A Moral Voice for the Restoration Lady: A Comparative View of Allestree and Vives

John A. Thomas
Brigham Young University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/rmmra

Part of the Comparative Literature Commons, History Commons, Philosophy Commons, and the Renaissance Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/rmmra/vol7/iss1/11

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Quidditas by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
A Moral Voice for the Restoration Lady: 
A Comparative View of Allestree and Vives

by

John A. Thomas
Brigham Young University

Following the civil strife of the 1640s and the Interregnum of the 1650s, Anglican England felt the necessity of spiritual housecleaning to tighten its hold on the godly and to ferret out dissenting influences. Evidence of renewed authoritarianism is seen in Richard Allestree's early appointment in the 1660s as a lecturer for the city of Oxford, where his task was to establish the faith and to root out schismatical opinions propagated by "false" teachers of the Interregnum.¹ In 1662 Charles was to pass measures, albeit reluctantly, requiring strict conformity concerning practices in the church not unlike those enforced by Laud. The surplice and the organ re-entered the church at Oxford and adherence to a stricter prayer book was a requisite for a preacher's position in the church. Further, the two thousand "schismatics" who were ejected at this time were, in 1665, forbidden to come within five miles of their former parishes. As Nicholas Jose has stated in his recent book on "ideas" of the Restoration,

The backlash against the rule of the saints, and even against the moderate presbyterians who, despite their loyalism, were suspiciously regarded as instigators of the rebellion, was triumphant, forceful and authoritarian . . . (21).

Important as a support to returning "order" was a popular new devotional treatise by Allestree setting out a complete rule for one's conduct, a treatise which had appeared in 1658 under the title The Whole Duty of Man. This tract was the parent of six anonymous treatises intended to return the age of Charles to a pre-war morality. The seven titles indicate something of the tracts' concerns: The Whole Duty of Man (1658), The Gentleman's Calling (1660), The Causes of the Decay of Christian Piety (1667), The Ladies Calling (1673),
The Government of the Tongue (1674), The Art of Contentment (1675), and The Lively Oracles or the Christian's Birthright (1678). In all except The Causes of Decay and The Art of Contentment (which are religious tracts rather than conduct books), Allestree pursues ideal deportment for the “correct” gentleman and the “pious” lady. The aim of the moral or didactic conduct book was to be revived and to flourish again, producing advice not unlike that delivered to the Restoration Englishman’s progenitors for generations and to the patristic, Biblical, and classical world before that.

In 1673 John Fell, the editor for all seven of The Whole Duty tracts, expressed jubilation on acquiring a manuscript, The Ladies Calling, which he correctly saw as a new combatant, not for the feminists who had recently become very visible in print but for traditional Christian values. The new tract would provide practical rules for a moral woman’s conduct in a Christian community. Allestree, himself, believed this book for women was closely allied to his other tracts on conduct, and if he saw the woman as a weaker vessel than the man, he was unaware that it was an illogical bias. He explains he is writing a treatise addressed to women not only because their special needs require it but also because he feels it to be “Civility to their humor.” That is, as he rather ungraciously concludes, “Ladies are used to think the newness of any thing a considerable Addition to its Value . . . .” (The Ladies Calling, 1). By now fifteen years had passed since The Whole Duty of Man had appeared and thirteen since his last conduct book, The Gentleman’s Calling, had been published. In the opening lines of the new tract, Allestree claims that the kinship of The Ladies Calling to The Gentleman’s Calling is close. In fact, he declares that for the most part a new title and a few “razures” in The Gentleman’s Calling would save him the “labor of a new Book” (LC 1).

The sameness that Allestree sees in the books reflects two of his attitudes: one, that there is a basic equality of the sexes regarding spiritual and moral matters, and two, that the course of human history shows that men and women have learned and relearned the same lessons. Regarding this point, Joanna Martindale says of some germane sixteenth-century writers, “The assumption that human nature remains the same, so that the lessons of history are applicable to the present was shared by Machiavelli, Sir Thomas Elyot and the Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives” (37). A summary statement of the two “callings” tracts, however, shows that the author clearly differentiates the spheres of influence nature has designed for each sex. The Ladies Calling wishes women to pride themselves for their sense of divine worth and not in earthly titles or earthly beauty. Their calling is essentially a religious matter. To this end, the book is divided into two parts, the first addressing the issues in five sections on a woman’s need to be modest, meek, compassionate, affable, and pious—virtues for which Allestree believes a woman is peculiarly suited by nature and by God’s will. The second part of the book develops these and other proper rules of conduct for women in life’s three conditions ordained to
woman as a virgin, wife, and widow. The Gentleman’s Calling, on the other hand, sees men in a more active arena where their responsibilities are broader and spiritually more perilous.4

The Ladies Calling largely avoids the war of the sexes which had gained special attention in England during the last three decades of the century. Instead, the tract is able to maintain its balance principally through its emphasis on piety and the importance it places upon divine and natural law. Moreover, there is a timeless quality in its theme which deals with the rules for human conduct that remain surprisingly like those of many tracts and moral treatises from the time of Juan Luis Vives and earlier. Linda Woodbridge’s scholarly assessment of some writers on women’s deportment is equally true of Allestree. She believes that “the feminist tendencies” of early humanists “Agrippa, Castiglione, Erasmus, More, Colet, Vives, and others . . . has been overestimated . . .” (16). Certainly, The Ladies Calling does not descend into the fray of battle with tracts as some contemporary ones do whose titles mark the feminist controversy—Female Preeminence, or the Dignity of That Sex (1670), A Friendly Apology in Behalf of the Woman’s Excellency (1674), The Woman as Good as the Man: or the Equality of Both Sexes (1696).5 And certainly Allestree, and most of his contemporaries, would have been horrified had they been able to look forward in history to a writer as bold as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1726) who could satirize Dean Swift’s scatological The Lady’s Dressing Room, producing poetic lines as vigorously obscene as Swift himself had been able to devise. It is true that one can discern defensive postures regarding established norms for women both in Vives’ rather enlightened representative sixteenth century tract, Instruction of a Christian Woman, and in Allestree’s important conservative Restorative tract, The Ladies Calling. But neither is belligerently reactionary toward the gradually encroaching social liberties advocated in print and practiced at court and among the gentility in the sixteenth as well as the seventeenth centuries.

