a critical reflection on the inadequacy of their models for the postwar cinema, as well as harbingers of things to come" (90). Landy, therefore, describes how Magnani's Pina in *Roma, città aperta* simultaneously challenges a fascist image of femininity and motherhood, and the familiar *femme fatale* figure (embodied by Maria Michi as Marina), both expressions of earlier Italian films. This argument supports Landy's accompanying claim that neo-realism was more than just a short-lived phase. In her analysis of Rossellini's direction of Vittorio De Sica in *Il Generale della Rovere* (1959) she finds that, in keeping with Rossellini's early concerns, the film constitutes a "critical intervention in reductive interpretations of realism." Stardom is thus central to the director's purpose since "by using De Sica, an actor identified with the role of doubling and impersonation in many of his films, and by drawing on elements identified with his biography, including his addiction to gambling, his womanizing, and even his identification with left politics, the film further blurs reality and artifice" (118).

To conclude the book, Landy points toward the uncertain future of stardom in the age of "new media." She credits television with "further domesticating and destroying the distinctive character of cinematic stardom and perhaps shortening the life span of the movie star" (232), but also with revitalizing film production (as with Marco Tullio Giordana's *La meglio gioventù*, 2003). The change in stardom is ultimately figured in the example of Silvio Berlusconi and the differences his persona exhibits from that of the Duce. Although many similarities have been drawn recently, Landy points out that Berlusconi is more like a contemporary television star than a classical cinema star — a J. R. Ewing to Mussolini's Maciste: "Berlusconi's image belongs to [. . .] the empty desires generated by an 'opaque surface' that resists materiality, but in its hyper-reality and evanescence may lie the seeds of his vulnerable cultural and political position or also a portent of new forms of control" (236).

In her compelling study Marcia Landy makes it clear that Italian stardom is a diverse and changeable phenomenon precisely because it is caught in a space between fiction and reality. The book represents a bold attempt to evaluate from a serious critical perspective that threshold area of the cinema shaped and occupied by these familiar yet remote celluloid ambassadors. Do not read this volume if you desire to find out hidden details about the lives of the "actual" people who have inhabited Italian stardom, but rather if you are interested in understanding the structural inevitability of your very desire to know them.

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Michelangelo, Drawing, and the Invention of Architecture. By Cammy Brothers. Pp. 272. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 2008. 40 color ills, 200 b/w ills

One of the familiar characterizations of Michelangelo's architecture is that it reflects a sculptor's sensibility. On one level Brothers' book provides specific and concrete evidence to confirm this, but it also moves beyond this oversimplified observation. Her argument is more nuanced; she focuses narrowly but consistently on Michelangelo's drawing process and design method for his Florentine architectural projects rather than simply on the formal affinities between the sculptural and architectural elements of the artist's *oeuvre*. As the author writes, Michelangelo's architectural details "derive their meaning from their immediate physical context, as sculpture does not. Their effectiveness depends on their defiance of a specifically architectural logic, and on the tension between the viewer's expectations of their roles and the new position Michelangelo defines for them" (165). The book highlights the convention-defying aspects of Michelangelo's architecture while providing a new way of understanding those departures from convention. Scholars of Renaissance art and culture will find the book illuminating and provocative.

In four chapters plus an introduction and epilogue that build upon one another, Brothers slowly persuades the reader through the sheer quantity of visual evidence that Michelangelo's distinctive working method produced the novelties of his architecture. The quality of the

illustrations allows readers to closely follow Brothers' visual argument. Many of the most important drawings are shown full-page and in color. Disappointing, however, is the fact that all illustrations of architecture are in black and white. While color is not an important factor in the author's argument, the subtleties of materials and surfaces are neglected in high-contrast black-and-white photographs.

Brothers' main concern is for what she terms the "fortuitous juxtapositions and accidental insights" that Michelangelo's drawings provided within the context of his design process (13). Situating this process within the cultural milieu of late fifteenth-century Florence, where Michelangelo was trained among a party of painters, poets, and humanists, Brothers sees his architectural work as exemplifying the artistic values of variety and license. As Brothers shows us in great detail, Michelangelo achieved variety in his art through the manipulation of a relatively small number of images and forms using novel means. The author usefully contrasts Michelangelo's drawing process with those of his contemporaries in order to decipher his unique working methods — "habits," as she prefers.

