Lucy de Bruyn. *Woman and The Devil in Sixteenth-Century Literature*. Tisbury, Wiltshire: The Compton Press, 1979. Pp. xii, 180. £9.95.

Ian Maclean. *The Renaissance Notion of Woman. A study in the fortunes of scholasticism and medical sciences in European intellectual life*. Cambridge: University Press, 1980. Pp. viii, 119. \$16.50. u.s.

At its best, scholarly analysis that focuses on women can illuminate an entire area of study and enrich it by revealing details and patterns that were not brought to light by other approaches; at its worst, it becomes so preoccupied with the "woman" question as defined by any given author as to ignore other aspects of the problem at hand, revealing little about women or anything else. Lucy de Bruyn's study of *Women and The Devil* falls into the latter category; Ian Maclean's analysis of *The Renaissance Notion of Woman* is emphatically of the former sort. De Bruyn's is a beautifully produced book, well-printed on good paper with interesting woodcuts. Unhappily, the scholarship does not live up to the presentation. De Bruyn's point of departure is an interesting one: the similarities and differences between the anonymous *Mariken Van Nieumeghen* and Marlow's *Dr. Faustus*. Like Faustus, Mariken becomes "a master of many scyances" (p. 5) through her pact with the devil, but unlike Faustus she keeps in touch with her relatives and through her name, with the Virgin, and she is saved in the end. Much of the chapter dealing with these plays is narrative, and few of the problems raised by them are tackled with any rigour. Catholic mercy is briefly contrasted with Protestant justice (nothing new here). We are told that Mariken is "generally looked upon as a female Faustus" (p. 9) but not what this reveals about contemporary notions of the differences between masculine and feminine thirst for and use of knowledge. An oblique reference to the *Malleus Malificarum* does not explain whether or not Mariken is technically a witch and, if she is not, what distinguishes her from authentic sixteenth-century witches.

The same criticisms apply to subsequent chapters dealing with "The Good Woman," "The Wanton," "The Witch," and "The Shrew." These classifications are apparently considered to provide sufficient structure so that examples from various times, places and literary traditions are accumulated with little regard for other connections. There is both too much and too little information in both text and notes and frequent apparent ignorance of essential patterns, as, for example, the Aristotelian/Thomistic tradition. There is constant confusion between literary woman and real woman. It is a great shame that the book does not succeed, for the initial comparison and the sources consulted are rich in possibilities.

At the opposite end of the scale, we find Ian Maclean's superb analysis of the *Renaissance Notion of Woman*. The study is an expansion of the first chapter of Maclean's fine *Woman Triumphant: Feminism in French Literature 1610-52* (Oxford University Press, 1977) and both are models of careful, lively, and illuminating scholarship in which the "feminist" approach sheds much light on the intellectual climate as a whole.

Maclean carefully confines his attention to those scholarly texts in theology, medicine, law, and practical philosophy which comprise the essential universe of discourse in the 16th and early 17th century, texts written principally in Latin and expressing structures of thought inherited in the main from Aristotle. That the

interpretation and discussion of these authoritative texts remained so little touched by political, social, and economic forces for change enables the author to study the corpus quite adequately within its own context, Maclean attributes the tenacity of the "outmoded" notion of woman within this universe of discourse to two factors, "the desire to foster and preserve the scholastic synthesis" and "the influence on thought of the institution of matrimony" (p. 82), although the latter is not central to this particular study. "The complexity of the notion of woman, and the dislocations which occur within that notion ... reflect well the hesitancies and incoherences inherent in Renaissance modes of thought" (p. 3-4).

Maclean uses carefully-structured sets of questions (worthy of the texts he is analysing) to lead his reader through the commonplaces about woman's "defective" and "inferior" nature as developed by Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas from misinterpreted Pythagorean dualities, and re-interpreted and reinforced through the interaction of all the major disciplines within the scholastic synthesis: theology, medicine, ethics, and law. Neither Protestant re-definition of marriage nor medical functionalism (Fallopio) nor neo-platonic idealism (Castiglione's Giuliano de' Medici) nor humanist legal historicism could dislodge the notion nor its effects, so that it still prevailed in the 17th century (and, it might be added, prevails in some quarters today). Besides those extra-intellectual factors Maclean encourages others to analyse, linguistic strategies such as paradox and humour, humanist relativism, neoplatonic spirituality, marianism, and representations of handsome, active women in the visual arts had some effect for change. In all of these, the defense of woman often "represents a strategy of discourse which is subversive in intention" (p. 91) not only with regards to women but with regards to the scholastic synthesis as a whole.

Thus Maclean carefully selects and effectively musters information about the Renaissance notion of woman, and about the flaws and the tenacity of the scholastic synthesis itself. Further, his documentation of the incredible force of linguistic commonplaces translated between disciplines within an authoritative but increasingly irrelevant synthesis suggest a model for the analysis of any rigid, restrictive or outmoded intellectual system.

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Ernesto Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy. The Humanist Tradition*, translated by Michael Krois and Azizeh Azodi. University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980. P. 122. \$14.95.

Here is a book that should command the attention of a wide range of scholars well beyond the philosophical circle that is targeted in its title. To be sure, the author is chiefly concerned with the theoretical problems of modern philosophy, especially epistemology. His solutions to those problems, however, carry him far afield, so that his reader is treated to a panoramic, if somewhat impressionistic, view of the literary-philosophical tradition in the West, from the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and beyond. Between these poles the reader is offered insight into important texts from all periods of Western history, but it is to the major