Like the very strong influence of the pietistic Whole Duty series on the Restoration period, Vives’ Christian piety and stirring humanism made a mark on the sixteenth century that had an apparent influence in practical rules of conduct and deportment for the Christian family, regardless of denominational antagonism. From 1514, when Vives took a “decisive turn toward humanism” (Noreña, 43), and again in 1519, in his treatise against the sophistical dialectics of scholasticism which elicited admiring remarks from Erasmus and More, Vives’ career established him as an important humanist educator and innovative and pious Christian scholar. He was to become, in fact, one of “the most read Humanist[s] of Northern Europe in the second half of the sixteenth century” (Noreña, 1). That his theories of education would be read so broadly must have pleased Vives, for he writes in De Tradendis Disciplinis (1531), that “we must transfer our solicitude to the people . . .” (278).

Vives’ dedication to Henry VIII of his Commentaries on the Civitas Dei in
1522 received a warm and flattering response from Henry and an invitation from Cardinal Wolsey to come to London. Having completed *De Institutione Foeminae Christianae*, commissioned by Catherine, Vives arrived in London in 1523, received royal pensions from the king and queen, an LL.D. and a reader-and lectureship from Oxford (besides living quarters at Oxford), the latter appointments resulting partly from Wolsey’s influence. Besides these tangible receipts for his scholarly activities, Vives found a place in the royal household as tutor to Princess Mary. The five years that marked all of these favorable circumstances in England were to be, of course, undone by his involvement in Catherine’s marital trials in the stormy divorce proceedings of the royal couple in 1528.

The pious humanism of *Instruction* was stimulated by the pious queen, by Vives’ own well-known piety, and by the liberal humanist curriculum that Thomas More administered to the family of his household. The classical training of Margaret, particularly in languages, was innovatively broad for the times, so innovative for women that Retha M. Warnicke concludes that More’s program was unique; such training was to be narrowed or ignored by Vives and by Protestant factions (133, 200). Warnicke writes, “Despite his [Vives’] suggestion that some women might advance more quickly than some men, Vives clearly did not advocate an equal education for both sexes” (35).

In classifying Vives’ particular kind of influence, Carlos G. Noreña identifies Vives’ piety in a way that helps account for a similarity of sentiment that this study will investigate in Allestree’s Restoration piety. Noreña believes that Vives cannot be comfortably classified into any of the traditional groupings for sixteenth century educators. Rather than belonging to the “stylists,” the “scholars” or the “verbal realists,” Noreña concludes Vives is appropriately classified a “moralistic Humanist”: “There is little doubt that the ethical education of Vives’ academy stressed Christian ideals and piety” (179–180). In his theories on education, Vives writes that every art must follow rules that seek predetermined ends; otherwise there is no art. Even without such learning, Vives makes it clear that man can find happiness in perfecting his nature—and since piety is the only way of perfecting man . . . piety is of all things the one thing necessary” (*Disciplinis*, 18).

It is from such men as Vives, as learned educator and pious and ethical Christian, that continuing conservative conventions dominate conduct literature and appear in a garb only slightly changed for the Restoration. Just how morally derivative *The Ladies Calling* is, how much a part of a long tradition it is, can be properly appreciated by observing the striking number of parallels which exist between it and Vives’ *Instruction*, first published in 1523. The immediate occasion for Vives’ book was to supply Catherine of Aragon, to whom he dedicated his book, with instructions for herself and Princess Mary on women’s deportment. A larger audience is implied in the title, and the book went through many editions being translated into English in 1529 by Richard Hyrde.
and reviewed approvingly by Thomas More. It is likely that Allestree—as a moral philosopher, a clergyman, and a writer of conduct books—would have been acquainted with Vives’ book, since the tract remained more or less accessible into the eighteenth century. That this tract was read much in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is attested to by the number of editions of Hyrde’s translations. Vives’ modern editor states that “we see that Vives was held in high recognition, contemporaneously by More and Erasmus; in the 17th century by Andreas Schott; in the 18th by Morhof . . . .”

Yet Allestree probably does not draw specifically from the early tract because he does not mention Vives as, for instance, does Peacham in his Complete Gentleman, who besides naming Vives lists Erasmus, Elyot, Ascham, and others. Moreover, Allestree generally does cite his sources specifically; and like many contemporary tract writers, he draws copiously from a broad range of authorities. It is all the more surprising, then, that he never makes an overt reference to Vives, whose influence is apparent. It is possible that Allestree’s Catholic antagonism would keep him from citing Vives by name. In fact, Allestree warns unwary women away from “Papery”; for if they are too confident of their ability to resist “every teacher with a strong mind,” they will find themselves, as some have, in the “midst of Samaria”—that is, in the very “Religion from which alone they design’d to fly” (LC 13). As will be seen later in a closer comparison of Vives and Allestree, Allestree, the staunch Reformationist, seems to contradict his fear of Catholics when he laments that the Reformation has dissolved nunneries for women whose chaste white virginity deserves a holy vocation. Whatever his real feelings may be, Allestree’s tract is filled with Vives-like advice and with common sources from which the writers draw. What the following parallels between Allestree and Vives will show is that it is appropriate to see a close association between books as late as Allestree’s in the Restoration period with a moral humanist lineage exemplified in Vives of the previous century.

