Introduction

Modesty's Charge: Feminist Functionalism and Seventeenth-Century Feminist Theory

It is impossible to overstate the importance of modesty as a virtue for early modern women, particularly those entering public discourse. While most writers and speakers, regardless of gender, had to strike a humble posture, both as a rhetorical courtesy and in order to lessen the possibility of raising the ire of patrons, royalty, and religious authorities, women were also burdened with the need to veil themselves either literally or figuratively as a sign of both their purity and their inherited shame. *Pudor*, not *modestus*, is the modesty of women. Commenting on François Fénelon's assertion that women should have a "*pudeur* towards knowledge, almost as delicate as that which inspires the horror of vice," Elizabeth Rapley observes, "[*p*]*udeur* went far beyond physical modesty. It represented the feminine identity as it was perceived in the seventeenth century, in all its weakness and limitation" (158). Modesty was a virtue for men as well, but for them *modestus* or "keeping due measure" was the appropriate Latin cognate—in men, modesty connoted probity, self-government, and reason. In the hierarchical secular world, modesty helped men negotiate the dual roles of governing and being governed. From a religious perspective, modest activity meant acting with faith, humility, and charity, well aware of one's own fallen nature. For men, modesty was largely a matter of moderation. Immoderate men were characterized as effeminate; they were governed by the body when they should be governing it.[1]

It should not be surprising that women were aware of this difference. They commented on the imposition of modesty as *pudor* and argued for their own ability to "keep due measure." In Anne Bradstreet's "Of the Four Humours of mans Constitution" we find a common gesture of modesty from the most feminine of the humors, Flegme.

> Some other parts there issue from the Brain,
> Whose use and worth to tel, I must refrain;
> Some worthy learned *Crooke* may these reveal,
> But modesty hath charg'd me to conceal. (*Tenth Muse* 39)

1 See the introduction to Todd W. Reeser, *Moderating Masculinity in Early Modern Culture* for a useful argument about the role of moderation in Renaissance notions of masculinity.

Flegme claims the brain as hers and alludes to Helkiah Crooke's lengthy description of conception and generation as well as his insistence on the primacy of the brain in his encyclopedic *Μικροκοσμογραφια : A Description of the Body of Man* (1615—referred to hereafter as *Microcosmographia*). But he may say what she may not. These lines follow the same formula as a familiar reference to Guillaume du Bartas that Bradstreet includes in "The Prologue," the first poem in *The Tenth Muse Lately sprung up in America*—"A *Bartas* can, doe what a *Bartas* wil,/But simple I, according to my skill" (3). In both passages, the first line of a couplet explains her precursor's achievements while the second admits her own limitations in the same area. However, du Bartas "can" do what he will while Crooke "may" reveal what he knows; Bradstreet does not share du Bartas's skill, but she does share Crooke's knowledge by virtue of having read his book. The difference between "can" and "may" distinguishes humility from modesty; Flegme's feminine modesty requires a veiling of shameful knowledge and is overtly conditioned by social expectations rather than innate abilities.[2] It does not, however, deny what she knows and in her deployment of this knowledge elsewhere she stakes a claim for modesty as *modestus*.

Recent treatments of modesty in early modern women's writings tend to focus on concealment and *pudor*; expressions of modesty are understood as capitulation to patriarchal assumptions of women's inferiority or as acts of subversive misdirection that only appear to submit even as they critique these assumptions. In concealing her role in sexual reproduction, Flegme may be read as either submitting to those gendered social expectations that require a feminine humor and a female poet to refrain from speaking that which is "immodest" or practicing a kind of double-voiced discourse by indicating that she knows what she cannot say. In this book I propose a third reading of modesty in the works of four women who lived in the Americas during the seventeenth century. Rather than bemoaning their modesty as submissive or doubting their manifest claims by naming it subversive, we may accept this modesty as an engagement of contemporary discourses that embraces modesty as keeping due measure and understands bodies as functional but symbolically unimportant. The modesty I explore is associated with discipline, practice, and embodied efforts that are always conditioned by the limits of human perception in a fallen world rather than the concealment of shameful female bodies. These women insist that souls do not transcend bodies but rather are served by them in ways that respond to and challenge misogynist claims about sinful, female flesh.

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2 In her introduction to *Silent But for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works*, Margaret Patterson Hannay writes that "consciousness of defying a prescribed role prompts women to use the modesty topos with vivid intensity" (1). This topos acknowledges social demands that women refrain from public speech, that they remain silent. Hannay does not discuss the origins of this topos in any depth, nor does she explore the distinctions between humility and modesty. Alicia Ostriker likewise argues that "the most continuous term of approbation for a woman poet from the early nineteenth century to the day before yesterday has been *modesty*" (3). "Stealing" language either under the cloak of modesty or through direct, immodest attack are options she explores in women's poetry; I argue instead that early modern women are often unironically modest and yet change the stakes of female modesty by substituting moderation for concealment, *modestus* for *pudor*, in ways that self-consciously engage gender ideology.

In citing Helkiah Crooke, Bradstreet displays her learning and expects her readers to understand the allusion; she does not require a twenty-first century feminist to decode her message or observe the paradoxes of her situation. But more to the point, the knowledge she displays is of the works of a medical functionalist. In late Renaissance medical theory, functionalism involves a recognition that all elements of the body have their own purposes and capacities, and thus women's bodily processes and organs are seen as complete and effective in themselves rather than as deprived forms of male perfection, an argument that is particularly evident in the numerous "controversies" Crooke addresses throughout *Microcosmographia.* Modest but not unknowing, Flegme consistently uses the medical functionalism outlined by Crooke to argue that "feminine" humors and parts of the body are necessary and fully functional, not lesser as Choler, her masculinist opponent, would have it. In making this claim Bradstreet has Flegme mount a learned and successful challenge to long held beliefs about the inferiority of women's bodies rooted in Aristotelian notions of sex difference that characterize women as lesser in all ways because of their cooler, less developed bodies.

