That said, *Writing Across Borders* very successfully meets the call for what researchers of writing seem to argue for across the board: attention to second-language writing not just as the purview of specialists, but as a necessity for all teachers. The film thus broadens Bruce and Rafoth’s (2004) important work on helping ESL writers in the context of a writing center. It speaks not only to tutors, but to teachers across the disciplines. In fact, many colloquium participants openly wondered if the film could be required “reading” for all faculty and instructors. The film may be purchased for $12.50 through the website.

Madison, WI


Reviewed by Elizabeth Tasker, Georgia State University

The writings of Mary Astell present a unique but, until recently, largely forgotten intellectual female voice of late-seventeenth-century England—a voice significant to the European Enlightenment not only for its female perspective but for connecting seventeenth-century French rhetorical theory with the emerging philosophical and rhetorical developments of eighteenth-century Britain. In *The Eloquence of Mary Astell*, Christina Mason Sutherland resuscitates Astell’s contributions to rhetoric and shows how Astell’s writings both extend and challenge the ideas of Descartes, Locke, and many other male philosophers and thinkers of her period and earlier. Sutherland’s book offers a thorough analysis of the rhetorical situation represented in each of Astell’s published works, which include *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, Part I* (1694), *Letters Concerning the Love of God* (1695), *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, Part II* (1697), *The Christian Religion* (1705), *Some Reflections on Marriage* (1706), and four political pamphlets (three published in 1704 and one in 1709).

Sutherland’s study combines historical, rhetorical and literary feminist recovery scholarship to integrate Astell’s work into the context of mainstream (masculine) western rhetoric and philosophy in the late seventeenth century. Foregrounding Astell’s distinct female Christian Neo-Platonic position within the cultural and intellectual climate of her period, Sutherland presents Astell’s ideas in relationship to Cartesian and Lockean empiricism, Platonism, Protestantism, Augustinian Christianity, and early eighteenth-century British politics. With numerous close readings of primary passages and detailed discussions on fine points of philosophy, *The Eloquence of Mary Astell* will be best appreciated by readers who have a deep interest in historical rhetoric and some knowledge of Enlightenment philosophy, or by readers who have the desire to learn about these things.
Sutherland organizes her book into three parts: part 1 contextualizes Astell as a woman intellectual writing in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, part 2 focuses on Astell’s work as rhetorical practice, and part 3 describes Astell’s rhetorical theory. The background provided in part 1 should prove helpful for readers new to early modern feminist historical rhetoric. Those already familiar with historical rhetoric may find part 1 repetitive in terms of general feminist history, but they will find new insights in biographical details, such as Astell’s major influences, acquaintances, and friendships. In part 2, each chapter provides a thorough analysis of one of Astell’s works, including its context, audience(s), argument structure, and use of rhetorical appeals. In its entirety, part 2 is immensely valuable in tracing the development of Astell’s authorial practices, thematic concerns, and rhetorical strategies over the course of her writing career. Finally, part 3 revisits Astell’s explicit statement of rhetorical theory, which, as Sutherland points out, covers ninety-six pages in chapter three of *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, Part II*. The three-part organization of *The Eloquence of Mary Astell* allows readers to join Sutherland’s discussion at various points based on their own research needs and interests. But reading the entire book, all three parts, will give readers the most complete view of the extraordinary intellect, talent, theories, and achievements of Mary Astell and how she overcame the educational and social obstacles faced by women of her time.

When Astell first began to publish in the 1690s, the Enlightenment ideals of rationality and empirical science were coming into vogue, and the intellectual center of Western Europe was in the process of shifting from France to London. Ramus, Descartes, the Port Royalists, and Lamy were being read in their native tongue, translated to English, and appropriated by the British educated elite. The ideas of Whig philosopher and empiricist John Locke were gaining prestige in England. Today, historians view the seventeenth century as a time of transition from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, an especially fuzzy time as it pertains to the rhetorical activities of women whom, in general, historians tend to cast as late adopters of new intellectual developments and whom, in the seventeenth century, scholars associate with Renaissance humanism much more often than with the Enlightenment philosophy. In part 1, Sutherland seems to concur with this assessment of seventeenth century females as a repressed product of their culture, lagging behind in education and enlightenment.

But, moving through Astell’s writings, Sutherland shows that her subject is not only in tune with the latest Enlightenment thinking but that Astell continually challenges the ideas of her male contemporaries. Sutherland states of Astell, “hers was a critical mind” that craved education and intellectual exchange (44). Sutherland explains how Astell sought out John Norris, a well-known Christian Neo-Platonist scholar. Through a two-year correspondence, captured in *Letters Concerning the Love of God*, Astell’s conversation with Norris amounted to what Sutherland describes as an education that “we might compare with modern graduate school” (42). While describing Astell and Norris’ relationship, Sutherland
also elucidates the tenets of Christian Neo-Platonism, a major source for Astell’s philosophical position. In a later section, Sutherland details exactly how Astell opposes Locke, stating that Astell finds Locke’s philosophy “too secular,” that it ignores the role of faith in metaphysics, and that it does not accept intellectual activity in all strata of society (69). At the same time, despite Astell’s staunchly Christian position, Sutherland argues that Astell is “typical of the Enlightenment” in her “preference for logos over ethos” as the chief means for persuasion (89). Sutherland does an excellent job detailing Astell’s methods of logic and rhetoric and explaining how Astell’s work is informed by Descartes’ *Principles of Philosophy*, Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole’s *The Art of Thinking*, and Bernard Lamy’s *The Art of Speaking*. Thus, although Astell’s gender marks her as a marginal figure for her period, Sutherland shows that Astell’s work places her knowingly in the mainstream intellectual conversations of her day.

Sutherland argues that Astell is, in fact, the most important female figure in early modern rhetoric because her work contributes to the theory and practice of both sermo and contentio. Contentio, Sutherland explains, refers to traditional public argumentation as found historically in the solely masculine venues of law courts and political forums and has been the chief concern of rhetorical practitioners and theorists for centuries. Sermo, in the other hand, refers to less structured, less public, and less theorized forms of verbal communication, such as conversation used in social gatherings and epistolary correspondence, traditionally not the focus of pre-modern rhetorical study. Sutherland’s broadening of rhetoric to include sermo, or conversation, aligns with both the importance of conversation in seventeenth-century society and with the trend of today’s feminist scholars in including conversation as a new genre in the study of historical rhetoric, for example with Jane Donawerth’s work on Madeleine de Scudery, which Sutherland notes in her introduction. Although Astell herself does not use the terms contentio and sermo, Sutherland contends that “it is the letter genre [Astell’s primary genre] that allows her to move from sermo to contentio” (50). Most of Astell’s works are written as letters, a genre acceptable for females in her day. However, in *Reflections on Marriage* and her four political pamphlets, Astell sheds the letter genre and writes treatises and tracts that “belong to contentio, to the full public discourse of oratory” (80). As read by Sutherland, Astell’s rhetorical practice operates in both the female and male worlds of her period.

Emphatically placing Astell into mainstream rhetorical history, Sutherland’s *The Eloquence of Mary Astell* is an authoritative and important book for those who study historical rhetoric. Still, in the opinion of this reader, it would have benefited from further discussion in two areas: first, more attention to Astell’s theories of composition and secondly in exploring possible links to later eighteenth-century rhetoric. In pursuit of the distinction between contentio and sermo, Sutherland’s reading of Astell’s rhetorical theory glosses rather too quickly over Astell’s delineation of composition styles as well as Astell’s perspective on how morality and human will are related to rhetoric and argumentation. I believe
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,