A tract like The Ladies Calling, then, is not an exclusively seventeenth-century phenomenon. Instead, it reflects the fondness of an age for doctrines which are colored by an inherited view of society. Because of the conservative quality of the rules and ethical code for the gentlewoman in a stratified society that feared it had perhaps lost its hierarchical sense of order during a period of civil war, this tract and its immediate predecessors were written to fill a pressing social need, thereby receiving popular acclaim during their own day. The highlights taken from The Ladies Calling and the older Instruction demonstrate an interestingly similar code spanning a century and a half, as well as illustrate the honor that a conservative Restoration writer continued to accord the classic-patristic world.

In the prefaces of the respective tracts, Allestree and Vives introduce themselves by promising not to cite many authorities from antiquity—for such is, Allestree says, “too high a strain” for ladies and for the subject under
consideration. Rather than be scholarly, the respective writers promise to deliver practical advice. Both men do discuss practical matters, but not without citing, contrary to their promises, many classical and religious authorities—Vives more copiously than Allestree. Both list women from classical times who have been as virtuously good as they have been learned. Vives' list also includes women from early church history and from contemporary times; but Allestree, who mentions these periods, says he will restrict his list to classical times. After high encomiums to the virtues of womanhood, both retreat to place woman in her accepted role—inferior to and dependent upon man as the head, intellectually and socially (Vives, C2r–C5r; LC, preface).

As the general matrix for conduct-courtesy literature for women, the tripartite organization which is used by Vives and adopted by Allestree in the second part of his tract is traditional; thus both Allestree's and Vives' tracts explain that it is appropriate to consider a woman's life under the three states which she may experience (after Paul and Tertullian) as a virgin, a wife, and a widow. Both bestow lavish praise on those who prefer a virgin state. In fact, Noreña believes the convent of Syon, which he calls "a focal point of humanist education for women," to be an important influence on Vives (87). However, if Vives approved of the houses established for women, he is cautious about their administration. As he says in Instruction, "it neither becommeth a woman to rule a Schoole nor to live amongst men" (Vives C6r). As mentioned earlier, Allestree finds the convent an attractive stronghold for chaste virgins; nostalgically he wishes that "those ... within the Reformation [had chosen] rather to rectify and regulate, than abolish them" (LC 57). But Allestree ends by conceding that a personal rather than an ecclesiastic vow is less presumptuous.

The duties outlined for the three estates of women (except for satirical portraits which Allestree cannot resist creating occasionally) are orthodox and gravely considered. In the first estate as a virgin, education for the young girl, fixed by Aristotle and other classic authorities, begins at age seven. Both Vives and Allestree consider favorably debates that argue for a younger age, both recommending crafts and other household training as relief from diligent reading. Neither finds it important for women to continue formal training too long aside from the mother's tutoring (Vives, B4r; LC, 77). Both agree, Allestree somewhat reluctantly, that women's thoughts are prone to be unstable or facile (Vives B5r; LC 14, 33). In the humanistic tradition, Allestree recommends that women cannot do better than to live the dictate of a "heathen moralist, 'Revere thyself.'" Allestree concludes, "and 'twas very wholsome council ..." (LC 9). But after almost surcharging women with their excellencies, Allestree contradicts what he seems to have believed regarding women's ability to learn by adding that he will not oppose a "received opinion" that women's "intellects ... are below men." Finally, in a peculiar defense of women's intellectual endowment, he sounds like the exasperated male moralist: "Women's natural imbecility ... renders then liable to seducement ..." but, he adds, not because
"so many of that sex" have "natural defect" but because they are simply "undiscerning," having "loose notions" of "Religion" (LC 14). Vives, too, says "womans thought is swift and for the most part unstable," adding that it is helpful to alternate reading with household work (Vives B5r).

Regarding managerial tasks, Vives recommends that young girls, besides developing the fine arts, should also work flax and wool and practice cookery. Drawing these together, Allestree advocates that young ladies employ themselves in "needlework, language, and music" (Vives B6r; LC 60). Vives is unenthusiastic about music, acknowledging comically in his Latin dialogues for students that he has the voice of a goose, not a swan (Dialogues 196). Both recommend training in the kitchen: Allestree attacks culinary concoctions that lead to hedonistic appetites and Vives similarly worries about "slubbering and excess in meates" and in other "glotony" (Vives B 7v). As a general position, both insist the management of the house should not be below the fine lady.

Both writers exhibit a staunchly moral and male-oriented reaction to the young virgins' grooming habits and associated behavior. Earlier, in The Whole Duty, Allestree establishes his philosophic base by aggressively attacking women's as well as men's generic pride: "How much does the whiteness of the Lilly, and the redness of the Rose exceed the white and red of the fairest face? What a multitude of creatures is there, that far surpas man in strength and swiftness?"13 "A man's judgment of himself," says Allestree, "is of all others the least to be trusted" (WDM 54). Moreover, if a young woman goes to great length to enhance her physical appearance, she will cause the poor to envy and "add sin to misery." "Nay farther," says Allestree sentimentally, "when a poor wretch shall look upon one of these gay creatures, and see that any one of the baubles, the loosest appendage of her dress, a fan, and busk, perhaps a black patch, bears a price that would warm his bowels; will he not . . . repine at the unequal distribution of Providence?" (WDM 21). Linking beauty aids with compassion, Allestree remarks that a lady who washes her face clean with tears should not suppose it prepared for "paint and fucus."14 And as he further says elsewhere, women who busy themselves with healing the sick with "unguents and balsoms" cause a better smell to go up to "God's nostrils than do women who wear the costliest of perfumes." Vives, citing Plautus, agrees that "a woman ever smelleth best when shee smelleth of nothing."15 Vives also complains that the woman with rich adornments robs from the poor. Perhaps recalling More's Utopia, Vives says, "thou carry golde about thy necke . . . when thou denyest a halfpeny unto them that have need & be an hungred . . ." (Vives F 6r).

