Debora Kuller Shuger. *The Renaissance Bible. Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1994. Pp. xv, 297.

Since specialization produces wondrous forms of fragmentation and scholarly provincialism, any book that shoots past the trees of theory, colonial discourse, or stylistics in Renaissance studies and heads ambitiously and provocatively for the larger, overlooked forest is a significant event. Shuger's study of *The Renaissance Bible* begins with the centrality of religion in the culture of the early modern Christian West, and proves that it understands not only the stranger lineaments of a biblicized culture but also its impact on group and individual psychology, on ethics, and on corporate spiritual life generally.

What one does with a topic as huge as "the Renaissance Bible," however acutely sensed and appreciated, is nevertheless problematic. The subject could move towards ethical norms or towards social and political patterning. Shuger's choices are reflected accurately in her subtitle: "Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity." For her, the work of scholarly Renaissance biblical interpretation germinates in "the two obsessive themes of the post-medieval West: psychological fragmentation and socioeconomic decadence, themes heavy with gendered anxieties about violence and weakness" (p. 127). Her chief interest is in "the implications of Renaissance biblical scholarship for . . . intellectual history" (p. 12). She graciously admits that her study is only "a tentative and partial exploration of the cultural work done by . . . Renaissance biblical discourses" and that it aims at merely a few of the highly disputed "sociocultural imbrications of religion" (p. 2). That concession is almost enough to disarm a critic, who is thankful that someone has taken a serious, scholarly, and provocative look at Renaissance Christianity, lacing cultural study with psychoanalytical insights and writing seamlessly, powerfully, and crisply.

If ambitious books fall short of their ends or leave readers puzzled by the interpretation of evidence, the burden of alleged failure rests as heavily on the reluctant or resisting (or disarmed) reader as on the daring grasp or missteps of the book. This is a dazzlingly ambitious book, one which did not convince me about many of its socio- and psychocultural claims, but it needs to be aired and discussed widely. I enjoyed the analyses greatly and am willing to entertain Shuger's hypotheses and conclusions as a useful intellectual exercise, but I think a scholarly consensus about the "truth" of her study will be very slow to emerge.

The substance of *The Renaissance Bible* is too detailed to summarize adequately, but its range and selected topics need to be anatomized and appreciated. Her first chapter splendidly and gracefully pulls together the world of New Testament scholarship in the Renaissance, the *respublica litterarum sacrarum*, an "international and interdisciplinary community of academics, diplomats, poets, lawyers, civil servants, and churchmen engaged in producing and consuming advanced humanist scholarship" (p. 12). Here Casaubon, Heinsius, Grotius, Erpenius, and Drusius rub shoulders

with each other, teach the pupils of mutual friends, and share ideas monthly. It is a closeness which encourages a bold, imaginative form of exegesis, not merely of things mentioned in the sacred text, but more "an inquiry into the codes and customary practices (*mos*) implicit in both the composition and content of scriptural narrative" (p. 32). Shuger's second chapter focuses on the *De satisfactione Christi* (1617) by the great Dutch biblical humanist Hugo Grotius. The bloody sacrifice of Christ becomes for Grotius the "intersection of legal, historical, and biblical studies" because he analyzes the event, in the light of Roman law, as a problem of voluntary sacrifice and penal substitution. The modern individual, by contrast, embodying nascent rationalism, "is . . . defined in terms of alienation from sacrifice" (p. 73), writes Shuger, but most readers would here sense that modern individualism and conceptions of selfhood derive from "sources" wider and deeper than those here probed.

Chapter 3 focuses subtly on Calvinist passion narratives and their rhetorical strategies, ones which established complex lines of identification between readers and the personae dramatized, and which "produce an unstable, divided selfhood, fissured by its own ambivalent responses to violence" (p. 99) and a "complex and conflictual Christian subjectivity" (p. 113). Shuger's target here is "the self-divided reader" (p. 105) and the "Protestant psyche" (p. 106) in general. She reads the agonized Christ as "a peculiarly Renaissance nightmare of emasculation, of the loss of power, autonomy, strength, and status" (p. 116), and the violence of the passion narratives "as a projection of the religious strife tearing apart the social fabric of the sixteenth century" (p. 120). Texts like Nashe's *Christ's Teares Over Jerusalem* (1595, not 1593 as claimed) for Shuger "encode some sort of anxiety about cities" and a "dark fascination with urban catastrophe" (p. 124). Christ and Jerusalem represent a significant collocation, for "the crisis of manhood takes place in cities" (p. 126).

