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[See table of contents](#)

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Burger, Glenn D.

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

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018. Pp. 262 + 4 b/w ill. ISBN 978-0-8122-4960-6 (hardcover) US\$65.

In *Conduct Becoming* Glenn Burger examines and re-examines a wide body of sources, many of which will be familiar to scholars of medieval history or literature. For example, the book of the Knight of La Tour Landry or the manual written by the Menagier de Paris are virtually commonplace for the study of medieval gender, marriage, or the household. Similarly, the marital vicissitudes of (Patient) Griselda have received extensive analysis in its multiple re-tellings by Petrarch, Boccaccio, Chaucer, and others. But Burger also integrates less-well-known sources such as the *journées chrétiennes*, a sort of vernacular Book of Hours intended to inculcate religious prayers and contemplation taken from the monasteries into the domestic sphere and the daily life of the medieval wife. His close reading and analysis of these texts is meticulous. Burger argues that conduct literature of this sort transformed the earlier ecclesiastical perceptions of women from sexualized and uncontrolled into positive and virtuous exemplars of the good wife of the later Middle Ages. This, he suggests, reflects how thirteenth- and fourteenth-century society was moving beyond earlier conservative religious views to embrace a more pragmatic and positive view of women, which was especially significant for the milieu of newly emergent bourgeois society.

This is a volume focused on textual analysis to reveal the transformation of the evaluation of the wife through the dissemination of conduct literature. This whole process is founded upon female lay literacy, at least among the aristocracy, bourgeois, and gentry groups. To support this assertion, in the introduction Burger includes a compelling and thoughtful discussion of an image from the Hours of Mary of Burgundy. While conduct literature discussed household management and other quotidian matters, it was overlain by lay devotion which links it back to Mary of Burgundy's own devotional literacy. Thus, female literacy was essential for the dissemination of conduct literature and its new vision of feminine virtue. But, in our haste to see women, literate in the vernacular, reading empowering texts, we must also wonder who actually did read them. Certainly, the sheer volume of manuscripts, translations, editions, and early printed books that survive supports the argument that

these treatises were popular and important. But with so little direct historical evidence for female vernacular literacy, there is a need to exercise caution about the readers. For example, Burger notes that conduct literature was often written by men and was relational; that is, the texts posit relationships between fathers and daughters, husbands and wives, and even the good wife and servants, tradesmen, and household managers. Could this also suggest that men—husbands and fathers—may have read these treatises to the women of the household?

Burger identifies important changes in the religious and secular understanding of marriage following its recognition as a sacrament in the twelfth century. In particular, as the meaning and implications of marital affection evolved, there was less stress on women as sexual or erotic beings. This aligns with the development of marital chastity, the controlled sexuality appropriate between husband and wife. Moreover, the notion of marital affection modified spousal behaviour, placing mutual spousal care at the centre of the marriage bond. This respectful and reciprocal consensus led to marriage being appreciated more as a domestic partnership and less as a relationship of dominance and submission more familiar to the earlier Middle Ages.

While conduct literature was pedagogical in nature, intended to educate women to be good wives, Burger argues that another consequence was the development of women as ethical subjects. In the process, conduct literature reflects a transformation of marriage into not only a sacrament but a union of two partners who effected an emotional, domestic bond reflecting and reinforcing the emergent values of marital affection. Burger's focus on the development and emergence of the ethical good wife also parallels the development of bourgeois and gentry society itself and the respectable masculinity, the sober governance, that inflected the patriarchal households in the later Middle Ages. In short, good men were expected to be good husbands. These new types—the goodwife and the respectable husband—occupied a transitional domestic sphere, one that moved patriarchy away from sheer hierarchy into a relationship foreshadowing companionate marriage. In *Conduct Becoming*, Burger puts marriage at the centre of gender analysis, overturning the conventional strategy of using a gendered position to analyze marriage. This is a volume that will interest a wide body of scholars: gender studies, marriage and household, textual analysis, emotions and affectivity, to name but the most obvious. It is

a welcome addition to the bookshelves equally of social historians and literary and religious scholars.

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Cavendish, Margaret.

***Poems and Fancies with The Animal Parliament*. Ed. Brandie R. Siegfried.**

The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series 64 / Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 536. Toronto: Iter Press / Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2018. Pp. xx, 462 + 4 ill. ISBN 978-0-86698-593-2 (paperback) US\$59.95.

Brandie R. Siegfried's edition makes an important contribution to seventeenth-century literature, culture, and science in English, as these are realms in which Margaret Cavendish played a central role. Cavendish has been part of the conversation of English and western European culture from her lifetime onward. In this review, I will focus on how Siegfried introduces and edits her work.

Cavendish was a keen student of natural philosophy as well as a writer of many genres, including essays, poems, orations, plays, romance, epistolary philosophy, political parody, science fiction, memoir, and biography. This versatile figure, as Siegfried argues, is of interest in the history of science, philosophy, and literature. Constantijn Huygens praised *Poems and Fancies*, Cavendish's first poetic exploration of natural philosophy. Gerard Langbaine lauded her poetry and learning. William Cavendish, her husband, was an admirer of her work, which included an Epicurean poem of atomism, a model that Cavendish adapts to her own view of matter. Siegfried also stresses that Cavendish was aware of her role as a female author and of the perils of writing and speaking up as a woman, while she advocated for female education and for better legal and political status. Cavendish asserted her own voice in print rather than leave her work in manuscript.

Siegfried presents a brief life of Cavendish, in which she claims that Margaret Lucas's marriage to William Cavendish had a great effect on her career as a writer. It introduced her to mathematicians, scientists, and philosophers; she also learned from William and his brother Charles, who were well versed in