More subtly, Vives and Allestree believe (as does Bacon, in his essay, "Of Beauty") that a woman's attractiveness is not in "favor" (features) nor in a spirited or animated behavior, but rather, as Bacon phrasés it, in "decent and gracious motion."16 Such beauty has little to do with physical appearance but is inward virtue. Allestree ascribes Bacon's concept to Zeno. On a more practical
note of beauty in dress, both Vives and Allestree, naming Tertullian and the apostles as sources for their comments, desire that women wear proper clothing. As Allestree says, not “gaudy” finery as an “Idol’s” or, at the other extreme as Vives pronounces, not “sluttish and slubbered”; nor should they be too “bare necked” nor “too exceedingly covered.” Both warn that ostentatiousness or peculiarity of dress may cost a virgin a proper marriage (Vives F6r, G3r, M8r; LC 61–63). Allestree adds she must not “render herself less amiable than Nature has made her.”

Both men discuss the necessity of a chaperone when the woman, beautiful inwardly and outwardly, leaves her home to go visiting. Vives, sorry she should go abroad at all, recommends some “sad woman,” if not the mother. Allestree also recommends a “mother, or some other prudent Person,” but admits that the lady who has to go abroad with her mother in “this age” is considered to be “with her Jailor” (Vives L4r; LC 63).

Regarding the second estate wherein advice is delivered to a wife, Allestree and Vives believe the young woman should have little to say about marriage arrangements. Vives apparently represents a standard position when he writes that a maid shouldn’t talk when her “father and mother bee in communication about her marriage: but to leave all that care and charge wholly unto them” (Vives M2r). Such acquiescence is, Allestree writes, “the right of the parent,” the child’s obedience bringing the “Benediction” of “God” and “Parents” (LC 62–65). Allestree, writing earlier in the Whole Duty of Man, deals at some length with the obtaining of a fair dowry in order that the children’s marriage state be “comfortable.” He also observes scrupulous care be taken that family blood lines not be “interbred” (WDM 114). There is no reference to “love” in proposed marriage contracts, and Allestree mentions “mutual affection” so cursorily that one may assume that lack of hostility between the contracted parties is adequate as a starting point.

Once married, however, the lady’s duty to her husband is very clear. Her obedience to him, essentially a Pauline enjoinder, corresponds to a man’s duty to God or a citizen’s duty to the King. The theme of both moralists is that a wife must be incredibly patient and even subservient. As Allestree says, she must be friendly and kind in conversation. She must avoid “sullenness and harshness, all brawling and unquietness.” When the man is “fractious,” her special sweetness and patience are to turn his anger. As Vives says, “If thy husband be foule, yet love his heart and mind . . .” (Vives Q1r). The modern reader may feel himself shudder at Allestree’s calm conclusion that nothing must break the woman’s fortitude: for, as he says, “We have naturally some regret to see a Lamb under the knife; whereas the impatient roaring of a Swine diverts our pity.” Vives, citing the nurse’s advice to Octavia, the wife of Nero, agrees that the wife may: “Vanquish [her] cruel Husband rather with obedience” (Vives S2v). After both tracts have advised the woman to conquer her unkind husband with kindness, they both pass oblique remarks on the
“prattling” woman who tries a husband’s patience. Thus, Vives thinks the “wife of Job was left him to make his adversity more painfull.” Allestree remarks that Socrates said he tested his own patience by marrying Xanthippe, his shrewish wife; yet, continues Allestree, “until we fall to an age of Philosophers . . . twill be hard for any of our Xanthippes to find a Socrates” (LC 18). Peter Malekin points out in *Liberty and Love* that the injunction that was to balance power and love between husband and wife was based on two of Paul’s admonitions: “‘Wives, obey your husbands’” and “‘Husbands, love your wives.’” But, says Malekin, “the resulting compromise was often [harsh]” (151).

In the marriage relationship of wedlock, both writers deal with the question of chastity and sex, Vives more rigorously. Vives believes “generation” is less important than “fellowship.” Sexual pleasure for the woman is replaced by “shamefast” and “chast behavior.” The true wife remains worthy of “dignity” and “reverence.” Vives is, in fact, so extreme that the begetting of children would seem to be problematical. Allestree also condemns all wantonness in the marriage bed; the woman in bed is “never to admit so much as a thought or imagination, much less any parley or treaty contrary to her loialty.” Allestree delicately refrains from saying loyalty to what and, after the language does some embarrassed side-stepping, plows boldly into a discussion of adultery (Vives N4r–S7r; LC 69).

