

### Excerpts from Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Conduct Books

Let them reply modestly to their husbands when called upon... and when place and occasion offer, let them speak to the point so briefly that they may be thought reluctant rather than eager to open their mouths... By silence indeed women achieve the fame of eloquence. ... ; for the speech of a noblewoman can be no less than the nakedness of her limbs.

**Fransesco Barbaro, *De Re uxoria* (Paris, 1513).** Cited in: *The Earthly Republic: Italian Humanists on Government and Society*, ed. Benjamin Kohl et al (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), p. 203.

... chastity is the principal virtue of a woman, and counterpoiseth with all the rest: is she have that, no man will look for any other, and if she lack that no man will regard other.

**Juan Luis Vives, *The Instruction of a Christian Woman*, trans. Richard Hyrde (London, 1540).** Cited in: *Renaissance Woman: A Sourcebook. Constructions of Femininity in England*, ed. Kate Aughterson (London & New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 70.

... it is meet that our English housewife be a woman of great modesty and temperance inwardly as well as outwardly: inwardly, as in her behaviour and carriage towards her husband, wherein she shall shun all violence of rage, passion, amiable, and delightful; and though occasion, mishaps, or the misgovernment of his will may induce her to contrary thoughts, yet virtuously to suppress them, and with a mild sufferance rather to call him home from his error, calling into her mind that evil and uncomely language is deformed though uttered to servants, but most monstrous and ugly when it appears before the presence of a husband: ...

**Gervase Markham, *The English Huswife, Containing the Inward and Outward Virtues Which Ought to Be in a Complete Woman* (London, 1615).** Ed. Michael R. Best (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986), p. ix.

... the paths of an harlot... are movable, for now she is in the house, now in the streets, now she lieth in wait in every corner...; she is ever more wondering: her feet are wondering, her eyes are wondering, her wits are wondering. Her ways are like the ways of a serpent: hard to be found out.

**Banabe Rich**, *My lady's looking glass* (London, 1616). Cited in: *Renaissance Woman: A Sourcebook. Constructions of Femininity in England*, ed. Kate Aughterson (London & New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 96.

A family is... a little Commonwealth... a school wherein the first principles and grounds of government and subjection are learned... So we may say of inferiors that cannot be subject in a family; they will be brought to yield subjection as they ought in Church or commonwealth.

**William Gouge**, *Of Domesticall Duties: Eight Treatises*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (London, 1634), p. 17.