further analysis of Astell’s theories on the composition and moral philosophy could provide possible links between Astell and later eighteenth-century theorists, such as Campbell and Hume.

Nevertheless, Sutherland’s *The Eloquence of Mary Astell* is a masterful work of scholarship on a brilliant female rhetorician who transformed the ideas of her day into a unique philosophy designed to develop intellectual possibilities for females (dare we call it in the dawn of a female enlightenment?) a torch passed to the Bluestockings and other educated women of the later eighteenth century. Sutherland does not speculate on the scope of Astell’s influence beyond the most directly obvious links. In *The Eloquence of Mary Astell*, Sutherland sticks to the verifiable facts, focusing on the ideas that fed Astell’s more than on any widespread impacts Astell’s own ideas produced. In fact, Sutherland notes that by the late eighteenth century, Mary Astell was largely forgotten, but Sutherland serves very solid ground from which to begin historical research on Astell’s influence moving forward into the eighteenth century.

Atlanta, GA


Reviewed by Tanya R. Cochran, Union College

*Negotiating Religious Faith in the Composition Classroom* is best summarized by its own last line: “For the composition classroom to depart, even on a few occasions, from the scene of inculcated convention, instructors and students alike must attempt to unfold the discursive spaces through which thought ceaselessly migrates” (Cain 180). In other words, as our world continues to be woven together, the temptation to disengage with students of faith by limiting their topic choices, refusing to read their often stubborn and even fundamentalist proclamations, or responding with criticism that prevents rather than encourages self-reflexivity, is neither fruitful nor acceptable. In this collection, editors Elizabeth Vander Lei (Calvin College) and bonnie lenore kyburz (Utah Valley State College) present essays from writing teachers, tutors, and program administrators in order to continue a conversation that only recently has become less marginal in our field’s publications. *Negotiating Religious Faith* brings to light issues we would be sorely remiss to discount or disregard, especially in a post-9/11 era.

Part 1, grouped as “Teachers and Students Negotiate,” begins with Vander Lei’s “Coming to Terms with Religious Faith in the Composition Classroom.” In her orienting comments, Vander Lei sets the tone for the book as she previews the essays in this section. She explains that negotiation most succinctly captures the collection’s purpose: writing teachers must not only recognize that faith infuses classrooms, but also acknowledge its presence and, more importantly,
guide students into an understanding of how religious faith, instead of provoke and injure, can “inspire and nurture effective rhetorical practice” (3). The goal of such practice is students who are self-invested in education and better equipped to be effectual citizens (3). Faith, explains Vander Lei, can be troublesome as its use in the United States is generally in a Protestant Christian context, often connotes closed-mindedness, and smacks of doctrinal absolutism. But rather than use the broader and less specific term spirituality, she and kyburz chose to use faith because most of the work in the field, especially by Ronda Leathers Dively (1997), Amy Goodburn (1998), Priscilla Perkins (2001) and Lizabeth Rand (2001), focuses on students of particular denominations and religious faith provides the editors and contributors the occasion to consider the intricacy of private and public expressions of belief (7).

Part 1, then, begins with a cluster of essays that speak specifically to the contact zone of the classroom. Juanita M. Smart, for example, in “‘Frankenstein or Jesus Christ?’: When the Voice of Faith Creates a Monster for the Composition Teacher,” examines how her own identity as a scholar and a lesbian clashes with the identity of a student who, like many students of faith, believes he owns the truth (22). Smart admits her unwillingness and inability to negotiate with such a student but maintains that not doing so will never get her, her student, or anyone else closer to the goal of productive rhetorical engagement. In many ways, a practical extension of Smart’s essay, in “Religious Freedom in the Public Square and the Composition Classroom,” Kristine Hansen offers several writing activities designed to help students develop their rhetorical skills. Hansen calls on her membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, her position as a faculty member at Brigham Young University, and her liberal political leanings to inform the construction of the prompts. Douglas Downs concludes part 1 with “True Believers, Real Scholars, and Real True Believing Scholars: Discourses of Inquiry and Affirmation in the Composition Classroom,” one of the most provocative and practical essays in the collection. Downs explains that Discourse with a capital D is not just a way of talking but a “way of being” (51). When teachers who embody the Discourse of inquiry (which values questioning, doubt, and ambiguity) encounter students who embody the Discourse of affirmation (which values the answer, faith, and certainty), the classroom can seem like a boxing ring. Rather than taking a swing, though, professors can guide, translate, mentor, and coach (49-52). Students will only learn to “cast their nets on the other side” when we teach them how, Downs asserts (52).