Bradstreet's Flegme uses what I call "feminist functionalism" to answer the claims and calumnies of Choler, as I explore in greater depth in Chapter 1, a strategy also evident in the writings of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, who similarly appeals to functionalist medical theory, as well as the theological arguments and spiritual practices of Anne Hutchinson and Marie de l'Incarnation. Functionalism, as Ian Maclean has shown in *The Renaissance Notion of Woman*, is not limited to medical thought; it is also apparent in ethical and social debates, especially surrounding the institution of marriage, and is possible in legal and religious discourses. During the Renaissance there arises, along with a greater awareness of differing sexual functions, an emphasis on women's and men's different ethical and social roles in marriage in ways that tend toward a form of equity. Maclean focuses on texts by learned men in which functionalism is *potentially* liberating for women, but does not ultimately lead to great changes in power relations between the sexes. These writers are more often concerned with refuting scholastic modes of argument than changing women's social positions; thus, functionalism in these works does not extend to any significant assertion of women's legal equality or alteration of their place as archetypal sinners in Christian theology. Maclean attributes this failure in large part to the coexistence of experimental and observational heuristics that reject "the parallels male/female, active/passive, formal/material, perfect/deprived" (*Renaissance* 86) alongside persistent characterizations of women as lesser and imperfect. Even in ethics and medicine, disciplines far more open to new modes of analysis than religion and law, "the conservative view of sex difference survives, and causes notable dislocations of thought" (*Renaissance* 87).

Maclean's conclusions are based on scholarly works by men, a limited pool of texts for his claims about "Renaissance feminism." Reviewers have paid particular attention to both his neglect of women writers and his disregard for social experiences involving a range of challenges to various forms of dichotomy and hierarchy that not only belie their validity but perhaps even necessitate their persistence (Davis "Review" 212–13; Blaisdell 113). While such critiques are just, my argument here is not about social experience *per se*. Rather, I look at how women writing in the Americas during the seventeenth century both engaged functionalist

discourses that helped reconceive entrenched "notions of woman" *and* knowingly responded to dislocations within male-authored texts that promised a form of equity while nonetheless perpetuating conservative views of sex difference. In doing so, I focus particularly on the functional body in both medical and religious discourses (discourses that overlap considerably). These treatments of the body as functional challenge body/spirit dualism by insisting on the role of the body in sustaining the soul while refusing to read the body symbolically, thereby mounting a potent attack on arguments for the subordination of women that depend on their association with the body. Functionalist approaches to social roles are also evident in the texts I study, but almost always filtered through associations with the body. By focusing on what bodies do rather than what they mean, these engagements of functionalism claim for women the ability to practice modesty understood as "keeping due measure" in ways that become radical because they are not joined to the social rewards of moderation available to men.[3]

The "feminism" I claim for these women is not based primarily on either an appeal to women's gendered experiences or a rejection of sexual differences along the lines of "the soul has no sex," strategies which revalue women's association with the flesh either in positive, experiential terms or through negation. Neither is it concerned with equal rights or otherwise oriented toward the future emergence of modern feminisms. Instead, I frame the feminism of these women as a response to prevalent expressions of what Alice Jardine, writing of French modernity, calls "*gynesis*—the putting into discourse of 'woman' as that *process* diagnosed in France as intrinsic to new and necessary modes of thinking, writing, speaking" (25). This process is not concerned with women as such, but rather with a metaphorical use of the feminine to explore "the master narratives' own 'nonknowledge'" (25). Gynesis names verbs, processes,

3 Women's association with "the body" and embodiment within a dualistic understanding of body and mind or spirit is a key concern in discussions of gender and feminism both in the early modern period and recently. Among numerous works treating associations of women with the body that both confirm and complicate our understanding of this relationship are Sherry B. Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?"; Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*; Carolyn Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*; Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*; Marilyn Westerkamp, *Women and Religion in Early America, 1600–1850*; essays collected in Susan Rubin Suleiman, ed., *The Female Body in Western Culture* and in Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub, eds, *Body Guards*; Londa Schiebinger, *Nature's Body*; and Peter Stallybrass, "Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed." As these works demonstrate, this dualism and its gendered associations have a complex history. Kathleen Canning provides a useful overview of recent treatments of the body in "The Body as Method: Reflections on the Place of the Body in Gender History." Susan Bordo's *Unbearable Weight*, Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain*, Elizabeth Grosz's *Volatile Bodies*, and Judith Butler's *Bodies that Matter* are among numerous theoretical works that focus on the relationship between material bodies, embodied experiences and practices, and problems of representation associated with symbolic bodies. My concern here is to focus specifically on how a group of early modern women represented functional bodies in ways that challenged prevalent versions of the symbolic body that were limiting to women. Their lived experiences of embodiment are not my primary concern, though these experiences certainly shaped their theoretical formulations.

a horizon, in other words, an informing (or deforming) instability rather than static objectification. Slippage is evident to the degree that this is an *embodiment*; these new verbs, these metaphors, are attached to the name of woman and consequently create a different narrative crisis for the women who find their bodies oddly emerging as a horizon, a negativity. This "slippage" described by Jardine is very like the disjunctions Maclean observes in scholarly notions of woman during the Renaissance—new deployments of the feminine are often socially conservative at the same time that they are conceptually radical. Jardine insists on the verb, but slippage occurs because these verbs are always also nouns.

