

CFP: He Said - She Said: Women's Words in Defence of Women

Renaissance Society of America Annual Meeting
Toronto, 17-19 March 2019

“Do you really believe ... that everything historians tell us about men – or about women – is actually true? You ought to consider the fact that these histories have been written by men, who never tell the truth except by accident.” - *The Worth of Women* (1600)

Writing about women in the late medieval and early modern period focused on ideals of female behaviour. In the 16th and 17th centuries the discussion became a public debate over not just how women should act, but also whether or not they were even capable of the prescribed behaviours: what was the nature of womankind? The “controversy” reached its height in the sixteenth century, with attacks and defences flying off the printing presses.



Not content to leave their defence to men, writers such as Moderata Fonte (quoted above) produced works that provided a counterpoint to traditional narratives that cast women as incapable and morally weak. From Christine de Pizan's *La cite des dames* (1405) to Archangela Tarabotti's *Tirannia Paterna* (1654), women have sought to directly confront misogynist views on the purported nature of women and their appropriate roles and behaviours in society.

This panel invites submissions on women who consciously and directly challenged the male-dominated discourse by interjecting their own voices into it. How did these women attempt to change or alter the debate? What argumentative tools/mediums did they choose? What were their expectations of the intervention? Who was the audience? How were such interventions received? What were the ramifications of such direct / public actions for these women?

Suggested topics may include but are not limited to: “in defence of” and other activist texts; literary or visual representations of ‘illustrious women’ cycles; conduct manuals or advice texts written by women for women; women educators; political tracts/political activism by women; and philosophical or religious writing on the role and nature of women.

Particularly welcome are papers on un- or understudied women, and non-Eurocentric approaches. Papers from all disciplines will be considered.

Please submit 200-word proposals to Sarah Schell (sschell@aud.edu) and Tabitha Kenlon (tkenlon@aud.edu). Please include your name, email address, institutional affiliation, title of paper, and a brief CV. Feel free to email with any questions.

Deadline: July 25th, 2018