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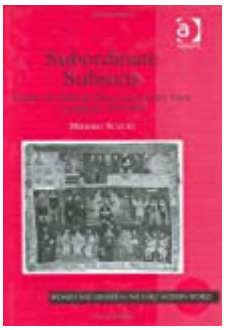

Mihoko Suzuki. *Subordinate Subjects: Gender, the Political Nation, and Literary Form in England, 1588-1688.* Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003. x + 330 pp. $79.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7546-0605-5.

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Lewd Lads and Roaring Girls

Mihoko Suzuki's monograph is an interdisciplinary study using legal documents, literary texts, and surviving remnants of early modern material culture to examine popular political discourses and the ideological use of literature. The book will appeal particularly to literary theorists and historians interested in gender, youth culture, and popular politics in early modern England. Suzuki's central argument is that women and subordinate males saw themselves as participating in political discourse and the public sphere, but that whilst women drew on the apprentices as a model for their collective political action, apprentices forged collective identities through their antagonism to and demonizing of women and immigrant "strangers."

Chapter 1 discusses depictions of apprentices in relation to the riots of the 1590s. Suzuki examines different middling sort attitudes to the riots by discussing negative official interpellations, but also more sympathetic portrayals in Hollinshed's *Chronicles* and *The Book of Sir Thomas More*, before examining representations of apprentices in the writings of Thomas Deloney; in late Elizabethan and Jacobean drama; and in Edmund Bolton's *The City Advocate*. Deloney's work offered comic perspectives on social and gender hierarchies by expressing apprentice fantasies of social mobility that were characterised by xenophobia, misogyny, and antagonism towards aristocratic patriarchs. Jacobean plays depicted a distinct apprentice culture of subordinate males defined by the same traits, and also by homosociability and fratricidal rivalry. Bolton's tract highlighted conflict between the citizens and the gentry, advising the latter to make their sons apprentices, and sought to ally urban artisans and tradesmen with the monarch. In all these sources, Suzuki argues, apprentices were given positive identities as members of the political nation. Chapter 2 deals with the theory and practice of female sovereignty in Elizabethan England, discussing domestic patriarchy in *Arden of Faversham* and *A Warning for Fair Women*. Both plays highlighted potential domestic dangers posed when murderous wives conspired with subordinate males and when ambitious males would not accept their place in the social order. During a period of social mobility, plays sought to shift attention from subordinate males to rebellious wives as the cause of social disorder. Domestic tragedy depicted women's power for rebellion,

whilst problem comedies showed women intervening in politics outside the household. Suzuki's reading of *Measure for Measure* suggests women's public speech was sexualized or discredited as mad, whilst political actions by subordinate males were depicted as comical and hence discounted. *Measure for Measure* can be read as an acknowledgment and a critique of the political exclusion of women; it contrasts with *The Maid's Tragedy* wherein women are depicted as political subjects with reasonable grievances.

Chapter 3 consists of case studies of Amelia Lanyer and Rachel Speght. Both writers articulated claims to be political subjects and challenged patriarchy by writing revisionist history (or at least making historical claims). They drew attention to historical contexts of misogynist writings, promoting ideas of female collective empowerment whilst acknowledging differences of opinion existed between women. Lanyer rewrote biblical history to critique existing gendered interpretations and highlighted women who had resisted male hegemony. By writing epideictic and devotional poetry Lanyer could debate women's place in society and overturn social hierarchy by advancing a self-fashioned identity as a poet. By contrast Speght invoked maternal identity as a form of authority to justify her writing. Suzuki argues that both female writers showed how negative interpretations of women could be rearticulated and redirected to effect positive identities by reinterpreting historical texts from a female perspective. They showed female subordination was neither natural nor trans-historical but based on specific historical arrangements and subject to change.

Chapter 4 discusses petitioning by apprentices and women. Suzuki argues apprentices moved from petitioning about matters regarding their welfare to general issues that showed them to be opposed to the established order. The change they sought involved restoration rather than revolution, appealing to a moral economy, seeking to protect the body politic, and showing hostility to strangers and aliens. Apprentices cited authoritative texts and showed solidarity with other subordinate males in order to establish political legitimacy. By seeking to represent those unable to speak, Suzuki argues the apprentices became what Antonio Gramsci called organic intellectuals. By contrast women's right to speak remained contested. Their petitions were satirized by men such as Henry Neville and were responded to negatively. Yet, although women accepted their subordinate status for the most part, Suzuki argues their use of the literary form of the petition was radical. Petitions promoted publicly disseminated political discourses that asserted women should be part of the political nation. Women's appeals for political voices were built on their fulfilling domestic roles, on historical precedents such as Judith and Boadicea, and on extending rights men were already entitled to, such as trial by jury. Female (or sympathetic male) readers might also have read satires of women's petitions against the grain to find real grievances in the texts.

