

woman who served five English queens and cultivated fruitful contacts with Spanish nobles at the English court. The second, by Jo Eldridge Carney, examines queens who were prisoners in early modern literature and life. Overall, this remarkable volume contains much that is valuable for specialists in royal studies, literature, drama, and historical research.

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Conduct Becoming: Good Wives and Husbands in the Later Middle Ages.

Glenn Burger.

The Middle Ages Series. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017. 262 pp. \$65.

Professor Burger's book—smart, complex, and engaging—kicks up a notch and fine-tunes the conversation about works of conduct for women in the late Middle Ages. He convincingly connects the works discussed to the emergence of the good wife as an active reader, providing a model for Christian perfection every bit as potent as that of the dedicated virgin from earlier clerical discussions of female excellence. The texts included under the rubric of conduct promulgate what Burger deems a “radically different” (4) sex/gender system from those of previous clerical or aristocratic models. These late medieval texts on forming the good wife's character evince that their (male) authors deem that a woman's nature, despite the long antifeminist tradition of female waywardness, can indeed be made nobler. The central tenet of such books is female self-restraint. The late medieval wife who willingly and actively submits to the texts' authority desires self-restraint and re-creates herself as a model of secular virtue in the household—an altered social paradigm, Burger claims. He provides fairly persuasive evidence that these texts redefine woman and the feminine for the new age, heralding novel relations between the sexes, emphasizing affection within marriage and the sacramentality of wedlock, and accounting for new realities of lay households, coupled with the era's changing relations between church and state (6).

Chapter 1 discusses *journalées chrétiennes*, primarily vernacular religious works addressing how the layperson emulates celibate devotional practices. While not announcing themselves as conduct manuals, works like Walter Hilton's *Mixed Life*, books of hours, or *Decor puellarum*, among many cited, indicate, argues Burger, a movement to reshape the spiritual nature of the lay reader, advocating both active and contemplative piety in the secular householder. At this cultural moment, some authors erase the gender differences between the devout practices of married laymen and laywomen. Such hybrid texts reflect and engage with the hybridity of the married estate. It's unfortunate that the terms *hybrid* and *hybridity* occur in this book too frequently to have, in the end, the impact the concept deserves, since Burger's point throughout about the mixed/crossbred/fused nature of the conduct texts and the life they encourage is significant.

Burger turns, in the excellent chapter 2, to secular conduct literature pointedly concerned in its narrative strategy about remaking the feminine as a good wife, such as in the “complexly hybrid” (89) and “innovative” (103) *Livre du chevalier de la Tour Landry*, which combines the discourses of *fin amor* and conduct, the courtly garden and the married household. In a work focusing on mirroring the woman as good, marriage becomes “the privileged space for female chastity and achievement” (100). The wife who takes the book to heart, then, achieves her place in the social sphere of the household, forging a model, self-created and ennobled through her careful interiorization and performance of the text’s injunctions to guard her behavior. The third chapter examines *Le Menagier de Paris* and its author’s narrative experimentation (although Burger sidesteps the discussion of an author). Here the bedchamber represents the “theater of marriage” (128), where monastic and mercantile values productively conjoin, and Burger provides salient insights into the compilation as a unit, a network designed to socialize the good wife, despite its “maggie incorporation” (107) of different kinds of narratives.

The final (and best) chapter surveys Griselda’s avatars in the late Middle Ages and the readings of her story, with its unstable meaning, by Boccaccio, Petrarch, Philippe de Mézières, and Chaucer’s Clerk. The problem of ethical action in the world, the sacramental context of consensual marriage, and the issue of self-restraint at the heart of conduct literature operate in the tale, and married female virtue acts as an agent for change. Burger’s evaluation of “The Clerk’s Tale” is particularly sharp, labeling the Clerk’s reading of Griselda “androgynous,” demonstrating that conduct literature evinces the “best way to articulate an ethical subject position in the world” (180).

The latitude of this review necessarily shortchanges such a strongly argued book, and cannot catalog Burger’s many aperçus and fine close readings, especially in the Griselda chapter. This book re-visualizes myriad conduct texts and allows them to gather richness and meaning from being discussed in each other’s company by someone who reads them with care to theorize, while showcasing telling details of each text. The works Burger examines may have had the agenda of producing, in their historical context, marriages of coherence and affection (194), and intended, by stifling female waywardness and corporality, to produce through reading the self-restraint and ethical behavior denoting the good wife for a new age.

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Das Grenzwesen Mensch, Vormoderne Naturphilosophie und Literatur im Dialog mit Postmoderner Gendertheorie. Marlen Bidwell-Steiner.
Mimesis 65. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017. x + 320 pp. \$114.99.

Das Grenzwesen Mensch is a pathbreaking book, unprecedented in its scope in examining sixteenth-century theories of the body by natural philosophers and writers in