explored further, especially because it would seem to imply another dimension to, or complication of, Levy's questions about Cosimo's reasons for commissioning this picture. Concluding the chapter, Levy stresses the inevitable, circular, fissuring, suturing, re-membering, and re-rupture of bodies and "memorial deficiency" (p. 130). The widow, in filling a void, also "falls right through the cracks, [...] flirting with her very own fiction" (p. 130).

The idea of inevitable death and resurrection returns in the concluding chapter, "The Big Stiff," where Levy ends her study with an examination of contemporary images that engage with Leonardo's *Vitruvian Man*. Through photographs and through representations of the jazz musician, Levy briefly looks at the construction of black bodies. Although foregrounded, the introduction of the race theme here risks raising more questions than it is able to answer since the possibilities of analyzing "the black male body—dead and buried, exhumed and amputated, resurrected and restored" (p. 147) in any period are potentially immense.

Re-Membering Masculinity suggests that the task of remembering—because it implies the fear of being forgotten—is always going to be fraught with anxiety. However, the overall implication from this study, is that this was (and is?) a specifically <u>masculine</u> anxiety. Levy's exposure of masculinity's fragile nature is extremely valuable given that, until recently, masculinity has been used as a stable, unfissured yardstick against which to measure constructions of femininity. If the clever wordplays and postmodern, alliterative titles sometimes get in the way of the subject matter, they also reveal the artifice involved in writing—and painting—masculine *istoria* [history].

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Elizabeth L'Estrange
University of Liège

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Patrizia Bettella. *The Ugly Woman: Transgressive Aesthetic Models in Italian Poetry from the Middle Ages to the Baroque.* University of Toronto Press, 2005. Pp. viii + 259.

PATRIZIA BETTELLA studies the representation of female ugliness in male-authored Italian poems ranging from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries. In doing so, she brings into international feminist analysis a corpus that is not only unrepresented in intellectual history overall, but underexamined even in Italian literary history. Both anchors of her study—the motif of the

ugly woman and the five centuries of poetic production that she explores it in—make it a treasure trove for anyone working on the representation of women in pre- and early modern writing in any European language. Bettella's sprawling primary corpus makes it clear that the ugly woman is not a minor or chance-met figure in lyric and narrative poetry; she defines an actual subgenre that illuminates the treatment of all female figures and implicitly the normative figure of the "beautiful woman."

The first chapter explores so-called "comic-realistic" poetry of the thirteenth century dedicated to the ugly woman. In this period her principal feature is advanced age accompanied by unsuitable behavior. The transgressive and threatening power of the insubordinate, unlovely old woman is trounced by "male poetic dominance" in the form of controlling rhetoric and ferocious vituperation. Chapter 2 adds the figures of the *duenna* [chaperon, governess], the witch, and the prostitute as targets for male poets' representation and excoriation in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, connecting this development with what Bettella calls "the onset of Renaissance secularism" (p. 7).

Chapter 3 explores the idealizing poetic canons of female beauty in sixteenth-century poems targeting women of low social class and outsider status and in anti-Petrarchist poetry, systematically upending the *Canzoniere*'s (*Song Book*) descriptions of Laura (descriptions both rigorously consistent, on the one hand, and fragmentary and vague on the other). The fourth and final chapter explores "unconventional beauty" celebrated—disingenuously, for Bettella—in lyric verse praising women with such qualities as dark hair and/or skin, middle or old age, and vermin. Bettella appends six texts of difficult access. An index of the incipits of all the poems she examines would have been extraordinarily helpful, as would a division of the bibliography into primary and secondary sources; but *pazienza* [patience], we are lucky to get a separate bibliography at all, given how many publishers have decided to forego it altogether.

Readers of *MFF* will probably focus on the first two chapters. Bettella assures their usefulness to non-Italianists by translating into English all Italian passages quoted in the body of the book (though not in the endnotes). While one can certainly question some translation choices, the fact that translations exist at all will give unprecedented access to some works whose dialects or poetic forms make them difficult for non-Italianists. Bettella describes her method as "both traditional rhetoric-stylistic text analysis and [...] a feminist approach" (p. 5), and she variously invokes Freud, film theory, Mikhail Bakhtin, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, Nancy Vickers and Patricia Parker, Julia Kristeva, and Mary Russo.