It is naturally expected that a woman be totally faithful to her husband’s bed; for the corrupt wife, admonishes Allestree, “creates that most tormenting passion of jealousie” and “it may be the thrusting in the child of the adulterer into his family, to share both in the maintenance and portions of his own children” (WDM 87). Richard Steele approvingly cites this passage and Section II “Of Wives” from *The Ladies Calling* with a moralist’s words of reproof for such a female who would lead a man “to defile another man’s Bed . . . a crime of the blackest dye.” Vives’ ominous portrait of a jealous husband gives practical advice to a woman in a real world. She must avoid even the appearance of compromising friendships with other wives’ husbands. If she dissembles or sends secret missives to a lover—if she is indeed unfaithful—she can expect to be discovered. She is asked to remember, in this connection, that the lion will, “teare the Lionesse if he take her in adultery” and that the cock swan kills his hen when she follows another cock. Vives says everyone has seen this; and moreover, “we have read and heard tell of manye that have slain their wives” (Vives S8v–T1v).

Recognizing the need for diversion and representing a much more liberal position than that of the Renaissance. Allestree allows young women to play at cards and dice. Quite simply, he tells the ladies that when they play, it should be “meerly to recreate [themselves], not to win money,” for gaming should not be “a calling” (LC 60). By contrast, Vives observes no mitigating circumstances and says that for a woman to play at cards and dicing is a “foule thynge” (F2r). Nonetheless, Vives’ “Dialogue 21” for young Latin students describes in detail
the rules for a card game and treats the pastime as harmless—at least for young men in an approved setting (185–197). 21 Thomas Elyot, like Vives in his sterner moments, condemns “dyce and other games named unlefull.” Indeed, the church, as early as 1240, prohibited by statutory law the playing at dice; and in the thirteenth century, John of Salisbury named no fewer than ten games of dice that were popular but prohibited. 22 Associated with gaming, the question of drinking is raised, and both Allestree and Vives register stern admonitions against drunkenness in women; in fact, Vives insists on “water for women, unless it upsets their stomachs” (Vives E4r; LC 6).

Even in the apparently innocent pastime of reading, the young women, married or not, are warned to be cautious, both tracts discussing in detail how subtly the reading of romances infuses a desire in the reader to emulate the lives of the heroines who subdue young gallants. Allestree’s observations anticipate the novel-reading girl as a type in Restoration plays, bringing up to date the chivalric tales which Vives objected to as reading matter for the ladies of his generation. The part of Allestree’s passage given below illustrates best the tenor of Molière’s Les Precieuses Ridicules (1659). Allestree writes:

> Those amorous Passions, which ’tis their design to paint to the utmost Life, are apt to insinuate themselves into their unwary Readers, and by an unhappy inversion a copy shall produce an Original . . . . And when she has once wound herself into an Amour, those Authors are subtil Casuists for all difficult cases that may occur in it, will instruct in the necessary artifices of deluding Parents and Friends, and put her ruin perfectly in her own power. 23

Vives says that ladies “by little and little drinkest the entisementes of that poyson unknowingly, and many times . . . reading those bookes, doe keep themselves in the thought of love.” 24 Vives gives a list of romances that should not be read from Spain, France, and Flanders. Hyrde adds to the list by naming English romances—altogether a valuable index for ladies who wished to test their willpowers (Vives D1r). 25 Vives’ objection is not only to wanton lust, “filth & viciousness,” but also to the irrationality of the romances, in which he found no “goodness or wit.” As he points out, one hero slays twenty or thirty, receives a hundred wounds but rises the next day strong enough to carry treasure that would fill a galley (Vives D1r).

One of the most important duties of a wife was to care for her children. And among these duties, Allestree and Vives strongly advise that infants be breast fed by the mother rather than by a wet nurse, both authors quoting Plutarch and Favorinus for authority (Vives B2r; LC 74–75). An interest in
breast feeding by the mother was widespread and not at all considered a delicate subject by writers of morality and curiosities from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, who discussed the problem candidly. Usually English moralists dealing with this topic cited classical writers, among whom Plutarch and Favorinus (from Aulus Gellius) were most popular. Looking briefly at seventeenth-century commentators, one finds usually that they think it best that the mother give suck to her own child, but that if the mother is unable, a healthy nurse should be provided. Allestree names Gellius, as does Robert Burton, to obtain Favorinus' observations secondhand on breast feeding. Allestree also cites a contemporary treatise, *The Nursery*, by the Countess of Lincoln. Apparently the moralists' concern was two-fold: that the "delicate mother," as Allestree phrases it, was exhibiting an "unnatural attitude" simply in order to preserve her shape and that she willingly risked the moral evil to which a subservient wet nurse might subject the child (LC 74–75). More boldly vehement than any of these regarding the cultured lady's responsibility to breast feed her child is Daniel Defoe, who, though he cites no authority, obviously is using Gellius in stating that red blood and white milk are the same except for color. From this postulate, Defoe goes on to account for the corruption which he sees in England's best families. As Defoe so energetically phrases it, "The son of a king should suck none but a queen, the son of a gentleman should suck none but a lady" (72, 78). None of these writers, however, equals the angry moralist seen in Ben Jonson's Juvenallian epigram that makes a blistering attack upon the lady who hides her great belly and submits even to abortion to preserve her coquettish days at court.

Individually, these writers would scarcely have sought out classical authorities if copious references to authority were not part of an English moral tradition. In observing this single current, one can better see Allestree's part in maintaining an ancient doctrine which had become thoroughly domesticated. For his opinions on breast feeding alone, Allestree looks back to Chrysippus, Quintilian, Jerome, Plutarch, Favorinus, Marcus Aurelius, and Aulus Gellius. Most contemporary tract writers were willing to do the same.

