writers. She concludes this chapter and her study with a discussion of the permutations of the notions of “public” and “private” during this period in England, suggesting that “the careers of laboring writers show that the public is not simply an antithesis of or a reaction against the private—it is a positive, deliberate stance that early modern changes in economic organization, social organization, and religion helped make possible” (139).

In Labor and Writing in Early Modern England, 1567-1667, Ellinghausen presents insightful commentary on the evolution of writing as a profession. She does an admirable job of considering this group of writers’ relationships with labor and what those conditions meant regarding their rhetorical positioning and careers. The examples that she presents will no doubt spark scholars’ interest in examining the cases of other writers from the period in a similar fashion. Her book will especially be of interest to literary historians, as well as to those who would like to know more about the careers of these specific authors.


When the concept of modesty, i.e., virtue, is applied to seventeenth-century women, specifically women who engage in public discourse and who reject forms of modesty that are essentially about shame and veiling female bodies, the expectation to “keep due measure” regarding one’s conduct takes new forms (1). Tamara Harvey’s Figuring Modesty in Feminist Discourse Across the Americas, 1633-1700 explores the writings of Euro-American authors Anne Bradstreet, Anne Hutchinson, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, and Marie de l’Incarnation, women whose functionalist treatments of the body provide a fresh and reframed modesty. Each in her own distinct way speaks to the paradoxes and limits placed on public women. Exploring their “discipline, practice and embodied efforts” (2), Harvey shows that these women “fundamentally engage the debates of the time while shifting characteristics of the body in ways that challenge symbolic readings of the body” (13). Importantly, the works serve as correctives for
society’s members who believe women’s words and deeds meant they were unchaste, unreasonable, and unfeminine. Each is read as re-configuring modesty and representing women as capable of self-governing and reason.

Harvey’s “Introduction” establishes the tone and method for her study. She argues that the authors engaged religious, political, scientific, and social discourses while challenging contemporary functionalism. A highlight of her initial discussion examines Helkiah Crooke’s *Mikrokosmographia: A Description of the Body of Man* (1616), a text that challenges assumptions of women as inferior but maintains notions of female embodiment and modesty that subordinate women. Utilizing Crooke’s title page as an example of entrenched misogynistic logic, Harvey distinguishes the male figure’s objective, detailed circulatory system and muscular presentation from the female’s subjective pose with strategically placed hands and veiled modesty.

Chapter One explicates Anne Bradstreet’s feminism in her poem *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung up in America* (1650), exposing the double bind for vocal women who engage literary activity. Harvey also examines the *querelle des femmes* (debates about women) in Bradstreet’s quaternion on the four humors. The most feminine humor, Flegme, confronts the most masculine humor, Choler, and critiques Aristotelian belief that women are cooler and therefore inferior to men. Bradstreet’s treatment of this verbal contest validates the articulate, well-reasoned female while exposing the polemic of “power hierarchies between the sexes” (24).

In Chapter Two Harvey draws upon literary conversations, scientific theories, and theological debates that have implications for understanding gendered hierarchies in the works of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. The medical knowledge present in Sor Juana’s *Primero Sueño* (First Dream) allows the poem to recount both body and soul during a night’s sleep, emphasizing the functions of the body integral to corporeal and spiritual life but not the body’s symbolic value. Modesty in Sor Juana’s poetry joins the body and soul and rejects assumptions that intellect and the spirit transcend the body (79).

Harvey’s Chapter Three brings Anne Hutchinson’s actions into the “free grace controversy in early New England”; both Hutchinson trials insist that the body is not a base for “spiritual and civil values”
Her feminist functionalism is verbalized at her first trial in an argument with John Winthrop regarding women’s public speech. Mortalism, the subject of her second trial, perpetuates Hutchinson’s support for the belief that the body is not resurrected with the spirit. Harvey links this often-overlooked challenge to the Antinomian conflict with Hutchinson’s view of modesty in the public sphere.

The apostolate of Marie de l’Incarnation and the Ursulines of Québec constitute Chapter Four as Harvey probes spiritual autobiographies and collections of letters that expose a feminism which did not simply challenge social and ontological categories as applied to individual women but also explained Marie’s commitment to community life (115). Her life and work provide examples of the contradiction perceived in society between strength and woman. Marie’s speech and dedicated practice within community acknowledge a “sense of the body as useful but without symbolic value” (116). Most illuminating in this chapter are Harvey’s readings of Marie and her fellow Ursulines situating a functionalist understanding of the body as it intersects with religious and communal life. These readings emphasize Marie’s modesty, a topic that is often minimized.

The “Conclusion” offers an impressive synthesis, cataloguing the role each woman played in the evolving concept of feminist functionalism and the practice of modesty. Harvey notes, “Bradstreet and Sor Juana wrote privately to satisfy their own artistic and intellectual impulses” while anchoring their work in a “functioning body” (141-142). Similarly, “Hutchinson and Marie emphasize moderation and bodily practices in this world; they argue the functioning body is an integral part of their understandings of the soul’s relationship to divinity” (143). Each practiced modesty that required action even if the human mind and body lacked complete knowledge. They refused the symbolic and ontological dynamics of embodied chastity and silence —displacing those demands with reason, dignity, and keeping due measure. *Figuring Modesty in Feminine Discourse Across the Americas, 1633-1700* will captivate scholars of women’s studies and literary history. Harvey convincingly argues that these pioneering feminists prove that women can and do become change agents.