Jardine's emphasis on "new and necessary modes of thinking" may seem presentist to the ears of early modern scholars, but as Ivy Schweitzer has demonstrated, something akin to Jardine's gynesis was also at work in the seventeenth century (*Self-Representation* 32–35). Indeed, much of the most interesting recent work on gender in early modern and early American studies interrogates historically inflected versions of gynesis, i.e. the ways in which female otherness is used to constitute male subjectivity and privilege, define the intersection between theology and social order, and shape transatlantic politics.[4] Then and now, *newness* is an important element of gynesis, with the feminine used to challenge entrenched logic and hierarchies. In particular, the strength of (feminine) weakness becomes an enabling paradox for the newly strong—spiritual selflessness, empirical science (dependent upon limited human perception), poststructural critique; women's weakness is used as a vehicle to characterize this new, paradoxical strength. In the process, assumptions about women's otherness are reinforced. Frequently, this new thinking is contradicted by familiar assertions that women are by nature lesser than and subordinate to men, turning constructive paradoxes into hypocrisies and contradictions.

Thus, gynesis is an aspect of serious philosophies. In engaging gynesis, the women I study are not simply rebutting misogynistic attacks; they are using, refining, and challenging the theories of their contemporaries.[5] They particularly

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4 Among these are works by Ivy Schweitzer, Patricia Caldwell, Ann Kibbey, Richard Godbeer, Jonathan Sawday, Philip Round, Margaret Olofson Thickstun, and Elizabeth Maddock Dillon. Dillon includes an extended analysis of several such works in "Nursing Fathers and Brides of Christ: The Feminized Body of the Puritan Convert," included in *A Centre of Wonders: The Body in Early America,* edited by Janet Moore Lindman and Michele Lise Tarter.

5 In "Early Feminist Theory and the *Querelle des Femmes*," first published in 1982, Joan Kelly argues that Christine de Pizan's *City of Women*, often cited as the first significant pro-woman entry in the *querelle des femmes* (debates about women) is feminist theory because "Christine's 'new thought' was to investigate as well as rebut misogyny .... Christine had created a space for women to oppose this onslaught of vilification and contempt [from clerical debates on marriage and bourgeois satires], and the example of her citadel served them for centuries" (73). Though useful, defining early feminist theory as a response to misogyny and citing pro-woman debates of the *querelle des femmes* as the preeminent example of such theory puts too much emphasis on starkly contrasted misogynist and feminist positions. Such contrasts are too pessimistic in the power they accord the most extreme misogyny and too optimistic in suggesting that feminist arguments can emerge that are clearly oppositional to dominant ideology.

engage experimental science and lay piety, both disciplines that emphasize practice rather than authority and are relatively more accessible to women and men without formal educations. In both areas, these women emphasize embodied practices that are always partial, fallen, and thus modest while also explicitly challenging symbolic readings of the body. Not surprisingly, they particularly address readings of women's bodies as weaker, more sinful, more erratic, and generally less perfect than men's. The activities and functions of the body rather than its abstract materiality are emphasized as linked to and sustaining the soul in Bradstreet's and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's treatments of medical functionalism and scientific observation, in Marie de l'Incarnation's characterizations of her mortifications and her practice of Ursuline heroism, and in Anne Hutchinson's treatment of her body as witnessing object in her civil trial and, more radically, in her mortalism as expressed during her ecclesiastical trial. Unlike the functionalism of male thinkers, their characterizations of the body are developed in ways that enable women's activities and never rest on the assumption that women are less than fully human.

To understand "modesty's charge" in Bradstreet's poem as an example of the kinds of feminist responses to gynesis explored in this book, it is useful to look more closely at Crooke's own treatment of modesty and modest practices as he takes issue with scholastic medical writings and redacts "new" theories that hinge on reconceptualizing all bodies, male and female, as functional. Bradstreet's opposition between what Crooke may do and Flegme may not overlooks the many constraints placed on the "worthy learned" doctor. First published in 1615, his compendium of anatomical descriptions and controversies "Collected and Translated out of all the Best Authors of Anatomy" was nearly suppressed, both because it included chapters on reproduction and because it was translated into English.[6] In other words, his critics felt he revealed too much. Crooke addresses these problems in *Microcosmographia* by suggesting that his chapters on the generative functions of the body are necessary because they are related to that which is immortal in mankind and because they address "the diseases hence arising, as they bee most fearefull and fullest of anxiety especially in the Female sexe, so are they hardest to be cured" (197). Still, he concedes that "to reueyle the veyle of *Nature*, to prophane her mysteries for a little curious skil-pride, to ensnare mens mindes by sensuall demonstrations, seemeth a thing liable to heuy construction" (197). He therefore takes steps to avoid censure.

> As much as possible we haue endeuored (not frustrating our lawfull scope) by honest wordes and circumlocutions to molifie the harshnesse of the Argument; beside we haue so plotted our busines, that he that listeth may separate this Booke from the rest and reserue it priuately vnto himselfe. (197)

Crooke justifies his disclosures as necessary for the health of women, relieving diseases "most fearefull and fullest of anxiety," but in addressing his critics he relies more on modesty. Crooke presents himself as personally modest, decrying

6 Crooke borrows heavily from both Caspar Bauhin, a relatively progressive thinker whose writings inform Crooke's descriptive sections, and André du Laurens, who was more conservative and from whom Crooke borrowed most of his discussions of anatomical controversies. See C.D. O'Malley, 11–12.