In prescribing for the last estate of woman—her duties as a widow—Allestree ironically observes that women, though belonging to the weaker sex, commonly have "fortitude enough" to consider marriage a second time. The first adventure, if "prosperous," should warn them away from attempting to equal the first or, if "adverse," should more surely make her avoid entanglement "after the rod is taken off." Vives warns that, in a second marriage, the widow "bringeth upon her children an enemy, and not a nourisher: not a father but a tyrant" (Dd 5v). Therefore, widows should fix their memories on their dead husbands rather than on "cheer" from the present world and its circumstances. Allestree's treatment, like Vives', is vigorously rhetorical, the mood established by Allestree occasionally reminding one of Jeremy Taylor's best passages from *Holy Dying*. In fact, Allestree appears to
contradict Marvell’s well-known lines to his mistress that love does not dwell in the tomb:

*Love is strong as death,* and therefore when it is pure and genuine cannot be extinguished by it, but burns like the Funeral-lamps of old even in Vaults and Charnel-houses. The conjugal Love transplanted into the Grave, (as into a fine Mould) improves into Piety . . .26

Somewhat more sedately, Vives recommends that the aged widow should “beholde the heaven whither her minde should flit, and lift up all her sense, her thought, and all her minde unto God and prepare and applie her selfe wholly to her journey . . .” (Vives Bb 2v). Altogether, this section on the deportment of the widow, in both books, is the briefest of the three sections because the over-riding advice is that the widow remain a widow and keep her mind fixed upon her future in the next world. Vives, vehemently advising against second marriages, concludes his tract with stern warnings that there is great misery for the woman who takes part in such a “heretical” act. The attitude of both writers perhaps recalls some two dozen handbooks totalling more than fifty editions that were staple reading before 1600.27 Such books as *The Art of Dying Well,* *Preparation For Death,* *Salve for a Sicke Man,* *Christian Exhortation in the Agony of Death* all lay out orderly plans whereby men and women were to fortify themselves against a graceless death through fixed meditational exercises that would exalt them if they finally could say, with a full heart, “Into thy Hands, O Father, I commend my spirit.” In fact, good Christians were to have prepared themselves all their lives for a kind of moral victory over the grave by holy living and holy dying—both emphasized by moralists.

Thus in terminating his advice to widows, Allestree strikes a pose dictated by the pious, law-centered universe of the Elizabethan order to cool the reckless spirit one associates with the Restoration period. Allestree warns the widow that attempting to contract herself in a second marriage with a socially equal partner is fraught with worldly dangers. For either she will marry a Lord with a portentous family name, who will squeeze her, “an inferior” widow, like a “spunge”—or, if she marry beneath herself socially, she will feel the disgrace of a “serviler spirit.” The seriousness of this action, as Allestree makes clear, lies in disrupting an established hierarchy of rank, which exists by natural law (LC 92).

Moreover, if the worldly course is pursued, differences in the ages of a betrothed couple might violate natural law. Allestree remarks that though “positive law” may be allayed and an old widow marry a young man, “tis indeed an inversion of seasons, a confounding the Kalender, making a mungrel month of May and December: and the conjunction proves fatal as it is
prodigious.” Gay old widows Allestree compares to “Alhallontide Springs” which will meet “Frosts,” the consequences of supposing they can distort nature. Allestree’s description of a frivolous grandmother presents a humorous picture of the superannuated beauty, who was to become a popular type for eighteenth-century satirists. Allestree writes:

How preposterous it is for an Old Woman to delight in Gauds and Trifles, such as were fitter to entertain her Grand-children? to read Romances with spectacles, and be at masks and Dancings, when she is fit only to act the Antics? These are contradictions to Nature, the tearing off her Marks, and where she was writ fifty or sixty, to lessen (beyond the Proportion of the unjust Steward) and write sixteen. (LC 94)

Although such a course was not inevitable, Allestree appears to believe it is all too possible. Pursuing Paul’s advice, Allestree relents, grumpily and pre-emptorily allowing that “gay widows, wandering planets,” should remarry (LC 90). Also, citing Paul’s words to the Corinthians, Vives makes a similar concession, but only under certain conditions. The widow should not wish “yong men, wanton, hot & full of play, ignorant & riotous, that can neither rule their house, nor their wife ne their selfe neither: but take an husbande something past middle age, sober, sad, and of good wit . . . (Vives Dd 8r–v).

In light of the similarities between rules of conduct in Allestree and in Vives and their classic and patristic predecessors, one can see that the popularity of The Ladies Calling made this tract a great disseminator in the Restoration age of conservative “morality.” A difference in the emphasis, of course, does exist in Vives and Allestree, partly in Allestree’s occasionally less conservative strictures—though equally pious attitude—and in his awareness of the contemporary scene. Parenthetically, it should be emphasized that this awareness does not jar him from his trust in the ancient order of stratified English society nor from a philosophy whose prime concern is obedience to a ruling deity.

One may ask, in conclusion, what The Ladies Calling had to offer its age that caused it to be so attractive to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The answer is that the Allestree book was associated—through content, reference, and editor—with The Whole Duty of Man, which had the good fortune to head the Restoration Period. And equally important, Allestree desired a resurgence of the venerable piety he associated with the preceding century. Moreover, The Whole Duty of Man and its progeny were supported by sympathetic contemporary tract writers and moralists, who were anxious for such conservative rules of deportment.

