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**Gender Debates in Literature 1683-1701:
The Gould-Egerton and Sprint-Eugenia-
Chudleigh Controversies**

A thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts in English at Massey
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Teresa Deirdre Boleyn

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ABSTRACT

During the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-centuries debates about issues of gender and sexual behaviour became prominent in literary discourse. These gender debates were informed by traditions of western literature such as the classical Greeks and Romans and the Bible. In two of these debates we can see the adaptations of misogynist writings to support claims of male superiority, expressions of male desire and women's inherently evil and depraved natures. In contrast, the women reassess the traditions to make room for female equality, expression and expectations.

In the work of Robert Gould, Sarah Egerton, John Sprint, "Eugenia" and Lady Mary Chudleigh, we see a crystallisation of arguments in gender debates. Each writer describes their expectations of men's and women's behaviour and voices assumptions about the sexes based on current ideologies. In the works of the women writers we can trace the development of early English feminism.

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A NOTE ON THE TEXTS

The bibliographic history of *Love Given O're* is a little confused. The *DNB* claims that it was printed as early as 1680, but other sources put the first printing at 1683. The edition that I am using bears a paste-over imprint with the date 1682, but it seems that this date is false, and the actual date of printing was 1683.¹ The texts of later editions of *Love Given O're* in 1685 and 1686 have no significant textual variations. The text of Egerton's *The Female Advocate* is that of 1687.

Sprint's *The Bride-Womans Counsellor* was printed in 1699, the year of its delivery as a sermon. *The Female Preacher* was first published under that name in 1699 or 1700, and then reprinted under the title *The Female Advocate* in 1700. I am using the former text. *The Ladies Defence* was first published anonymously in 1701 (bearing a dedication signed "M--y C--"). Editions of 1701 and 1710 included a substantial preface. I am using the 1709 edition.

Throughout the text all quotations have been retained with the original spelling. Letters "i" and "v" have been modernised to "j" and "u" respectively. All brackets in quotations have been standardised to round brackets. Any obvious misprints have been corrected.

Quotations from Anne Finch's "The Introduction," Jane Barker's "A Virgin Life" and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's "Epistle from Mrs. Y[onge]" are from *Minor Poets of the Eighteenth Century*, *Kissing the Rod*, and *Essays and Poems and "Simplicity: a Comedy"* respectively. All quotations from Chudleigh and Egerton not from *The Ladies Defence* or *The Female Advocate* are from Margaret Ezell's edition of Chudleigh's poetry and Roger Lonsdale's anthology *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*.

¹ Felicity Nussbaum outlines the printing history of this edition in a little more detail in *The Brink of All We Hate: English Satires On Women, 1680-1740*, (171 n.46). Langley Curtis also appears to have published an edition in 1683 (see Wing *A Gallery of Ghosts* O G 1423A).