

complexity and richness of medieval texts and the fact that they are saturated with contemporary values. Medieval authors of these texts certainly made choices about how to classify the people with whom they interacted. What is less strongly indicated, although not crucial to her central argument, is just how these broader cultural, religious, and legal discourses directly affected classifications of people. The idea that classifications had moral associations is persuasive, but it is more difficult to prove how these associations were internalized.

This is a valuable study for those interested in women's history in premodern Europe, but also for students of medieval history more generally. With *Medieval Single Women*, Beattie has taken a refreshing approach to documents sometimes judged as overtly transparent. Also commendable is her ability to explore how legal understandings, such as *coverture* [suspension or covering of the legal personality of a wife during marriage], competed and overlapped with other discourses so that in documents we can see terms that meant single woman, meaning alone and not covered by a man, alongside terms with "value-laden" associations like maiden and *puella*. Beattie's work emphasizes that women in medieval England, perhaps more than men, were conceptualized in a great variety of fashions, as marriageable, married, or widowed, dependent or independent, legally or economically, head of their own household or part of another, young or adult, pure or corrupt.

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Allison Levy. *Re-Membering Masculinity in Early Modern Florence: Widowed Bodies, Mourning and Portraiture.* (Women and Gender in the Early Modern World.) Ashgate, 2006. Pp. xx + 194.

Re-membering Masculinity is both a study of the complex nature of the representation of the widow, specifically the sixteenth-century Medici widow's portrait, and the failure of the widow's—as well as men's—portraiture. Levy's well-illustrated exploration of these two axes is necessarily an interdisciplinary project which, in turn, broadens the project's appeal to scholars in a variety of disciplines.

In chapter 1, "Disjecta Membra," Levy introduces the anxieties of loss and being forgotten that are central to the study through an analysis of the now

dismantled altarpiece commissioned from Fra Angelico for San Marco by Cosimo I. The subject of the altarpiece's predella, in which the black leg of a Moor is attached to the white body of a Deacon amputee, "reveals a politics of gender and sexuality, race and disability intertwined with Medicean identity, memory and the anxieties of loss" (p. 4). This idea of a fragmented male self, which is pre-emptively protected and/or reconstituted through portraiture, runs throughout the book; it is therefore less about the ambiguity of widows and their bodies than it is about men's bodies, including how they are constituted and re-membered (to use Levy's term). The widow and her portrait are analyzed along with death and commemoration rituals as a means to explore not only how masculinity, but also "masculine memory," was constructed in early modern Florence.

While Levy draws parallels between her work and that of other scholars examining gendered roles in funeral rites, she distances herself from them on the grounds that her subject, the widow, is still living. She also grounds her analyses in psychoanalysis, confronting a variety of theorists such as Schiesari, Freud, Lacan, Butler, and Žižek, and engages with the historiography of the Renaissance, especially the concept of "Renaissance man," from Burkhardt to Greenblatt. Although some of these theorists dominate in later chapters, perhaps at the expense of greater analysis of the period and works ostensibly in question, they are nevertheless balanced by recourse to historical writings, including those of Alberti, Boccaccio, Brunni, and Ficino.

Chapter 2, "Mnemonic V(o)ices," looks at "both bodily performance and performance failure" as a way to "rethink the dialogue between the uncooperative and the incorporeal, between the widow and the one she is meant to remember" (p. 34). Early modern humanists tried to curb women's traditional role as mourners, which they saw as excessively noisy and uncontrolled, but this silencing of the female mourner, Levy argues, meant that the task of mourning had to be reassigned. Such reassignment could result in transgressions that "ultimately challenge and complicate [...] gender codes, specifically the cultural construction of masculinity." Depictions of Augustine's "regressive, feminine performance of mourning" for his mother, to which he admitted in his *Confessions*, have "repercussions for the self-fashioning of the early modern humanist who takes his cue from the literary and visual texts of Augustine's mourning of Monica" (p. 47).

Chapter 3, "The Widow's Cleavage," examines the anxiety that the unstable figure of the widow could cause in early modern society. Both sexually experienced and sexually available, the widow was difficult for patriarchal society to contain and categorize. Occupying the roles of mother and father, abandoned

wife and absent husband, the widow was even encouraged to behave like a man. Levy cites the example of Caterina Sforza who, on her widowhood, not only “cast away her womanly tears” (p. 62) but also “reconfigured behavioral boundaries” by lifting her skirt up in front of those threatening to take her possessions and kill her children, exclaiming that she had the means to have many more children (p. 63). While male authors could praise the woman who overcame her grief and behaved with manly spirit, she also threatened masculinity. Levy briefly explores how themes like transvestism, the world upside down, and the hermaphrodite were implied in the figure of the widow who not only “legitimizes and threatens the gender hierarchy” but also subverts it and collapses it (p. 66). Levy also explores some of the abundant conduct literature addressed to widows and their subversive alternatives.

Chapter 4, “The Death of the Fathers,” begins with an analysis of Pontormo’s portrait of Alessandro de’ Medici depicted sketching his lover, the widow Taddea Malaspina. The picture “delineates [...] the gap between male melancholia—valued and validating—and female mourning—disparaged and relatively valueless” (p. 98). Taking as its cue the gendered mourning/melancholia dichotomy beloved of Freud, the chapter goes on to examine classical, early modern, and twentieth-century theories of mourning and the feminist responses that these have elicited. Levy’s use of images such as Freud and Panofsky in the pose of *Melancholia*, Vermeer’s *Girl Asleep*, and Dürer’s *Melencolia I* as a means “to explore the possibility of women’s melancholia” (p. 102) and the “melancholic performance of the art historian” (p. 105) is interesting, but it takes the study in a different direction and tends to privilege the (male) idea of male melancholia without having the space to engage fully with feminist revisions. At the end of the chapter it is noted that Alessandro is not only the illegitimate son of Pope Clement VII but also his son by his Moorish mistress. Given the questions of race thrown up by the miracle of the black leg and, in the afterword, by a focus on contemporary representations of (black) masculinity, this aside might have been exploited further, perhaps at the expense of the oft-explored Freud.

In the fifth chapter, “Phantom Limbs,” Levy comes to what one might have expected to find earlier in the book: an analysis of Medici portraits—not only of widows but also of the (reconstituted) men they were expected to mourn. In Bronzino’s portrait of Lodovico Capponi, his codpiece, vagina-like gloves, and the medal of his lover are “fetishistic devices” to ward off loss and forgetting not only of his beloved but also of himself (p. 125). Pontormo’s portrait of Maria Salviati, commissioned by her son Cosimo I, Levy suggests, both asserted and challenged gender codes in early modern Florence. The identification of the androgynous child as the daughter of Alessandro and Taddea could have been

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-membling, 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-Membling 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 masculine 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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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