The common interests of the Ladies Calling and Instruction of a Christian
Woman lead to surprisingly similar advice. Both reassuringly (and didactically) preached a classic-Biblical doctrine that would produce a sainted woman—one who was intelligently educated especially at home by her mother, who was capable and willing to manage a household, who was beautiful and appropriate in a spiritual and temporal sense, who was serious in her reading habits, who sought judicious recreation, who was patient, loving, faithful, and even subservient toward her husband, and who would preserve the memory of a good husband and avoid the scandal too often seen in attempting to re-enter the world only to make an ill-advised remarriage. She was, in short, the perfect Christian gentlewoman, nurtured by Pauline and Patristic precepts and humanistic morality. Indeed, the sought-after perfection for the lady was to Christianity what the idealized portrait of a gentleman was to humanism—as so glowingly epitomized by Gabriel Harvey from Castiglione's The Courtier. Harvey writes:

Above all things it importeth a courtier to be graceful and lovely in countenance and behavior; fine and discreet in discourse and entertainment; skillful and expert in letters and arms; active and gallant in every courtly exercise; nimble and speedy of body and mind; resolute, industrious and valiant in action; as profound and invincible in execution as possible; and withal ever generously bold, wittily pleasant, and full of life in all his sayings and doings. His apparel must be like himself, comely and handsome, fine and cleanly to avoid contempt but not gorgeous or stately to incur envy or suspicion of pride, vanity, self-love or other unperfection. Both inside and outside [he] must be a fair pattern of worthy, fine and lovely virtue.  

For his own time, then, Allestree was to help dictate a Vives-like function of the gentlewoman within a cohesive, God-monarchial society, pious in an age, which, despite the reputation of the court, prized piety and religion. Paralleling moral demands from the Whole Duty-tract series made upon gentlemen, The Ladies Calling was successful in adding to a wave of morality for ladies with their special callings and responsibilities from God which washed through an age popularly renowned for its rakish King and for its scandalous court and gentility.

NOTES

1. Richard Allestree, Forty Sermons . . . the Greatest Part Preach'd Before the King And on Solemn Occasions . . . To these is prefixt an account of the Author's Life,

2. Though all of the tracts were published anonymously, they have been most frequently attributed to Richard Allestree by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scholars, who did battle for decades over the question of authorship.

3. As Philip Warton (1698-1731) recalls about the first of these tracts, “I remember what my father told me, that after the restoration, almost all profession of seriousness in religion would have been laughed out of countenance, under pretence of the hypocrisy of the former times, had not two very excellent and serious books, written by eminent royalists, put some stop to it; I mean *The Whole Duty of Man*, and Dr. Hammond’s *Practical Catechism*.” Cited from Philip Warton, *Works* I, 10, by Nicholas Pocock in *The Miscellaneous Theological Works of Henry Hammond*, ed. Nicholas Pocock. 3 vols. (London, 1847-1850), I, xxxin. Hobbes’ comments on the former book further recommend it almost as an official organ of the Royalists. Thus, in a dialogue, Hobbes has Speaker B say that he should like to see “a system of present morals written by a divine of good reputation and learning, and of the late king’s party.” Speaker A, Hobbes himself, answers: “I think I can recommend unto you the best that is extant, and such a one as (except a few passages I mislike) is very well worth your reading. The title of it is *The Whole Duty of Man . . . .*” Henry Morley, *A First Sketch of English Literature* (London, Cassell and Company, 1912), p. 692. (Hobbes’s words are taken from *The History of the Civil Wars of England . . . from the year 1640 to the year 1660*.)

Hobbes probably voices what had been the desire for stability after the Interregnum. For Hobbes, as Basil Willey points out, pragmatic truth made “right”—and living in an ordered, stable commonwealth under God and a sovereign power became “right”; “‘truth’ ” must maintain “what is established.” Basil Willey, *The Seventeenth Century Background, Studies in the Thought of the Age in Relation to Poetry and Religion* (New York: Chatto 1934), p. 116.

4. *The Gentleman’s Calling* goes on to say that, in spite of the peril, the calling of the gentleman in this world offers him five advantages. From a superior education, he can refine his mind and character; from his wealth, he can succour the poor; from his free time, he can restore himself to the “primitive luster” enjoyed by Adam before the fall; from his authority over domestics and political charges, he can serve the commonwealth; and from his reputation as a gentleman, he can encourage those beneath him to emulate virtue and to curb vice. The most obvious common denominator between the tracts, then, is that both sexes are to be pious; the most obvious difference is in the domain of each sex—the woman’s duties are mostly domestic and private, the man’s public.

5. A. H. Upham, “English Femmes Savantes at the End of the Seventeenth Century,” *JEGP*, XII (1913), 273. The last-named tract, written by William Walsh and prefaced by John Dryden, raised the feminists’ ire, for while the tract is ostensibly a defense of women, the feminists saw obviously that Walsh gave more of “‘an Edge to his Satyr [of women] than force to his apology.’” *Ibid.* Walsh’s tract was probably the one which Stephen Penton links with *The Ladies Calling* in a reference in *The Guardian Instruction* in 1688, although he refuses to name it for fear of angering his mistress. Mary Astell’s vigorous and sincere *Defense of Women* (1696) also comments on the double-dealing of the Walsh tract.

6. Warnicke also believes classical scholarship for women was “on the wane in the 1580s and the 1590s.” However her findings seem to indicate greater attention to classical training for Catholic than Protestant women.
7. Foster Watson, *Vives: On Education, a Translation of the De Tradendia Disciplinis of Juan Luis Vives* (Cambridge, England: at the University Press, 1913), xxiv-xxv. In the latter part of the eighteenth century Vives' importance lessened and he was almost forgotten in the nineteenth century. *Ibid.* A look at the editions of the tracts in the *Whole Duty* group suggests a similar decline into obscurity. What Watson says of Vives is applicable, in a different context, to Allestree—that the old, serene, aristocratic atmosphere was dying in the new climate. *Ibid.*, xxv.