Brothers very nimbly extracts meaning from the visual qualities of drawings and built works. A good example of this is her discussion of the stairway of the Laurentian Library in Florence. Brothers argues that the plethora of biological and organic metaphors that have been used to describe the stairway and the vestibule tacitly assumes that the dynamic qualities of tension and movement are extrinsic to architecture. By contrast, she suggests that Michelangelo's "fluid renderings of classical bases reveal the dynamic qualities of the ancient forms themselves. [. . .] In their origins the ancient forms had the same qualities with which Michelangelo invested them: it was only by decades of conventional usage that these characteristics had given way to static ones" (186). She recognizes, however, that the anthropomorphic qualities of the vestibule render conventional architectural descriptions inadequate. Her method of visual analysis, coupled with an interest in expanding the rhetorical possibilities for architectural description, serves her subject well.

Although Brothers employs words and phrases such as "destabilizing" and "liberating," "signs and signifiers," as well as "systems of reference," she avoids burdening her arguments with bulky theoretical disquisitions. When she writes of "the maneuvers by which he transformed precedents — inversion, reversal, scale shift, and displacement" (153), she indicates a debt to linguistic theory and structuralism. Yet Brothers eschews an elaborate theoretical superstructure on top of the formal analysis at which she is so adept. Indeed, it would have been helpful for the reader if the author had at least briefly discussed how those theories do or do not fit her aims and methods rather than simply avoiding that crucial scholarly exercise. Readers interested in in-depth theoretical debates undoubtedly will be disappointed.

This is not to say, however, that Brothers' book lacks implications for other theoretical studies of Michelangelo's work. She demonstrates that it is still possible to do compelling scholarly work in art history in a formalist vein. Her method could be contrasted with the elaborate theoretical models employed by Charles Burroughs in *The Italian Renaissance Palace Facade* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), a book that is ultimately less unified and tightly argued than Brothers' because of his insistence on using critical theories to drive his arguments. Brothers does the opposite: critical concepts are sparingly employed only where the material itself — the evidence of the drawings and of the built work — easily supports it. In this way her book builds upon the fascinating study of Michelangelo's manipulations of the human figure published by James Hall in *Michelangelo and the Reinvention of the Human Body* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005).

In the broadest reading, Brothers provides a sensitive and compelling understanding of the possibilities inherent in classicism as a dynamic rather than static tradition. The novel working methods of Michelangelo demonstrate that the potential for producing art that is new and unexpected yet clearly within the bounds of a tradition is unlimited. The achievement of Brothers' book is that she establishes this point unequivocally for the case of Michelangelo's work within the context of Renaissance encounters with the legacy of antiquity. The reader

is persuaded that Michelangelo did not set out to destroy the *all'antica* architecture that his predecessors and competitors had been developing for more than a century. Rather, through his drawing practices, he forged a new path within tradition.

Brothers exhaustively documents how Michelangelo's work is best regarded in the context of the fluid fifteenth-century Florentine categories of variety and invention rather than by reference to the stricter artistic code that developed by the later sixteenth century. As she bluntly states, "It is difficult to break rules that do not exist" (208). In the epilogue, Brothers continues this cultural argument through an extended comparison of Michelangelo's work with the writing of Ludovico Ariosto in order to explore how the artist's work was the product of a particular historical milieu. Ariosto famously wrote in *Orlando Furioso*, "Michel, più che mortal, Angel divino." *Il Divino* and Ariosto negotiated the categories of precedent and license in similar ways within a cultural environment that favored innovation. Brothers persuasively shows that the later hardening of artistic conventions resulted in the perception of Michelangelo's art and Ariosto's writing as more deliberately subversive than it was originally intended. The reappraisal of the more liberal Florentine artistic code, and the prospects it holds for understanding Renaissance classicism anew, are among the most important of the book's contributions.

