Fonte, Lucrezia Marinella, and Ancangela Tarabotti; and in numerous anonymous female querreille authors whom we can only hear today as textual voices, or whose identity remains hidden behind the protecting mask of a male pseudonym.

Even though Jean Bouchet in Le Jugement poétique de l’honneur feminin (1536) still speaks of "the quarrel which the woman suffers at the hands of the man,"23 one can observe that this lexeme is replaced more and more often by apologie, defense, or, in the famous text by Marie de Gournay, Le grief des dames (in the sense of women’s complaint).24 After 1630, it seems that the querreille in its original form had passed its climax;25 the lexeeme querreille also took on a markedly pejorative connotation. New forms of the debate over male/female inferiority or superiority include the catalogues of women originating from the older querreille des femmes, to which contemporary examples or at least those dating from the immediate past were added more and more often. Such a development can be considered as an early form of anthologizing and cataloguing of women’s literature. A further indication of the "continuation of the old querreille in new media" is the presence of querreille topics in literary texts such as Pierre Marivaux’s one-act play La Colombe (1729–30) and Christoph Martin Wieland’s Bildungsroman: Geschichte der Agathon (1794),26 to mention just two random examples.

This "continuation of the querreille by other means" forms a relatively continuous and straight line, which in Italy runs from Ludovico Domenichi’s Rime diverse d’alcune nobilissime et virtuosissime donne (Diverse Rhymes by Noble and Virtuous Women) (1559) to Luisa Bergalli’s Composizioni poetiche delle più illustri rimatrici d’ogni secolo (Poetic Compositions by the Most Famous Poetesses of All Centuries) (1726) to Yolanda De Blasis’s Le Scrittrice italiane, dalle origini al 1600 (Italian Women Writers from the Beginnings to 1600) (1930). The first of these volumes are anthologies with a few added biographical commentaries (Domenichi and Bergalli), while their successor is a preliminary attempt at a gender-specific literary history (De Blasis), a rather unsatisfactory work owing to its lack of structuring categories. Nevertheless, all three examples are interesting for modern readers with regard to canonization processes. In France a similar but richer tradition developed during the same period. It begins with Jean de La Porte’s Le cercle des femmes savantes (The Circle of Learned Ladies) (1665), which is no more than a list of names, but two eighteenth-century works are more important: Abbé de La Porte’s Histoire littéraire des femmes françaises (Literary History of French Women) (1769), and Louise-Félicité de Kéralio’s Collection

26Christoph Martin Wieland’s Bildungsroman: Geschichte der Agathon (1794), esp. book 14, chapter 6, containing Aspasia’s philippic against the male sex, carries clear traces of the querreille des femmes.
This renaissance occurred mainly thanks to the work done by the literary historians and historians of literature, Abel Lefranc and Emile Telle, who used the term *guerelle* in their studies on Rabelais (*Le tiers livre de Pantagruel* et la guerelle des femmes, 1904, reprinted in 1914, 1931) and on Marguerite de Navarre (*L'oeuvre de Marguerite d'Angoulême, reine de Navarre et la guerre des femmes*, 1937). This return to a classic term of gender history was an accident but can be explained by a specific historical constellation: the encounter of early French feminism and existentialism around 1900. From both arose the tendency to historicize an important contemporary phenomenon, feminism, and to find its founders and precursors.

A second phase of the *guerelle des femmes* took place during the new women's movement of the sixties and seventies. The women's movement was not so much interested in finding possible precursors; rather, it acknowledged the *guerelle* as a phenomenon sui generis, important for the history of women, which became the center of attention. From this perspective, the work of Maté Albisur and Daniel Armogathe, 


31Maclean, *Woman Triumphant*.