"sensuall demonstrations" and vain displays of skill, while constructing the book so it too can be modest, with the chapters containing information on reproduction and birth designed to be easily removed. In the first chapter of the controversial book on the parts of generation, Crooke wishes he could "cast a veile, which it should bee impiety for any man to remooue, who came not with as chaste a heart to reade as wee did to vvrite" (200).[7]

Crooke justifies his disclosures as providing necessary information for the practice of medicine, but they were also understood to challenge a variety of social distinctions, beginning with that between "the Worshipfvll Company of the Barber-Chyrurgeons," who did much of the day-to-day work of tending to the ill and to whom he addresses his preface (n.p.), and Latin-trained physicians. Crooke gave the former access to advanced medical information while appearing to favor their more practical knowledge over the theories of the latter. This was not just a matter of disseminating information, however. As Jonathan Sawday observes,

> Crooke's 'crime' was to conjoin the illustrations and an English text at a moment when theological sensitivity was particularly intense. Scripturally based notions of patriarchal rule were part of the very fabric of puritanism, at a time when domestic religious policy was one of constant compromise and negotiation between competing factions within the (predominantly) protestant establishment. So, whilst it is easy to dismiss the objections of Crooke's fellow physicians as a combination of prudery and obscurantism, it was also the case that there was an ideological stake in controling the ever more detailed dissemination of public information on the operation of the reproductive body. (226)

The functionalism Crooke espoused posed a significant challenge to a key component of patriarchal rule—the assumption of women's inferiority. This is most clearly stated in a section exploring controversies related to sexual difference: "But this opinion of *Galen* and *Aristotle* we cannot approue. For we thinke that Nature aswell intendeth the generation of a female as of a male: and therefore it is vnworthily said that she is an Error or Monster in Nature. For the perfection of all naturall things is to be esteemed and measured by the end: now it was necessary that woman should be so formed or else Nature must haue missed of her scope, because shee intended a perfect generation, which without a woman cannot be accomplished" (271). Crooke explicitly links this appreciation of women's bodies as being as fully functional as men's to the equality of souls.

> For the female sexe as well as the male is a perfection of mankinde: some there bee that call a woman *Animal occasionatum*, or *Accessorium*, barbarous words to expresse a barbarous conceit; as if they should say, A Creature by the way, or made by mischance; yea some haue growne to that impudencie, that they haue denied a woman to haue a soule as man hath. The truth is, that as the soule of a woman is the same diuine nature with a

7 At least one reader seems to have taken this admonition seriously. Written on the back flyleaf of a copy of the *Microcosmographia* at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Thomas Yull has written his name several times as well as the following: "god give him grace there on to look." Underlining in book 4 suggests that at least one of the readers of this volume was particularly interested in "Of the motions of the wombe," a chapter that touches in part on female orgasm.

> mans, so is her body a necessary being, a first and not a second intention of Nature, her proper and absolute worke not her error or preuarication. The difference is by the Ancients in few words elegantly set downe when they define a man, to be a creature begetting in another, a woman a Creature begetting in her selfe. (258)

The equality of souls does not depend upon a rejection of sexed bodies, but rather the recognition of women's bodies as necessary and "a first ... intention of Nature" is coextensive with the understanding that men's and women's souls are of "the same diuine nature." It is this aspect of Crooke's book that Bradstreet particularly exploits in her quaternion on the four humors, arguing that female bodies are fully functional and in doing so, explicitly challenging the "barbarous conceit[s]" of misogynists identified by Crooke.

In other ways, however, Crooke maintains notions of female embodiment and modesty that subordinate women, reinforcing the hierarchies that Bradstreet challenges. While Crooke states that "it was necessary that woman should be so formed," he does not reject the notions that heat equals preeminence and that men are superior to women, though his functionalism leads in that direction, as Bradstreet recognizes. In the section immediately following his discussion of "controversies" surrounding sexual difference in which he declared that it is wrong to see women as monsters, Crooke explores women's temperament and debates over whether they are more or less hot than men. Those who have argued that women are hotter assert, among other things, that women are quicker to anger and that "wenches grow faster then boyes, become sooner ripe, and yeeld seede the sooner, which is the worke of the generatiue Faculty; they are also more wanton and lasciuious, as hauing the Testicles hid within their bodies, by which they are heated" (273). Crooke sides with those who insist that women are generally cooler, arguing, "Anger is a disease of a weake mind which cannot moderate itselfe but is easily inflamed, such are women, childeren, and weake and cowardly men, and this we tearme fretfulnesse or pettishnes .... If therefore women are Nockthrown or easily mooued of the hindges, that they haue from their cold Temper, and from the impotencie and weaknes of their mind, because they are not able to lay a law vpon themselues" (276). Likewise, "That Females are more wanton and petulant then Males, wee thinke hapneth because of the impotencie of their minds; for the imaginations of lustfull women are like the imaginations of bruite beastes which haue no repugnancie or contradiction of reason to restraine them" (276). Women may not be monsters to the degree that their creation is imperfect or accidental, but nonetheless Crooke finds that they are inclined to be more bestial than men because they cannot restrain themselves.[8]

Contradictions between Crooke's functionalist appreciation of women's bodies as necessary and "perfected" and his understanding of women as weak and "not able to lay a law vpon themselues" (276) may be understood as a problem of modesty and the difference between *pudor* and *modestus*. In providing theological justification for his work, he places great emphasis on the body as "measured" in the sense of