The book's strength, following the red thread of the ugly woman over five

centuries of literary production, is, inevitably, its weakness. While Bettella attempts to anchor the individual poets and poems in their specific times and sociocultural matrices, such a task is beyond the scope of a single book. In keeping with phrases such as "the medieval mind," sweeping generalizations are inevitable: "The presentation of female ugliness as physical and moral deviancy in early Italian poetry is partly attributable to a sentiment of woman-hating that pervades medieval culture as a whole" (p. 10). While many medievalists may read this sentence without either lifting an eyebrow or wincing, many others will not. Readers of Medfem-L may recall an animated exchange regarding the issue of whether or not German feminist scholarship assumes *a priori* that the Middle Ages was misogynous. A panoramic tendency necessarily affects the entire work, since Bettella is trying to trace the evolution of a motif and to ground its variations in larger developments in the history of ideas. Since she casts a very wide net, the bibliography naturally shows gaps which affect the tenor and conclusions of her analysis. While Alcuin Blamires, R. Howard Bloch, and Joan Cadden are well represented, among the missing are Millicent Marcus, Lee Patterson, Katharina Wilson and Elizabeth Makowski, Thelma Fenster and Clare Lees, Robert Hollander, Guyda Armstrong, Olivia Holmes, Maria-Luisa Ardizzone, Mary Wack, Dana Stewart, and Alison Cornish—to name just a few who write on medieval works Bettella has taken on here. In addition, Bettella's focus on Italian authors means that she does not often invoke medieval parallels and sources in other languages.

Bettella's position is indeed that all the authors studied in her book ultimately have a powerful misogynous charge: "In the works considered in this study female ugliness is purely and unequivocally an expression of negativity, male fear, and misogyny" (p. 168). Even when (for example) baroque poets purport to praise the beauty of women with features (such as limps, stammers, black skin, lice, baldness, scars, or old age) which contravene conventional aesthetic canons, their aim, for Bettella, is to demonstrate their poetic skills and inventiveness. One problem with this conclusion is that it contradicts her earlier argument that to call medieval ugly-woman poems ludic or parodic is to understate the seriousness of their semantic and affective freight (p. 11). Here, instead, she insists that to take at face value the semantic and affective freight of baroque poetry praising "ugly" women is to underestimate its ludic and parodic (and self-serving) function. Her claim that the programmatic deployment of formal complexity and thematic inversion is a "mere pretext used by the baroque poet to exploit the polysemy of language and to display his technical skills" (p. 151) is something of a blunt instrument for poetry in general. <u>Any</u> "discourse harmonized with the bonds of the Muses" (in Dante's formulation) thus risks

being relegated to second place behind the self-aggrandizing figure of its pirouetting author. Perhaps it is no surprise that Bettella calls Rustico Filippi's "*Dovunque vai con teco porti il cesso*" *(Wherever you go, you bring the stench of the toilet")* a "realistic description" (p. 22) of a woman, rather than the hyperbolic, pyrotechnic, and —yes—ludic performance that I see in it.

Although the book's broad reach means that it cannot do full justice to its ambitious topic, this by no means undermines its usefulness. Bettella starts a number of intriguing hares that she leaves for other scholars to pursue, such as the suggestion that "Ornamentation and makeup, which in medieval texts were considered a source of suspicion and evidence of women's evil nature, have become symbols of civilization and refinement" in Renaissance texts (p. 112). Another is the possible connection with aesthetic developments in the visual arts and portraiture (pp. 130, 148, 160). A third is the "ugly man" as an object of representation by male poets, which generates no suspicion of widespread misandry (p. 168). I had been wondering about Rustico Filippi's *Messer Messerino* (*Sir Messerino*) sonnet, about a perfectly hideous man assembled—the poet hypothesizes—by a God with nothing else to do that day but show off His "technical skills." While Bettella's analysis (fortunately!) does not exhaust the topic of misogyny and its articulation in poetry, the book overall is a welcome, serious, and original contribution to the conversation.

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F. Regina Psaki
University of Oregon

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Melissa Franklin Harkrider. *Women, Reform and Community in Early Modern England: Katherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk, and Lincolnshire's Godly Aristocracy, 1519-1580.* Boydell Press, 2008. Pp. xii + 174; ill.

MELISSA HARKRIDER'S STUDY of Katherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk, explores the evolution of one aristocratic woman's evangelicalism in sixteenth-century England and her influence on an extensive network of family, friends, and dependents. Harkrider pursues evidence of the sources that influenced Lady Katherine's shifting religious sensibilities not only from aristocratic and court circles but also in the more intimate and local settings of her household and community. Harkrider's conclusions, then, are drawn from a broader circle