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Lyndan Warner, *The Ideas of Man and Woman in Renaissance France: Print, Rhetoric, and Law*. Farnham, England and Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2011. xiv + 263 pp. Figures, notes, bibliography, and index. \$119.95 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-1-4094-1246-5; ebook ISBN 978-1-4094-1247-2.

Review by Kendall B. Tarte, Wake Forest University

As its title suggests, this book brings together several areas of study that had previously been considered in isolation. Rejecting the traditional separation in Renaissance studies of literature on men and on women, Warner sets out to relate the discourses on the dignity and misery of man to the debate on the nature of woman called the *Querelle des femmes* and to trace their evolution over the course of the sixteenth century and into the seventeenth. Along the way, she considers the book market, the personal libraries and reading practices of individual men and women, and the rhetorical strategies of lawyers and judges. The most compelling aspects of this book come out of its subtitle, in examples of booksellers and lawyers who worked in and near the Palais de Justice in Paris.

Chapter one provides an overview of the topics to be discussed. Warner reviews the scholarship on sixteenth-century discourses on men and women and argues that relatively little attention has been paid to writings on the weaknesses of man, leading to the misinterpretation of the *Querelle des femmes* as “pure misogyny” (p. 7). This observation elucidates the genesis of this book, which considers the interconnectedness of these discourses over the course of the sixteenth century. This introductory chapter also provides useful background discussions of several topics that recur throughout the book—social mobility, humanist education, and marital alliances in the Renaissance—and a brief explanation of the three terms in the book’s subtitle.

Chapter two lays the groundwork for the two chapters to follow on the dignity and misery of man and on the *Querelle des femmes*. Warner examines the collaboration and rivalry that characterized networks of merchant booksellers and printers in the first half of the sixteenth century. The result is a vivid portrait of the book market that highlights the production of some of the most important—and well-known—figures in the book trade in Paris and Lyon: the L’Angeliers, the Janot family, including Denis Janot’s widow Jeanne de Marnef, and Jean de Tournes. This fascinating discussion draws attention to those who produced, sold, and owned books. Warner reads title pages and printers’ prefaces to show the roles of booksellers and printers in book production and distribution and to highlight the financial concerns, editorial policies, and marketing strategies of these men and women. She studies the post-mortem inventory of one man, Gilbert de Hodic, in an attempt to recreate his book collection. Although the lack of specificity in such inventories renders the resulting list inconclusive, this discussion provides a useful and interesting portrait of the holdings of one household.

Chapters three and four examine the literature on the dignity and misery of man and on the *Querelle des femmes*. Warner demonstrates that both discourses relied on similar commonplaces. For example, the topos of man standing upright, drawn from the creation story of Adam, served as a sign of dignity for certain writers, but could be used to reverse effect by others to argue for man’s misery through his presumption and stupidity; writers of the *Querelle des femmes* adapted elements of the creation story to praise or attack women. Throughout her discussion of the *Querelle*, Warner reminds her reader that the

dominant rhetorical mode in this period was to argue both sides of a question. Taking issue with the typical critical approach that considers the relative misogyny of these texts, she argues that the use of positive and negative exempla in one text was not inconsistent, but instead a characteristic rhetorical strategy of the Renaissance.

The most fruitful arguments in these chapters come from close examination of one text. In her discussion of Gratien Dupont's *Controverses des sexes masculin et féminin* [sic], first published in 1534, Warner outlines the reception of this controversial work and the circumstances of its publication; her reading of text and images shows the importance of verbal and visual play in Dupont's attack on women. Analyses that cover a significant number of texts in a small amount of space can, however, be less effective. The apparent impulse to compile an extensive list of sources leads the author occasionally to overlook the implications of literary genre. A section on the commonplaces that *Querelle* authors drew from texts on the dignity and misery of man, for example, includes allegories by Martin Le Franc, François de Billon, and Symphorien Champier, treatises by Henricus Cornelius Agrippa and Jean de Marconville, and the collection of poems praising individual parts of the female body called the *Blasons anatomiques du corps féminin*. A consideration of the differences between these genres—and in particular of the *blasons*, and the circumstances of their production as a literary game—would have enhanced this discussion.

Warner is most engaging and original when discussing the realities of bookselling and ownership. Throughout these two chapters, she calls attention to the fact that these books were produced and sold in specific places and that they were owned by real people. Warner offers periodic, brief glimpses into the Hodic inventory, first presented in chapter two. For example, in a discussion of commonplaces on the misery of man, she notes that “Gilbert de Hodic and Geneviève Bureau ... could have read about these human weaknesses in either of their two copies of Sforza's book or in their copy of Champier's moral advice to the prince” (p. 63); “Hodic or his wife ... obtained a copy of Corrozet's *Hecatographie* at some point in the 1540s” (p. 72). Such anecdotal references rightly remind us that the debates on women and men affected the lives of real people.

