Jessica C. Murphy. *Virtuous Necessity: Conduct Literature and the Making of the Virtuous Woman in Early Modern England*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015. Pp. 192. $60.00 (cloth).
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Those of us who study—and teach—early modern English literature and culture, have grown accustomed to annexing the conduct literature that was so popular in the period and, more particularly, to hinging discussion of women's conduct on the ideal, repeated so frequently, that women should be "chaste, silent, and obedient"(5). Jessica Murphy's *Virtuous Necessity* enriches this discussion by "reconsider[ing] both the triad of feminine virtue and woman's place as acting subject in relation to that triad" and by bringing together an unexpected variety of texts and genres (6). One of the book's chief strengths is that it canvasses such a wide range of literary and nonliterary works, often focusing on little-remarked passages and portions of those works.

Murphy situates her reassessment by noting that critical engagement with conduct treatises, especially as an interpretive context for literature, typically treats ideals of feminine virtue as inflexible and too often supposes that "only women who do not follow the code of behavior" can be viewed as "'liberated'" (6). For Murphy, such assumptions preclude the possibility of finding room for women's agency *within* observance of those codes. She aims to find that room and to demonstrate the ways in which women "negotiate rules of behavior" and wield influence, often from positions of apparent subservience, can be more interesting than open defiance (6). To those ends, she "reconstruct[s] the dialogue between conduct manuals and works of literature that show women receiving, acting on, and even subverting advice" (7). Central to Murphy's argument is the contention that conduct literature, while it reflects patriarchal imperatives in its definition of feminine virtue, simultaneously shows that the "patriarchal narrative itself admits that the virtuous woman *is* a cultural construct" (1, my emphasis). This admission, however tacit, allows for "multiple meanings of behavioral expectations for women" and thus for "models for 'acceptable' conduct that lie outside of rigid prescriptions" (7).

Murphy devotes a chapter each to the two virtues that to us today smack the most of patriarchal stricture: chastity and obedience. She aims to complicate conventional critical assessment of these ideals by showing that chastity was a paradoxical ideal and that obedience was understood to be an active, rather than passive, virtue. She maps the ideal of chastity across works by Juan Luis Vives, Elizabeth Cary, Edmund Spenser, and John Milton, arguing that each of these writers handles differently the inherent contradictions within the ideal. For Murphy, the contradictions and paradoxes associated with the representation of chastity make it an ideal that eludes strict patriarchal definition. Similarly, obedience, particularly in later Protestant marriage manuals, emerges as an ideal that is not entirely straightforward. Works as diverse as prose romances and funeral sermons represent obedience as active rather than passive, and, accordingly, as influential: women are enjoined to "perform" obedience in order to teach other women, reform wayward or abusive husbands, and, more widely, shape and define community values. In both chapters, Murphy is largely persuasive in the general thrust of her arguments, less so in her readings of texts, which are occasionally more descriptive than deeply engaged—a risk one runs in aiming to illustrate a central tenet with evidence from a range of sources.

Drawing on the fact that both conduct manuals and theater furnish models of behavior, Murphy turns in her third chapter to *Hamlet* and *The Winter's Tale*, noting that much criticism has focused on Shakespeare's female characters but little discussion has been devoted to "the advice these women receive" (53). Murphy chooses these plays because they offer a study in differences. Ophelia receives counsel from all sides and is driven to the point of madness because she has no one to show her how to interpret advice that can be inherently contradictory and because her own potential for critical thinking is shut down by her father. Paulina, on the other hand, pointedly ignores advice, disobeying husband and king, but remains unpunished

for doing so because she practices "counter-magic" that works to reform the patriarchal order. Ophelia suffers because of the unresolvable contradictions in early conduct manuals; Paulina triumphs because "more flexible post-Reformation model[s] of female conduct" (79) grant her the scope to act—"even if the result is her own resubmission to authority" (80).

Murphy's caveat regarding Paulina's agency underscores a motif that runs throughout the book: the agency or power to be found within prescriptive ideals is either redirected to the securing of patriarchal order or ultimately elided. Thus, for Vives, "the most chaste woman is a dead woman" (20), while for Phillip Stubbes, who praises his exemplary and therefore influential late wife, "the perfect wife … is a dead woman" (51). Such conclusions remind us that the room for agency that Murphy finds *within* the parameters of prescriptive ideals is, by our standards, woefully narrow.

In the fourth chapter, Murphy turns from male-authored works to female-authored works on feminine virtue, focusing on "how women writers tend to represent the flow of virtue among women" (82) and how that creates new roles for readers. Within this new dynamic between female writer and female reader, "[v]irtue is passed on through interpretation" rather than simply prescribed or modeled (96). In this, the shortest chapter of the book, Murphy does not develop as fully or coherently as she might what is one her most interesting claims. Murphy's concluding chapter, on broadside ballads, returns us to the book's opening contention—about the "many-sidedness of behavioral prescriptions for women" (1)—by noting that female characters in ballads show a "complex" range of behavior (97). And, while not denying the essential conservatism of ballads, Murphy finds that it is "directed toward peace in the household, on the streets, and in the partnership of marriage" and that therefore "feminine virtue is figured as important to survival" (122). Throughout the book, Murphy's examples of female agency come in similarly small measures; cumulatively, they do enlarge the place of women.

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In *Then and Now: Collecting and Classicism in Eighteenth-Century England*, Joan Coutu examines the popular aristocratic practice of collecting classical sculpture in mid-century Britain. Focusing on the curious preference for copies and casts of classical statuary instead of authentic originals, she argues that these replicas of antiquity were valuable in shaping the evolving taste and politics of the landed aristocracy and legitimating Britain's emerging empire. Coutu usefully focuses on four whig collectors—the Marquess of Rockingham, the Duke of Richmond, the Earl of Huntingdon, and Thomas Hollis—in order to explore the different ways they used sculpture to claim their right to rule and encourage public virtue.

Coutu begins by looking at how sculpture collections functioned as political display. Chapter 1 reviews early eighteenth-century collectors who interspersed classical sculptures among contemporary pieces to create an iconographic narrative that rested on a temporal elision between past and present. At his Houghton estate, for example, Robert Walpole gathered busts of Roman leaders together with those of himself and his family to authenticate his claim to political leadership, while the Prince of Wales installed a statue of Minerva in his gardens at Kew to evoke his own political prowess on his way to becoming King George III.

This trend became more pronounced with Charles Watson-Wentworth, the second Marquess of Rockingham, whose Wentworth Woodhouse estate functioned as his political base