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Poets of Divine Love. By Alessandro Vettori. Pp. xxi + 226. New York: Fordham University Press, 2004.

In this study, Alessandro Vettori investigates the interweaving of religious inspiration and rhetorical elaboration that shaped the work of two main authors of twelfth-century vernacular literature: Francis of Assisi and Iacopone da Todi. Vettori's inquiry focuses on two specific tenets that the founder of the Franciscan Order and his follower posed at the core of their spiritual as well as literary experiences, namely nudity (what Vettori defines as the "radical application of the rule of poverty") and harmony. Using the conceptual categories of nudity and harmony, Vettori systematizes the texts of the two authors, producing a convincing synoptic model for Francis's and Iacopone's texts and contributing significantly to medieval scholarship. Vettori develops his study by looking at how nudity and harmony, by reproducing themselves in variants and shifting from the literal to the metaphorical, forged the Franciscan oeuvre, both thematically and rhetorically.

In chapter 1, "Theatre of Nudity," Vettori investigates the theme of nudity, tracing its development from a literal meaning (the profession of nudity at the core of Francis's autobiography) to a metaphorical connotation (the bare rhetoric of his *Canticle*). Throughout Francis' life and works, nudity is a decisive accomplishment. In Vettori's analysis, it stands as the earthly representation of the unaltered condition experienced by humans in Eden and restored by Christ through his redemption on the Cross. Vettori points out a less orderly evolution of this notion in the text of Iacopone, to whom he attributes an "ambiguous use of the metaphor." The shifting metaphorical elaboration of nudity in the *Laude* resolves itself into a catachresis: playing on the overlapping etymologies of text and textile, Iacopone presents the naked body as the sign of a text whose words have been stripped of meaning, since they proved useless at expressing the mystical experience. Vettori reads the naked body presented in the *Laude* as the ultimate sign of the failure of language as well as of the desire to express the mystical connection between matter and spirit.

The moment in which the human soul merges with Christ represents the peak of mystical experience, and the content challenging any mystic writer. Since this moment is by nature ultra-mundane and ultra-sensorial, therefore ineffable, it creates the conditions for linguistic experiments. Vettori's analysis is based on the paradox implicit in Franciscan poetry: that especially the language of poetry, despite its high degree of elaboration, best serves the purpose

of describing the joining of the human soul with the divine, the experience most remote from human capacities of expression.

In chapter 2, "Mysticism of Sexual Union," Vettori exhaustively presents his readers with the textual instances in which Francis and Iacopone described the moment of connection between Christ and the soul through the figure of matrimonial unity. The union of the two genders, whose fertile junction germinates in the etymology of the Edenic couple (Vettori recalls the founding explanation of the Bible: "The name Adam comes from *'adamah*, the word for "ground" or "earth," while the name Eve, *hawwah*, has its root in *hayah*, to live") is, especially in Francis, the equivalent of the bond between God and mankind. Vettori discusses the Franciscan amplification of matrimony against the background of the twelfth-century twofold love tradition, theological love and courtly love, showing how Francis combined courtly love's commitment to the worship of the woman with the mystical tradition. On the grounds of the unfailing correspondence established by the Franciscan Rule between the theoretical basis and life, Vettori finds the embodiment of human love charged with theological power in the relation between Francis and Chiara, as well as in the relation between the two orders they founded (Vettori effectively strengthens his conclusion by observing that the matrimonial implication of the two orders' organization is confirmed by the production of their offspring, the third order).

This volume breaks new ground especially in its exploration of an element pervasively structuring the texts of the two Franciscans: harmony, or music (in the broad sense that the medieval curriculum attributed to this subject). In the chapter "Harmony of the Cosmos" Vettori recapitulates the theological significance of harmony. As drawn from Boethius, harmony corresponds to "an audible perception of a transcendental order of nature." Therefore music plays a crucial role in Francis' *Canticle* not only because it is naturally connected to poetry, but also because it reinforces the poem's harmonizing and conciliatory message. The *Canticle*, like music according to Boethius's conclusions, has its raison d'être in the reproduction of lost natural harmony.