35These include M. Streich's edition of François de Béthisy's *Le fort insigne de l'honneur des femmes* (1970) in the anthology *La femme dans la littérature française et les traditions en français du XVe siècle*, ed. Louise Guérin-Caruthcher, Jean-Pierre Guérin, Laurence Dejou, and Marie-Françoise Pieujou (Paris: Université de Lille, 1971); Maureen C. Drew, *The Lieu de la Cité des Dames de Christine de Pisan: A Critical Edition* (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1975), which up to then was only available in manuscript; and the new edition of *della* by Marie de Gournay, beginning in the eighties, and the *Archiv für philologische und historische Frauenforschung* of Elisabeth Güskamm (Munich: Judicium, 1984).
The title of this essay contains a proposition: namely, that the European *querelle des femmes* should be considered as a paradigm for historical cultural studies. If we agree with Roger Chartier that gender history is a part of historical cultural studies, and see gender history as "inscribed in practices and facts, organizing reality and the everyday," as "always constructed by the discourse which founds and legitimizes it," and as grounded in social reality, then the *querelle des femmes* marks a point of intersection of cultural studies research interests. The *querelle* combines an intensive discourse of "man" and "woman" with reference to their respective social reality and its practices: exertion of political power, access to education, forms of control over the body, and marriage, to name only a very few relevant topics. The longer one studies the *querelle des femmes*, the more one gains the impression that we are confronted with a historical phenomenon of global importance which, in its numerous offshoots, reaches deep into the heart of the history of our disciplines. If new evidence from the most various disciplines of such an omnipresence of *querelle* structures in different fields were not constantly appearing, one could easily dismiss this as the misconceived idea of an academic in love with her own object. These research interests, however, have not been brought together and as yet await integration into a broader cultural studies context. I will content myself with just a few references.

Concerning Italian studies, Deanna Sheneke and Pamela Benson prove that even classic texts such as Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* or Castiglione's *Correggio* are

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38. Friederike Hassauer draws attention to this phenomenon in Bock and Zimmermann, *Die europäische Querelle*, 267–8.


42. Pamela Benson, *The Inventories of the Renaissance Woman: The Challenge of Female Independence in the Literature and Thought of Italy and England* (University Park, Penn: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992). Franco-Italian literary relations within a *querelle* context are analyzed by Anna Skre, "L'nlavazione del De chaos materialis in due testi della 'querelle des femmes': *Champion des Dames* di Martin Le Franc (1460) e il *jugement poetique de l'homme femmene* di Jean Bouchet (1538)," in *L'arte de la Renaissance*.

43. Concerning the history of art, I would like to refer only to Mary D. Garrard's *Art and Feminism* and Silvia Neysater, *La Guerre des Sexes* by Lawrence Maillot (1977), which includes important material on the early modern *querelle*.

44. Further examples from the fields of history, philosophy, anthropology, theology, the history of fashion, gender history, and literary history round out the picture. Since the "exceptional quality of feminist research... lies in its interdisciplinary approach" and it must therefore be interested in working with precisely defined terms applicable across lines, the *querelle des femmes* offers itself as an exceptionally fertile key concept. It permits the focusing of similar research initiatives from the different disciplines involved in cultural studies but also allows us to uncover the considerable overlap in European *querelle* traditions. This will ultimately result in at least a partial rewriting of single-discipline histories such as literary history or art history. It may lead to the ultimate dissolution of monodisciplinary

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52. The attempt at structuring literary history with the help of the *querelle des femmes* can be observed already in Jean Lacome's *Histoire de la littérature féminine en France* (Paris: Editions Krit, 1929); and German Brie, *Women Writers in France: Variations on a Theme* (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1973), although this work covers a much more restricted time period.


Grammar in Arcadia

Gabriele Beck-Busse

This essay focuses on two works which, although published two hundred years apart, feature the arcadian setting evoked in the title as well as a number of other similarities. Both works, which present the French language and grammar, clearly have didactic aims. Peter Erendell’s French Garden, published in 1605, targets an English-speaking public that is learning French as a foreign language, whereas Alexandre (or Antoine) Touron’s Promenades de Clarisse, published between 1784 and 1787, is aimed at a French public that wishes to be introduced to the principles of its own mother tongue or to the fundamentals of grammar in general. I intend to show some of the characteristics that help to determine the genre of "Grammars for Ladies" by means of these two textbooks, which can be considered a representative sample.

The first work, Erendell’s French Garden, can be characterized as a collection of dialogues that seek to convey not only practical language competence but also moral values as prescribed in innumerable earlier works. For example, the anonymous Décor puellarum, Juan Luis Vives’s Institutione formæ Christianæ, and Giovanni

1 Peter Erendell, The French Garden; for English Ladies and Gentlemens to walk in. Or, A Summer day’s labour: Being an instruction for the staying unto the knowledge of the French Tongue: wherein for this practice thereof, are framed thirteeen Dialogues in French and English, concerning divers matters from the rising in the morning till Bed-time. Also the History of the Conversation mentioned in the Grapsel, in French Verses. Which is an easier and shorter Method than hath been yet set forth, to bring the letters of the French tongue to the perfection of the same (London: printed for Edward White, 1605).


5 For dauer, see Manfred Lentzen, "Vives' Ideen über die Erziehung der Frau: Zu «De institutione

52 I am grateful to Gesa Sedman for translating this chapter into English.