Chapter 5 argues conservative women did not completely align themselves with those who espoused monarchy and patriarchy. This chapter discusses the role of Margaret Cavendish, but also offers an innovative and interdisciplinary approach, bringing techniques of literary criticism to bear on early modern material objects. Such an approach reflects the interests of second-generation new historicism, or "new new historicism" to use the works of Patricia Fumerton.[1] Suzuki discusses examples of women's needlework to show how such objects did not merely inculcate royalist allegiance and conventional femininity, but could convey feminist and oppositional discourses articulated through the biblical stories they depicted.

Chapter 6 describes how Restoration patriarchs were depicted as threatened by thieving apprentices and adulterous wives. Suzuki argues that subordinates in the 1590s threatened the body of the patriarch, whilst in the 1660s they targeted household possessions instead. Political actions of apprentices focused on morality through their attacks on brothels. Suzuki reads such aggressive behavior towards prostitutes as a reaction to attempts to marginalize and exclude apprentices from the political nation by grouping them with whores. Many whores' petitions were male-authored and sought to reduce the political role of ordinary women. Manuscript poems used anti-Catholicism, xenophobia, and misogyny to attack politically powerful women like the Duchess of Portsmouth and Nell Gwynn.

Chapter 7 consists of case studies of Elizabeth Cellier and Elinor James, both middling-sort women with access to printing presses that enabled them to voice opinions in the public sphere by petitioning. Both writers were part of a tradition of seventeenth-century women who became involved in politics through petitioning and managing printing presses. In resisting a powerful state and emphasizing individual conscience, Suzuki argues Cellier was inspired by John Lilburne, and that she was an organic intellectual who spoke for the accused, who were tortured, and for the rights of female midwives to practice. By contrast James framed her political critiques

within analogies that presented her as a conservative mother or godmother concerned with maintaining social order. Unlike mid-century female petitioners who voiced collective grievances, James highlighted matters concerning her as an individual and fashioned herself as the monarch's personal counselor. Suzuki notes she offered her counsel to kings and not to Mary or Anne, a point that would be worth exploring further. Along with Margaret Cavendish, Cellier and James did not fit male political binaries of Whigs and Tories.

Suzuki concludes that, whilst in the mid-seventeenth century women and apprentices sought to become political subjects, by the early eighteenth century both groups were concerned more with commerce and private consumption. Apprentices and women who continued to focus on public politics became figures of ridicule and it was not until the later eighteenth century that either group was to re-emerge as politically active. Whilst superficially persuasive, this concluding chapter lacks the academic rigor of the rest of the book. This is a shame as the monograph as a whole is highly readable, well researched, and persuasive in its findings.

Suzuki's study engages with a number of interesting questions that have been pursued recently by historians who have discovered that women's solidarities were not defined only by gender but also by social position, family, and neighborhood. Suzuki acknowledges this but nonetheless concludes that gender remained of primary importance, a stance that should be considered in relation to recent work on women's networks and relationships by Bernard Capp and Laura Gowing.[2] Alex Shepard's recent monograph offers another point of comparison with regard to subordinated males.[3] Suzuki's book is also largely a study of gender and politics in London. Further research might provide studies of rural and provincial urban locations to make the distinctiveness of London more apparent. The relationship between apprentices and aliens in London would be worth exploring in greater detail. Such themes have particular relevance considering the centrality of issues of immigration in the recent British election campaigns and the decision of the RSC to stage *Thomas More* as part of its current Stratford season. However these are merely suggestions for future research. Overall this is a successful and engaging study that deserves a wide audience.

Notes

[1]. For a summary of the historiography see Patricia Fumerton, "Introduction: A New New Historicism," in *Renaissance Culture and the Everyday*, ed. by Patricia Fumerton and Simon Hunt (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999). For a similar interdisciplinary approach, see Catherine Richardson, ed., *Clothing Culture, 1350-1650* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

[2]. Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family and Neighborhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Early Modern England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003). See David Turner, "Review of Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family, and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England*," H-Albion, H-Net Reviews, January, 2004 <URL: `http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=36391079238690$>$;` and Tim Hitchcock, "Review of Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Seventeenth-Century England*," H-Albion, H-Net Reviews, August, 2004 <URL: `http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=47701095653533$>$.`

[3]. Alex Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

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