8. Henry Peacham, *The Compleat Gentleman Fashioning him . . . concerning Minde or Bodie . . .* (London: F. Constable, 1622); see Peacham's words, "To the Reader." Peacham acknowledges that his work is only a "small Taper among so many Torches." Allestree names almost no "modern" authorities in his treatises.


11. Vives, A3v-A4r; *The Ladies Calling*, p. 56. However, Allestree's plan to introduce briefly a few universally necessary virtues in Part I of *The Ladies Calling* is not followed too well. As he himself observes, Part I "is spun out to a length very unproportional to [Part II]." *Ibid.* Part II describes the three states of a woman's life.

12. See *The Art of Contentment*, p. 10. Noreña says it is a mistake to suppose Vives ever intended to organize an "ecclesiastical or denominational school" (181).

13. *The Whole Duty of Man laid down In a plain and Familiar Way . . . With Private Devotions for Several Occasions* (London, 1684), p. 54. (This tract first appeared in 1658 as *The Practice of Christian Graces or The Whole Duty of Man.*) Also see *Essays in the History of Ideas* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1948), pp. 62-63. Lovejoy, of course, cites Montaigne's specific comparison of man and animal (*Apologie de Raimond Sebond*). *Ibid.*, p. 66. If Allestree were following a current trend, he would, as a churchman and scholar, have been equally aware of Aristotle's or Seneca's words on the subject. In one epistle Seneca writes: "Why, pray, do you foster and practice your bodily strength? Nature has granted strength in greater degree to cattle and beasts. Why cultivate your beauty? After all your efforts, dumb animals surpass you in comeliness. Why dress your hair with such unending attention? . . . You will see a mane of greater thickness tossing upon any horse you choose, and a mane of greater beauty bristling upon the neck of any lion. And even after training yourself for speed, you will be no match for the hare. Are you not willing to abandon all these details . . . and come back to the Good that is really yours?" "Epistle CXXIV," trans. Gummer in *The Loeb Classical Library*, III, 449.

14. *The Ladies Calling*, p. 46. Also see William Cave's *Primitive Christianity* (London: By J.M. for R. Chiswell, 1675), which is much more austere than *The Whole Duty* tracts; yet when Cave writes about matters of apparel, adornments, and, as he phrases it, "fucus's and paintings," his wording is much like Allestree's. And both remind one of Tertullian and Gregory whom Cave translates as his authorities for the few pages which he designed for foibles before continuing with his "weightier" matter. See particularly pp. 65-67, 70.
15. *The Ladies Calling*, p. 23. In this picture, one is reminded of the benevolent Lady Bountiful of George Farquhar's *The Beaux Strategem* (1707). A great many handbooks of recipes and treatises describing medicinal concoctions were in vogue during the Restoration. The remedies might be of a homely, useful, fanciful, or superstitious nature, which, when once distilled, labeled, and put in a bottle, would cure everything from deep consumption to the falling sickness.

16. Vives, B3v; *The Ladies Calling*, p. 2; Bacon "Of Beauty" XLIII. Beacon, in fact, believes "decent motion" in older women makes them more amiable: "Pulchrorum autumnus pulcher." This adage occurs in at least three passages in Plutarch.

17. Also see Richard Baxter's comments on the flubbered (slubbered) condition in *A Call to the Unconverted* (London: Nevil Simmons, 1678), p. 40, and Sermon XII (1684) by Allestree.


21. Allestree's observation on dice and cards here and throughout the tracts as well as in a parenthetical remark in a sermon concedes these pastimes to be lawful.


24. Vives, C8r–C8v. Suzanne Hull's chapter on recreational literature indicates that romances were not considered appropriate for women in the sixteenth century by some moralists: "Joannes Vives (as translated by Richard Hyrde), Thomas Psalter, and Thomas Powell specifically condemned romantic fiction. . . ." *Chaste, Silent & Obedient* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1982), p. 71. Hull also indicates that "by 1640, reading by women was seldom attacked" (131). Even Allestree, with his sober conservatism, reluctantly allows the reading of Romances when the woman is very young, but after making the concession, he can think of nothing good to say about such reading. Rather he worries about the bad initial "impressions" made on the young mind (LC 61).


26. *The Ladies Calling*, p. 84. The italicized words are from "The Song of Solomon" 8:6. Also see Vives, Bb8r–Bb8v.

28. *The Ladies Calling*, pp. 92-93. The comments of the *OED* on this phrasing add to an already interesting passage. The word “Alhallonide” may be dated specifically as November 1, Allhallows’ Day. The phrase “Alhallontide Spring” is a variant of allhallowon summer, defined by the *OED* as a season of fine weather in the late autumn. Less literally, a brightness or beauty lingering or reappearing in old age. The *OED* gives only two examples of the phrase: from Shakespeare, *Henry IV, I.ii.178*, “Farewell, the latter Spring! Farewell, Alhallown Summer!”; and from Walton’s *Angler*, “About allhallontide . . . you see men ploughing up heath-ground. . . .”


**WORKS CITED**


——. *Forty Sermons . . . the Greatest Part Preach’d Before the King And on Solemn Occasions . . . To these is prefixt an account of the Author’s Life*, ed. John Fell. Oxford: at the Theater, 1684.


——. *The Ladies Calling. In Two Parts. by the Author of the Whole Duty of Man, Etc.*, 2nd impression. Oxford: at the Theater, 1673.

——. *The Whole Duty of Man laid down In a plain and Familiar Way . . . With Private Devotions for Several Occasions*. London: R. Norton, 1684. (This tract first appeared in 1658 as *The Practice of Christian Graces or The Whole Duty of Man.*)