The reading of the *Canticle* is the focus of chapter 4, "Origins of the Canon," which consists of a recapitulation of the *Canticle*'s exegesis, enriched by the original perspective constructed in the previous chapters: Vettori indicates the underlying drive of the text in the recovery of the pre-Fall condition, the "uncontaminated first stage of creation," that the Crucifixion made historically possible. The *Canticle* conveys such content, Vettori perspicaciously observes, by arranging the text into two axes, one vertical (the direction of human prayers ascending toward God), the other horizontal (the sermonic dimension of the *Canticle*): as the image of the Cross surfaces the lines, a further level of communication unfolds in the text. In Vettori's reading the *Canticle* is an outlook of a redeemed natural world, a world in which the theme of the union of the two genders becomes dynamic, revealing a universe in which "All creatures are at the same time siblings and spouses, they are sons and daughters of the same divinity, and they form a single entity through the bond of marital love." In the *Canticle* the bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood connect and make all living creatures equal, despite the Biblical dictation: "Francis's sense of humility regarding the relations of human beings to nature overrides the biblical command that gives mankind dominion over every living thing on earth." As Vettori acutely remarks, the *Canticle*'s syntax, by transversally dispensing the appellative of "brother" and "sister" on all creatures, bestows salvation not only upon men and women, but also upon the natural world, which is equally redeemed.

In chapter 5, "Theology of Ravishment," Vettori presents the compelling conclusions of his close reading of Iacopone's *Laude* which produces a cogent organization of the *Laude*'s tumultuous contents. Vettori embraces the definition of the *Laude* as a *canzoniere*, and specifies it is not a "self-fashioning" but a "self-deconstructing" one. As prescribed by the mystical path, the self must be effaced in order to connect with the divine. In the *Laude*, this path is marked by the progression from penance to lyricism, and love is its steady metaphorical thread. Through the lens of Vettori's reading, the *Laude* is a text hovering between matter and spirit,

and finally finding the solution connecting matter and spirit in the metaphor of matrimonial unity. While Iacopone professed at first a firm rejection of erotic love, he ultimately embraced it as a metaphor of the union between God and humankind. In Vettori's exposition, the erotic image of Anima, unclothed and dissolving herself in Christ, highlights the overcoming of the dichotomy between carnal and spiritual love, precisely because the former stands as an unequivocal metaphor for the latter: "Sexual consummation is spelled out in unambiguous terms, having as its final result Anima's metamorphosis into Christ himself."

Chapters 6 and 7, "Ecstasy of Agapic Love" and "Symphony of the Ineffable," are specifically devoted to the analysis of the *Laude*. Vettori selects a few exemplary texts, through which he illustrates Iacopone's search for a linguistic medium. In his close reading, Vettori traces the themes he has exhaustively investigated in his previous chapters: nudity (lauda 59), harmony (lauda 64), and their instrumentality in reaching the mystical askesis, described through the metaphorical matrimony of Anima and Christ (laude 67 and 68). The process is concluded in lauda 71, whose content describes the "liberation from all the limits and abandonment of demarcations" and whose language, accordingly, is stretched to its limits and made of "free association and abundant rhyming". Chapter 7 deals in detail with the linguistic experiments in lauda 71. Called to deliver an ineffable content, Iacopone overpowered the structural deficiency of human language by employing as tools for communication an "instinctive, uncontrollable emission of sounds, which are not intelligible, known words." In the moment of jubilation springing from mystical askesis, meaningful words are ultimately dismissed, and replaced by meaningless sounds. As Vettori makes clear in his gripping reading, Iacopone is engaged here in a verbal game, "the game of naming." Clothing ineffable concepts with meaningless words is equal to leaving the concepts stripped of language, naked. The iridescent language shaped by Iacopone is the substitute for silence, which is the ideal 'naked' language. This powerful interpretation of Iacopone's linguistic invention concludes Vettori's study, a perceptive and clear mapping of the progressive denudation and harmonization of the natural world carried out in the work of Francis and Iacopone as a metaphor of the journey to Eden, the reason for founding Franciscan poetry.

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