kyburz introduces part 2, “Negotiating Pedagogies,” with “Liminal Performances, Discursive Practices” in which she urges that we “motivate and value performances that avoid (linguistic) acts of disambiguation,” especially in a time when cultures vie for the ownership of words such as good, evil and terror (59). To encourage critical thought, Keith D. Miller and Jennifer M. Santos, in “Recomposing Religious Plotlines,” offer an analysis of faith assumptions and assignments that help students take apart those assumptions as they learn
to build new ones, a process that ideally enables students to navigate complex religious issues (67). Mark Montesano and Duane Roen follow with “Religious Faith, Learning, and Writing: Challenges in the Classroom,” a dialogue between Montesano as a less seasoned teacher and Roen as an experienced mentor as the former negotiates—even at times poorly, he admits—with students who argue from faith-based suppositions.

Part 3, “Negotiating Cultural Divides,” opens with Vander Lei’s “Cultural Contexts for Religious Faith, Religious Contexts for Cultural Practice.” She observes that faith and culture always already shape each other: “They are weft and warp of a single cloth” (102). Both essays in this section address the importance of looking closely at the cloth’s weave. In “The Book and the Truth: Faith, Rhetoric and Cross-Cultural Communication,” Bronwyn T. Williams gives us a rare glimpse in the field of work with Muslim students as he describes his teacher-student relationship with Mohammed, a student from Oman. Williams examines writing teachers’ reluctance (including his own) to let religious perspectives into the classroom, much less talk about their impact on cross-cultural, academic exchanges. Brad Peters, in “African American Students of Faith in the Writing Center: Facilitating a Rhetoric of Conscience,” introduces a rhetoric that allows students to be faithful to not only scholarship but also their cultures and religions. Peters is especially concerned that students be given more chances to practice melding cultural and academic literacies (131).

In “Religious Faith in Context—Institutions, Histories, Identities, Bodies,” kyburz begins part 4, “Negotiating Institutional Spaces,” by suggesting that we unwittingly but often greatly simplify the concept of audience (138). She challenges us to reconsider how we use the concept to indoctrinate students of faith rather than help them find their way in the complex web they find themselves in, whether on parochial or public campuses. Institutional context matters, insists kyburz, in more intricate ways than we realize or concede (140). In “Torah U’Madda: Institutional ‘Mission’ and Writing Instruction,” Lauren Fitzgerald draws on her experience as faculty and writing program administrator at Yeshiva University and College. She especially notes how the history and application of havruta (studying the Talmud cooperatively) influences her work with students in the writing center (152). Fitzgerald hopes that by deliberately examining an institution’s mission, teachers and students can turn the everyday work of school into a true search for knowledge (152). In “Negotiating Individual Religious Identity and Institutional Religious Culture,” Rebecca Schoenike Nowacek presents three case studies of students, Catholic and Quaker, at a Catholic university. Through ethnography, Nowacek captures the very different responses the students have to an interdisciplinary, three-semester course of literature, history, and theology. She finds that the students, no matter their struggles, participated in a complicated and productive negotiation of their own “religious themes, the rhetorical demands of particular classrooms, and the religious culture of their academic institutions” (165). Nowacek gives some of the best advice in the collection when she encourages us to be
sensitive to students’ search for self, even if that search manifests as preaching (165). And finally, in “(Sacra)Mentality: Catholic Identity in the Postmodern Classroom,” Jeffrey P. Cain employs the work of post-structuralists Deleuze and Guattari to suggest that their concept of the Body without Organs provides a model for teaching students of faith how to abandon religious absolutism long enough to observe immanence, which Cain argues “gathers reality into folds” (179). Such a deconstruction need not lead to nihilism but can create a space of students’ own, a paradoxical space where doubt does not demand rejection, where observing and analyzing immanence can occur simultaneously (176).

As with any collection, the essays seem uneven. And though the essays’ unevenness is due more to their methodologies and theoretical underpinnings than to their value, an introduction and conclusion from the editors may have improved the book’s cohesion. Still, Negotiating Religious Faith is a pedagogically and intellectually stimulating book. Even if the primary audience is compositionists, potentially any professor at a public or private institution teaching an array of courses will find Negotiating Religious Faith well worth her or his time. The essays both challenge readers to examine their biases and suggest ways to begin speaking and teaching and hearing, as Jim W. Corder calls for in “Argument as Emergence, Rhetoric as Love,” a “commodious language” that traverses campuses, disciplines, classrooms, and hearts (32).

Lincoln, NE

Works Cited