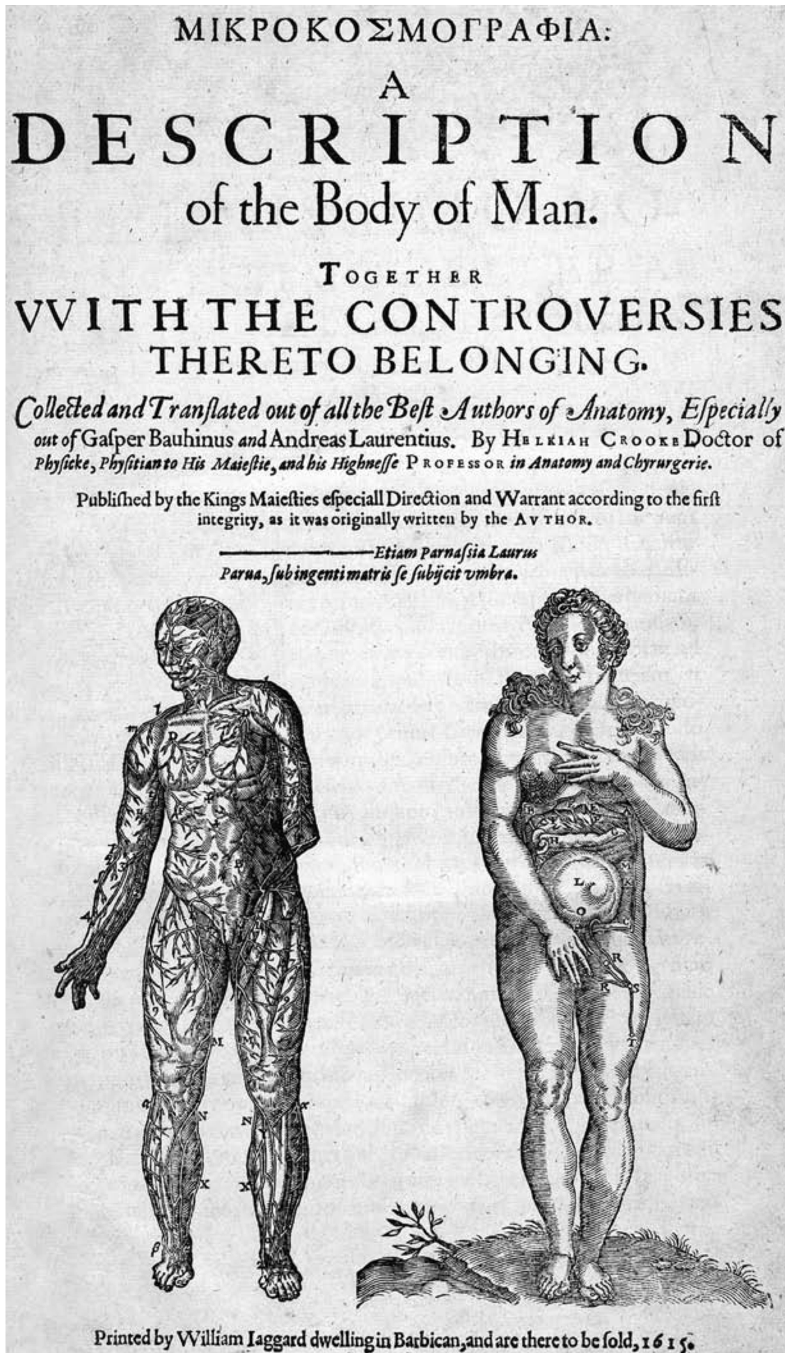
8 See Jean Marie Lutes, "Negotiating Theology and Gynecology: Anne Bradstreet's Representations of the Female Body" (315–19) for a discussion of contradictions in Crooke's treatment of the uterus as both functional and therefore healthy but also as the source of almost all maladies in women's bodies.

modestus but finds that women are less measured in this way. The body's "excellency" is evident in the following, according to Crooke: "The frame and composition which is vpright and mounting toward heauen, the moderate temper, the equal and iust proportion of the parts; and lastly, their wonderfull consent & mutuall concord as long as they are in subiection to the Law & rule of Nature: for so long in them we may behold the liuely Image of all this whole Vniuerse, which wee see with our eyes (as it were) shadowed in a Glasse, or desciphered in a Table" (4). Hierarchy, law, and the symbolic reading of images "shadowed in a Glasse" govern this portion of Crooke's defense, developed both theologically and in terms of the body politic ("And if both Princes and Peasants would weigh and consider the mutuall offices betweene the principall and the ignoble parts, Princes might vnderstand how to rule, and Peasants how to obey. Princes may learne of the braine how to make Lawes, to gouerne their people; of the heart, how to preserue the life, health, and safety of their Citizens; of the Liuer, they may learn bounty and liberality" [13]). The human body, unlike that of animals, is capable of "moderate temper."

> Man hath likewise a moderate temper, and is indeed the most temperate of all bodies, as being the μετρον, measure, and rule of all others. The bodies of other Creatures, are either too Earthy, or too Watery: but to Mans, the temperature of all things liuing, both plants and Creatures is referred, as to the *Medium generis*, as we vse to say, that is, to the *middle of the vvhole kind*, so that they are sayde to bee hot, colde, moyst, and drie ωξοξτι, that is, according to reference, their temperature being compared with Mans. Againe, Man alone hath encluded in himselfe the temperature of all liuing things; all other creatues are in their seuerall kindes for the most part, of one and the same temper. But if you looke vnto mankinde, you shall finde manie that haue the stomacke of an Estrich; Others, that haue the heart of a Lyon; Some are of the temper of a Dogge, many of a Hog, and an infinite number of as dull and blockish a temper as an Asse. (5)

Studying all the functions and parts of the body allows individuals to "knowe themselues" and to "giue glory to him who hath so wonderfully Created them" (197), but Crooke also humbly describes the soul as exceeding human knowledge and language, for "Onely this is created, not generated" (4). Though at times "Man" seems to encompass both men and women, Crooke's treatment of moderation is also distinctly hierarchical, informing differences between humans and animals, men and women, as well as differences among men. His functionalist treatment of women's bodies does not extend to according them the same place in this hierarchy as the most measured of men.

This contradiction between levelling functionalism and hierarchical notions of moderation is compounded by the ways in which women's modesty is figured in terms of *pudor* on the title page of *Microcosmographia.* Despite his repeated insistence that books 4 and 5 are rightly veiled from the impure, the title page of the first and most succeeding editions of the *Microcosmographia* includes a provocative image of a naked woman that advertises these controversial chapters. On the left is a male figure illustrating the veins of the skin "opened and scarified" and on the right, a female figure with abdomen opened, revealing her pregnancy. The male figure, taken from book two on "the parts Investing and Containing the whole Body," hangs in mid-air, his body fully exposed to the viewer while his own gaze is directed to the side. The female figure, on the other hand, is taken from the controversial fourth



ΜΙΚΡΟΚΟΣΜΟΓΡΑΦΙΑ:

A

DESCRIPTION

of the Body of Man.

