

Kathryn Schwarz. *What You Will: Gender, Contract, and Shakespearean Social Space*.

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Overturing the oft-quoted early modern adage “better a shrew than a sheep,” Kathryn Schwarz’s *What You Will: Gender, Contract, and Shakespearean Social Space* reveals that the sheep may be more troubling in her ardent conformity to social convention than her scolding sister. Intentional virtue, as Schwarz demonstrates, disrupts the tenets of heterosocial hierarchy as forcefully as outright resistance. Schwarz’s primary interest, however, lies with neither acts of resistance nor conformity but with the category of will, which she unpacks as a “useful tool” and “potentially renegade force” when exercised by feminine subjects (2). In part a trenchant philosophical exploration of the relation between gender and agency, reinvigorating the discussion Judith Butler initiated over a decade ago, and in part a series of exciting readings of dramatic texts, *What You Will* advances current scholarship on early modern political consent that illuminates the unstable subjectivities subtending social order. Exploring the ways that feminine will is at once antithetical to and inherent in ideological reproduction, Schwarz acknowledges her debt to those scholars who have revealed the various ways that feminine subjectivity was never conscripted to the patriarchal program, insofar as early modern women transformed and manipulated the terms of their social roles. Schwarz, however, outpaces her predecessors in her penetrating investigation of what it means for feminine subjects “to speak what normally — normatively — speaks them” (11).

Schwarz devotes the first half of *What You Will* to tracing the connections between what she refers to as the quotidian work of feminine volition and the abstract tenets of social order, as explored within faculty theory, rhetorical theory, and the discourse of misogyny. Chapter 1 explores the philosophical discourse of the well-ordered psyche, which, as Schwarz aptly demonstrates, participates in secular arguments about feminine roles as it posits the tasks of those elements within the mind or soul (such as reason, will, passion, judgment, and wit) as analogous to feminine subjects. Metonymy and the mother tongue stand at the center of chapter 2, which interrogates the ways rhetorical theory produces a gendered account of figurative speech. Chapter 3 advances a *tour de force* reading of misogyny's "own queer history" (103), as Schwarz shows that the repetitive nature of anti-woman rhetoric confounds rather than consolidates its efficacy. The second half of the book, chapters 4–7, offers analyses of three plays by Shakespeare and the later sonnets, all of which present female consent as crucial to social stability even as they reveal the contingency of the relationships and aims that such acquiescence underwrites. Plays that mobilize unmediated feminine will end in compromise and dissolution, exemplified by forceful resolutions in *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure* and what Schwarz describes as banished futurity in *King Lear*. Isabella's constancy, Helena's chastity, and Cordelia's virtue unexpectedly dismantle the distinction between passive conformity and active impropriety. In the Sonnets, feminine will results in failed reciprocity even as it offers a means of crossing the categories of sameness and difference, exposing the limits of sexual and social contract based upon the faculty of choice.

Schwarz's book should have enormous influence on current discussions within feminism and queer theory about the ever-vexing condition of the incorporated subject, a topic whose parameters may have been established by Foucault, Butler, Bourdieu, and Althusser but whose questions of volition and power remain as urgent as ever. Those interested in female resistance in the early modern period will also need to engage Schwarz's claim that feminine subjects knew the rules and used them to authorize constitutive action. This is a book with admirable density and range, and Schwarz's erudite canvas and lively traversal among early modern philosophical texts, imaginative works, and poststructuralist theories also make it essential reading for those invested in debates about the role of historicism in sexuality studies. For this reader, the book's freshest insights derive from its author's insistence that local, lived questions of gender, as well as more abstract ideas about femininity, are crucial to attitudes toward and practices of social contract. Schwarz advances the stunning insight, I paraphrase here, that because deliberate compliance identifies multiple sites of volition, informed consent demonstrates that hierarchy emerges from a dynamic process, which is a product rather than a negation of the will. Observations such as these open up promising avenues for approaching political relations in the period. If volition always turns back on itself and feminine will is a vital but risky element of heterosocial order, then gender becomes crucial to any investigation of how social subjects are made.

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