The next two chapters turn to literary developments in the mid-sixteenth century, after the heyday of the *Querelle des femmes* and literature on the dignity and misery of man. Here, “formats that allowed for multiple perspectives” (p. 143)—the literary dialogue, collections of commonplaces or lessons, and the essay—show the persistence of the model of arguing on two sides of an issue. In chapter five, Warner ties the advent of the dialogue to the development of a secular “civilisation story” (p. 121) that oscillated with and sometimes replaced the biblical source, the creation story. She draws on Virginia Cox's elaboration of the distinction between “open” and “closed” dialogues in the Renaissance in a consideration of literary dialogues published in France in the second half of the sixteenth century.[1] The centerpiece of this chapter is Louise Labé's *Débat de Folie et d'Amour*, in particular the final “Discours 5,” in which Apolon and Mercure each produce a long defense of Amour and Folie, respectively. Following Janet Levarie Smarr, Warner points to the absence in the *Débat* of Christian references, but largely bases her puzzling conclusion on the *Débat*'s final gesture, when the judge Jupiter declares that the verdict will be postponed “for three times seven times nine centuries” (p. 134).[2] Despite the existence of a number of nuanced critical readings arguing that Labé privileges Folie, Warner reads the *Débat*, somewhat reductively, as open (in Cox's terminology) in its suspension of judgment.[3]

This chapter is more successful in showing the ways in which authors, including Labé, played with typical commonplaces drawn from popular literature on women and men. In a particularly suggestive reading, Warner explores the parallels between a dialogue by Étienne Pasquier first published in the early 1550s, the *Monophile*, and the arguments he later made as a lawyer in the Parlement of Paris. Here as elsewhere, Warner's interest in the intersections between sixteenth-century commonplaces on women and legal discourse results in compelling reading. Chapter six turns from dialogues to other

texts that gather different perspectives: collections of miscellanies by Pedro Mexía and Jean de Marconville, and Michel de Montaigne's *Essais*. Again, the more convincing arguments are based on close reading. Warner's illuminating side-by-side comparison of miscellanies reveals the direct influence of Mexía on Marconville, who did not acknowledge his borrowings from the Spanish writer. The brief section devoted to Montaigne, on the other hand, seems rushed, perhaps an understandable effect of an attempt to grapple with the "questions on man, woman and human nature" (p. 143) in this complex writer.

Chapters seven and eight are the book's most exciting. Chapter seven looks at the books sold in the Palais de Justice at the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, and at the people who purchased (and likely read) them. Warner concentrates on the differences between professional reading and reading for contemplation and leisure, and between men's and women's book ownership and reading practices. The study of post-mortem and probate inventories also draws attention to the challenges the historian faces when working to discover the possessions and practices of women, as opposed to men, in this period. Warner creates an absorbing account of her methodical work to reconstruct individual libraries and to imagine the reading habits of these book owners.

Chapter eight examines court registers and printed lawyers' pleadings in a study of the rhetorical practices of lawyers in the Parlement of Paris. Far from simply reproducing the version of a case from the court registers, printed lawyers' pleadings were often amplified with classical exempla that reveal a "rhetoric of citation" (p. 194) similar to that of the earlier *Querelle des femmes*. In two very fine close readings, Warner reviews the different versions of two appeals in the Parlement of Paris. Both center on the inheritance of a woman. The first, years after her parents' deaths, tries to claim her share of the family possessions, while the second defends her right to the property of her husband, whom she married the day before his death after they had lived in *concubinage*—that is, acting as husband and wife without being married—for many years. Not just captivating stories, these cases also show the ambiguity of many legal decisions and the defining characteristics of such texts. To conclude, Warner provides a succinct reiteration of the main arguments of the book (chapter nine).

Most of Warner's book is smoothly written, lucid, and easy to follow. One typographical convention, used intermittently, is somewhat puzzling: unnecessary quotation marks. Of course, quotation marks are appropriately used to designate citations from primary and secondary sources. In some passages, however, especially in the earlier chapters, they also set off single words or short phrases not drawn from another work. In certain cases, this punctuation seems to indicate the use of a modern term in an earlier context—"This woodcut was frequently recycled ... to indicate the 'misogynist' and 'feminist' sides of the *Querelle des femmes*" (p. 23)—but Warner never directly indicates her intention to historicize. In other examples, quotation marks surround expressions whose use seems unproblematic: "To understand the early modern desire for 'dignity' and the ever-present anxiety about 'misery'..." (p. 9); "This chapter follows these 'books of the humanities'..." (p. 25); "With a steady income from 'official' and legal publications,..." (p. 37). There are many instances of this sort. While this typographical peculiarity may simply indicate the scrupulousness of the author, its excessive use proved distracting to this reader.

At its best, this book is persuasive and extremely engaging. Its analysis of literary texts can be uneven, but the most pertinent passages offer welcome readings of some lesser-known authors. Moving well beyond her stated goal of highlighting the crucial connections between the literatures on the dignity and misery of man and on women, Lyndan Warner reminds scholars of history and literature alike of the interconnectedness of literary and legal texts, and of the influence of these works on the lives of women and men in the Renaissance.

NOTES

[1] Virginia Cox, *The Renaissance Dialogue: Literary Dialogue in its Social and Political Contexts, Castiglione to Galileo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 1-8. Cox juxtaposes closed, didactic, monological dialogues with open, dramatic, dialogical dialogues; in the latter the reader plays a more demanding role.

[2] Janet Levarie Smarr, *Joining the Conversation: Dialogues by Renaissance Women* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

[3] See Smarr, p. 170; Floyd Gray, *Gender, Rhetoric, and Print Culture in French Renaissance Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 91; Anne R. Larsen, "Louise Labé's *Débat de Folie et d'Amour*: Feminism and the Defense of Learning," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 2(Spring 1983):43-55.

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