TOGETHER

VVITH THE CONTROVERSIES

THERETO BELONGING.

Collected and Tranſlated out of all the Beſt Authors of Anatomy, Eſpecially out of Gaſper Bauhinus *and* Andreas Laurentius. By HELKIAH CROOKE Doctor of *Phyſicke, Phyſitian to His Maieſtie, and his Highneſſe* PROFESSOR *in Anatomy and Chyrurgerie.*

Publiſhed by the Kings Maieſties eſpeciall Direction and Warrant according to the firſt integrity, as it was originally written by the AVTHOR.

——*Etiam Parnaſia Laurus*
Parua, ſub ingenti matris ſe ſubijcit vmbra.

Printed by William Iaggard dwelling in Barbican, and are there to be ſold, 1615.

Fig. 1 **Title page of Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia: A Description of the Body of Man* (London, 1616)**

book on generation. She stands on a grassy mound, with her right hand covering her genitals and her left over one breast with fingers outstretched toward the other as if that too is being covered by association. This pose, a version of the classical "Venus pudica," is most familiar to modern audiences through the Venus in Botticelli's famous painting. Paradoxically, her modesty is emphasized because she is only partially covered. Her head is also tilted to the side, but her gaze turns obliquely to the front, meeting that of the viewer. Like the conceits and blazons of a Petrarchan lover enumerating the virtues of his beloved, Crooke's circumlocutions and removable chapters allow him both to veil and unveil Nature's feminized mysteries, a situation further emphasized by this title page.[9] In the versions available in *Historia Anatomica Hvmani Corporis* (1600) by André du Laurens, both figures are standing on the ground.[10] Decisions related to the composition of book two may explain why the male figure is "ungrounded," but the effect is to narrativize female modesty while treating the male figure as neutral. The less posed male figure hanging in space invites a relatively objective consideration of the exposed circulatory system; in contrast, the female figure must be read through the veil of modesty put up by her imperfectly placed hands and the suggestion of narrative provided by her setting and pose.[11] Thus, women are treated as less capable of moderation in Crooke's text while his cover image suggests modesty caught in a dialectic between shame and titillation that renders women objects of speculation rather than functional agents. C.D. O'Malley argues that Crooke puts this particular illustration on the cover of his book as a challenge to the physicians who attempted to have it suppressed (8), reinforcing the idea that ultimately this reflects an argument among men about the nature of (male) agency and power.

Bradstreet's couplet about Flegme's modesty hinges on tension within the rhyme pair "reveal"/"conceal." Though he clearly "may" do more than a female figure like Flegme (and a woman writer like Bradstreet), Crooke also must justify his revelations. He does so by insisting on his modesty in order to avoid the charges of both pride and prurience, excesses that a reasonable, moderate man positioned appropriately within social and religious hierarchies should avoid. He both reveals and conceals knowledge by appealing to the moderation of his similarly self-governing readers and warning away those who "came not with as chaste a heart" (200). However, Crooke is not above deploying a more titillating version of the tension between reveal and conceal as evidenced by his cover images, one of which depends on an understanding of

9 Anatomical illustrations that represented an apparently living body opened and revealed were common throughout this period, whether of men or women. See Nancy J. Vickers' discussion of the violence of the blazon in "Diana Described: Scattered Woman and Scattered Rhyme." See also Sawday's *The Body Emblazoned*, Londa Schiebinger's *The Mind Has No Sex?*, Thomas Laqueur's *Making Sex*, and Vickers' "Members Only."

10 O'Malley attributes these illustrations to Caspar Bauhin's *Theatrum anatomicum*, published in 1592, while notes for the edition available at the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library attribute them to Andreas Vesalius. They are exactly like those found in du Laurens' *Historia Anatomica* (1600), a facsimile of which is available online through the website of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (http://gallica.bnf.fr/).

11 See Valerie Traub's *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* for an extended discussion of anatomical *pudica* and Crooke's strategies of simultaneous display and concealment (110–24).

female modesty as shame, but a shame that is provocative and, perhaps, feigned (the female figure on his title page has what arguably may be called "a come hither look"). Crooke may be immoderate in this second form of revelation, but it is woman's modesty and shame that is on display. In other words, his associations of women with modesty as *pudor* inform his judgment that they are less capable of modesty as *modestus*, a very familiar double-bind addressed variously by all the women studied in this book. To return to Bradstreet's couplet, Crooke may reveal what he will because he successfully claims moderation and thus is able to benefit from "subiection to the Law & rule of Nature" (4) in ways that Flegme cannot. Bradstreet, through Flegme, is more consistent than Crooke in developing her functionalism to its logical conclusion insofar as it applies to women's social status.

In *Microcosmographia* we see several aspects of gynesis and its attendent disjunctions with respect to real women. The discussion and display of women's bodies is associated with the relatively new practice of human dissection; empirical observation is contrasted throughout *Microcosmographia* with the fallacies of scholastic commentary. Likewise, the theoretical claims of medical functionalism are reinforced by the surprising and new observation that women's bodies, like men's, are fully functional. Jonathan Sawday describes yet another form of gynesis when he argues that anatomies, literary blazons, and other forms of "dissective dynamism" in the early modern period "stress the endless *divisibility* of the female body" (217) in contrast to perfect male bodies *and* as a figure for male self-examination. Sometimes women are dismembered, displayed, and circulated as a sign of possession and mastery but at other times the partitioning of (feminine) bodies figures both as a literalized answer to the injunction, "Know Thyself," and as a figure of Christian humility and Christ-like sacrifice.