Shuger's fourth chapter deals with a neo-Latin school play, *Jephthah* (1554), written by George Buchanan, a Scottish humanist teaching in France. Here "the language of introspection, desire, and inner struggle constructs the tragic subject as an eroticized, neoclassical, female type of Christ" (p. 106). Katharsis, tragedy, and sacrifice meet in a text that went through dozens of influential editions. Her last chapter, dealing with Mary Magdalen narratives, analyzes the fusion of "highly eroticized Ovidian representation of abandoned females" with the hagiographic tradition, a fusion "producing a self-conscious amalgam of the ancient rhetoric of female desire and the biblical language of erotic spirituality" (p. 170).

Shuger's transitions and conclusions become increasingly problematic, partly because the reader knows they are not the only ones that can be made or drawn. While some of the analysis is exciting and subtle, many readers in the conclusion of the work will not accede to Shuger's promised demonstration of the "larger significance" of the Renaissance Bible "for the interpretation of early modern culture" (p. 12). Far more imposing, historically attuned, and suggestive, for example, is Christopher Hill's approach in *The English Bible and the Seventeenth Century Revolution* (1993). I appreciate Shuger's point that the "analysis of inner life" prior to the seventeenth

century “remained circumscribed within ethical and devotional domains” (p. 196), but to limit the early modern structuring of subjectivity to the “formation of inwardness as erotic, abandoned, and female” (p. 190) is a strangely narrowing prescriptive focus. And ultimately the reader asks why only certain questions and answers should be aimed at or extracted from the texts analyzed. Nashe’s odd generic mixture of satire, complaint, warning, diatribe, and caricature in *Christ’s Teares Over Jerusalem*, for example, surely must temper reader responses to its primary as well as psychosocial purposes as a text.

For most readers, *The Renaissance Bible* will be a complicated, exciting, and speculative book, filled with many suggestive if unprovable assertions and interpretations. Conventional scholarship should not dismiss it, or be frightened off by its unusual blending of disciplines: it is a novel and extremely useful point of departure for more imposing analysis of the topic.

PETER AUKSI, *University of Western Ontario*

Fausta Garavini, *Monstres et chimères. Montaigne, le monstre et le fantasme*, Paris, Honoré Champion, coll. “Études montaignistes,” 1993. Pp. 279.

Dans un premier ouvrage, *Itinerari a Montaigne* (Florence, 1983), récemment traduit en français (Paris, 1995), Fausta Garavini avait étudié le travail de construction, constant dans les *Essais*, bien qu’il ait été longtemps sous-estimé, voire méconnu, “au niveau de l’armature de la phrase, de la structure du chapitre, comme de l’architecture du livre.” Dans ce nouveau volume qui “focalise le regard sur les endroits où le mécanisme se grippe, où se produit la fêlure, en somme où le contrôle se relâche” (p. 13), elle s’emploie à débusquer dans le texte, derrière un discours-écran rassurant, la présence de fantasmes et d’angoisses que Montaigne s’efforce désespérément d’apprivoiser. En entreprenant de “mettre en rôle” les “chimères et monstres fantasques” (I, 8) que lui engendre son esprit, l’écrivain pensait les réduire à leur inanité; Fausta Garavini se propose, elle, de traquer les monstres autrement inquiétants qu’à l’insu de leur auteur les *Essais* recèlent.

Pour mener à bien cette tâche, elle a rassemblé une douzaine d’articles et de communications qu’elle avait déjà présentés, le plus souvent en français, et les a complétés par de nouvelles études qui lui permettent d’assurer à l’ensemble un bel équilibre et une progression rigoureuse. (L’ouvrage a été publié en italien [*Mostri e chimere; Montaigne, il testo, il fantasma* [Bologne, 1991] avant de l’être en français). Cette cohérence est encore renforcée par le parti pris de Fausta Garavini — qui plaide avec constance et conviction pour une édition séparée de chacune des trois versions successives des *Essais* — de se donner pour premier objet d’étude le texte de 1580 et de n’analyser qu’ensuite les ajouts, de manière à trouver la confirmation des hypothèses