> To open the body of another was, it was true, part of the process of achieving generalized understanding of the human frame and its creator's wisdom, but the words also led the enquiring human subject to a form of self-analysis. Moreover, that analysis meshed with the rigours of Calvinist self-examination *and* a tradition of pictorial representation to be found in overtly catholic contexts. (110)

Women are not expected to practice any of these forms of thought associated with gynesis. For one thing, the "empirical" observation that women are less moderate than men bars them from being able to exercise moderation or practice reason and empirical observation themselves. But women's modesty as *pudor* is not primarily defined by their lack of modesty as *modestus*; representations like that found on Crooke's cover or in literary *blazons* essentially objectify women and women's modesty for male consumption. No true agency is imagined because women's modesty is linked to readings of their bodies rather than the modest activities of their bodies. The association of the dissected female body with religious self-examination is even less accessible to women because such figurative uses of the feminine to imagine an open, submissive, disempowered self short-circuit when one really is a woman. As Ivy Schweitzer asks, "Can women dream of becoming what they already are?" (*Self-Representation* 18). Thus, their association with modesty as *pudor* prevents them from practicing moderation while making their exposed bodies more potent as figures for male self-contemplation.

The conjunction of figurative uses of femininity and hierarchically-informed beliefs about women's capabilities raises formidable barriers to women's participation in these discourses, as most scholars of these kinds of gynesis have concluded. Jardine, for instance, brackets the question of women's responses, explaining, "I have not included their work in any major way here because their rewriting of the men, their repetitions of and dissidence from those men, are exceedingly complex, meriting more attention than one or two chapters could provide" (21). Sawday is particularly quick to admit defeat. "Very occasionally, we can glimpse a woman struggling against this pervasive system, questioning the analogical discourses within which her own language (of necessity) was formed. But usually, the result was a failure" (227). Discussions of women's responses to gynesis have tended to treat women as naturally more critical of these "analogical discourses" both because of their lived experiences of femininity and their awareness that these analogies enforce power structures from which they do not benefit. However, like Philomel, Sybil, or any number of other women from classical literature, they are also understood to be isolated, individualized and unheard because of this critical insight. Gynesis is an ideological formation that men use collectively, with variations, to be sure, but effectively and, for the most part, unthinkingly. Women's engagement of gynesis, on the other hand, is assumed to be mostly ineffective because of the very cultural formations that make gynesis work for men. In other words, it is assumed that women respond to gynesis as individuals who know but cannot speak or who do not know and are led to identify against themselves. In this framework there is very little space for effective critical thought within ideology.

I argue instead that there is a collective female response, no more uniform than men's uses of gynesis but reflecting trends conditioned by a shared awareness of gynesis and the underpinnings of misogynistic logic. Men do not conspire together to use gynesis; women do not need to organize in order to have a collective response. Stephanie Merrim makes this argument in discussing the *querelle des femmes*.

> Feminism need not have been organized as such, as it is now, to evince either a feminist consciousness or a discursive commonality.
> Indeed, if the texts I have analyzed are any indication, it is clear that the *querelle* and the pan-Christian imaginary gave rise to an unceasing, unwitting, almost inevitable, textual sorority between early modern feminists who were unaware of one another and who often worked in isolation. (*Early* xxii–xxiii)

Similarly, women respond to the metaphorical universe of gynesis by reframing or refusing an assumption at its heart—that bodies can be read symbolically as signifiers for spiritual, intellectual, and legal signifieds. This is not just the shared language of commonplaces and retorts; the responses to gynesis I explore more fundamentally engage debates of the time while shifting characterizations of the body in ways that challenge symbolic readings of the body. Todd W. Reeser's reading of male moderation usefully shows how ideal masculinity in the Renaissance was frequently characterized as a moderate intermediate between excess and lack. He suggests that women were less inclined to treat moderation in this way, appealing instead to neoplatonic arguments that "often claim or assume that men and women possess the same capacity for virtue and should strive for the same virtues—a position that makes

moderate masculinity of little direct interest" (43). However, neoplatonic arguments about women's and men's capacity for virtue generally bracket the body in ways that may be understood as an implicit rejection. The women I study claim that men and women possess the same capacity for moderation, though not as distinguished from the lack and excess of others on a scale of self-government. Rather, their modesty involves moderate, fallen, human, embodied activity. Repeatedly they reject forms of modesty that are essentially about shame and veiling female bodies.

In Chapter 1, I explore the link between Anne Bradstreet's feminism in *The Tenth Muse* and her use of medical functionalism, paying particular attention to her staging of a *querelle des femmes* in her quaternion on the four humors. In this poem, Bradstreet has Flegme, the most feminine humor, answer the sexist assertions of the most masculine humor, Choler, with functionalist arguments drawn from the writings of Helkiah Crooke that challenge the Aristotelian belief that women are cooler than men and therefore inferior. Bradstreet reveals the double-bind that ensnares public women in memorable couplets elsewhere in *The Tenth Muse*, most notably in "The Prologue" and her elegy on Queen Elizabeth. However, Flegme's functionalist challenge to Choler's insistence on male preeminence provides a more fully developed alternative to masculinist thinking, one that may also be used to reconsider her understanding of gender in "The Four Monarchies" as well as less public poems like those written to her husband that were only published in later editions of her poetry.

Chapter 2 treats the ways Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, like Bradstreet, uses and questions literary conventions, scientific theories, and theological debates that have implications for understanding gendered hierarchies. I particularly focus on her use of medical knowledge in the poem that many judge to be her masterpiece and that Sor Juana herself claimed was the only work she wrote purely for her own pleasure, *Primero Sueño* (*First Dream*). In this dream poem, she chronicles the trajectory of both body and soul during a night's sleep. While lungs breathe, heart beats, and stomach churns, the soul rises through successive levels of human learning, aspiring to and almost achieving total, divine knowledge, only to awaken. Notably, it is not until the final line of this poem that we learn that the dreamer is female. Like other dream poems, *Primero Sueño* explores the limits of human knowledge as well as transgressions committed in pursuit of that knowledge. But unlike her models, Sor Juana's dreamer does not have a guide. While many critics read this poem as another example of the intellectual nun's attempt to overcome the limits of the female body by emphasizing a neuter spirit, overlooking as they do so the long passages in which Sor Juana describes the body as "the vital mainspring of the human clock," I argue that Sor Juana emphasizes the functions of the body and not its symbolic value, and in doing so continues a challenge to dominant, patriarchal logic and symbolism begun in other poems by her about gender relations.

In Chapters 3 and 4 I turn to functionalist discourses and practices of the body employed by two women known primarily for their religious activities, Anne Hutchinson and Marie de l'Incarnation. In both cases I resist individualist readings of these women by considering the relationship between their theological beliefs, spiritual practices, and social activities. In Chapter 3 I discuss Hutchinson's engagement of religious debates within a highly politicized public conflict, the

Antinomian or free grace controversy in early New England. In Hutchinson's trials we see a clash between her opponents' tendency to treat the body as a symbol which can be read from the outside (most famously in descriptions of her "monstrous births" that are read as literally embodying her monstrous ideas) and Hutchinson's insistence that the body cannot be read and has no enduring significance but rather is a conduit of felt spirit. Like Choler and the Aristotelians, Hutchinson's judges see the body as a base for spiritual and civil values; like Bradstreet, Hutchinson challenges this model by disrupting the symbolic relationship between body and spirit. In this chapter I examine these differences between Hutchinson and her judges in their references to her body as a witnessing object and in their positions on the mortalist heresy (the belief that both soul and body perish at death). It has been argued that Hutchinson displays an early example of "American individualism." However, her belief that the body is not resurrected with the spirit is an important and often overlooked challenge to the individualist reading of the Antinomian Controversy and its implicitly gendered presuppositions about subjectivity and individual freedom.

In my final chapter I look north to the apostolate of Marie de l'Incarnation and the Ursulines of Québec. Several spiritual autobiographies and collections of letters by Marie de l'Incarnation, one of the founders of the first convent in Québec, were published in France during the seventeenth century. Her writings invite comment on the apparent contradictions informing a life that included both mystical visions and efficient business acumen, both secular motherhood and several tenures as Mother Superior. However, Marie's own treatment of the intersections among the various aspects of her life does not reflect the same sense of paradox found there by many scholars. In writings about her early mystical experiences, we find precise descriptions of the body that are similar to Sor Juana's emphasis on the body's presence even as the soul seeks to escape its bonds. Later she expresses more developed ideas about the role of the body in spiritual matters, explaining the need for a "double spirit, for attending to inside and outside" (*Corr.* 528). But most illuminating for this study are the ways in which both Marie and her fellow Ursulines situate her heroism and her functionalist understanding of the body within Ursuline beliefs and community life. This communal context was minimized or overlooked altogether by early writers about Marie including the writers of the Jesuit relations and her son, whose volumes about his mother contributed significantly to her later fame. Marie's example provides a rare opportunity among the women I study to locate her thought and practices within a community of women, suggesting ways we may draw further connections among four women writing in three different European colonies across the Americas.

Seventeenth-century women who asserted public voices were frequently given titles like Tenth Muse, *femme forte*, and jezebel that played on a paradoxical relationship between the modesty of their sex and their own public fame or infamy, in each case reinforcing the idea that women *by definition* are not strong, public actors. When Anne Hutchinson was accused of beliefs that would lead to sexual licentiousness, for example, her transgressions were described in terms of breaking her husband's marriage covenant and supporting "community of women," that is the practice of men holding women in common. In other words, she was accused of being sexually transgressive with language that does not describe female sexual agency.

The Tenth Muse, a title shared by Anne Bradstreet and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, was a name for talented, prolific women that marked them as exceptional and inhuman, while *femme forte*, a label used frequently in seventeenth-century feminist writings in France and applied to Marie de l'Incarnation, gained much of its rhetorical power from the apparent contradiction between "strength" and "woman."[12]

These paradoxical formulations indicate a double bind for public women, either charging them with impropriety or carving out a new, vexed category that is not "woman."[13] Bradstreet, Hutchinson, Sor Juana, and Marie all remark on this double bind with a version of Bradstreet's, "If what I doe prove well, it won't advance,/ They'l say its stolne, or else, it was by chance" ("The Prologue"), demonstrating an understanding of the workings of misogyny that has led each to be identified as a pioneering feminist *avant la lettre*. But they do not simply observe the unfairness of misogynistic logic. In this book I look beyond the double bind, significant though it is, to arguments made by women that undo this trap by rejecting the symbolic and ontological thinking that sustains it. In addition to showing that women can do what definitions say they cannot and uncovering the masculinist interests of a "should" that understands modesty only in terms of silence and chastity (complicated by frequent demands that women speak and act as sexual objects in situations controlled by men), these women reframe the significance of the body in ways that challenge this logic through various forms of functionalism. In denying symbolic readings of the body and claiming for women the ability to practice modesty as keeping due measure, these women mount what may be called "modesty's charge."

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12 Among the numerous studies treating these paradoxes and the limits they place on public women are Stephanie Jed's "The Tenth Muse: Gender, rationality, and the marketing of knowledge," Joan DeJean's *Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of the Novel in France*, and Ian Maclean's *The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A study in the fortunes of scholasticism and medical science in European intellectual life*.

13 Kathleen Hall Jamieson usefully catalogues different forms of the double bind that persist today in *Beyond the Double Bind: Women and Leadership*.