From the outset, *Women, Religion and the Atlantic World: 1600–1800* opens a new space for the study of gender in the Atlantic World. It does not claim to be the last voice on gender and religion in this context, but challenges scholars to break with the dichotomies of their own disciplines and redefine the parameters of Atlantic, as well as gender, studies. Therefore, the authors included in this collection challenge traditional divisions of religion and nationality and reveal the interconnected nature of social, political, and cultural life across this geographic area. In sum, these essays model methodologies and potential lines of scholarship that could include missionaries in Asia and refugees from India, as well as other still unexamined inhabitants of the Atlantic world. This text is successful in establishing an expanse of study and interrogation for scholars of religion, the Atlantic, and gender by pushing them to create new interdisciplinary realms that further explore the intricacies of daily and Atlantic-wide experiences in this era.

**Kate McCarthy-Gilmore**

**Loras College**


Diane Wolfthal’s *In and Out of the Marital Bed: Seeing Sex in Renaissance Europe* is a compact and detailed account of representations of Renaissance sexuality in specific physical contexts: the bed, the dressing area of the home, the window, the bath, and the street. The book is organized into chapters corresponding to those categories and includes both northern European and Italian material with an emphasis on the former. Wolfthal describes the eroticization of each of these spaces both historically and in artistic representation. Her analysis focuses on a small number of key works, many of which are likely to be new even to a reader who is expert in the field. Wolfthal also discusses in these chapters some of the more familiar images of Renaissance domesticity: the Van Eyck *Arnolfini Wedding*, for example, or Lippo Lippi’s *Man and Woman at a Casement*. The inclusion
of these works is part of Wolftthal's self-stated intent to make visible not only previously hidden spaces and sexualities, but work previously unstudied in this context — hence the subtitle's reference to “seeing sex.”

The first chapter concerns the representation of couples lying together and introduces several manuscript illuminations of men and women sharing their beds. The number and variety of these bed encounters will awaken any reader to the regularity with which they appear in early modern northern European paintings, but the analysis of the Arnolfini portrait, while challenging the conclusions of recent scholars, is unfortunately brief.

In the second chapter, Wolftthal assesses the dressing area of the home and focuses on an image, circa 1600, of Elizabeth Vernon, Countess of Southampton and wife of Henry Wriothesly, the third earl of Southampton. The chapter includes a detailed account of the many visual, historical, and literary sources either related or even potentially related to the image of a woman shown combing her hair. The significance of combs, combing, dressing, and dressing rooms — just for a start — form the basis of this chapter. Wolftthal skillfully unpacks the multiple contexts that might have been associated with this simple gesture, not all of them contexts that are necessarily, even by her own account, explanatory of this particular image. By offering so many explanations, Wolftthal gives a sense of the density of the possible resonances an object or action might take on within eroticized spaces.

Chapter 3 considers the woman at the window as a theme of Renaissance erotica. Wolftthal’s suggestion that a woman offering herself to public gaze in a penetrable space (door, window) would imply her sexual availability is perhaps not surprising; the variety of visual, historical, and literary contexts where this happens actually is. Throughout this book, Wolftthal is exhaustive in her discussion of sources and contexts, not only those relevant to her key works, but also those that she herself deems irrelevant. From the point of view of a teacher, this strategy is very useful: this book will make an excellent textbook for courses that cover early modern gender and sexuality (particularly outside Italy). But such contextual breadth can also be a limitation; some potential avenues brought up by Wolftthal’s own analysis are left essentially untouched. For instance, she makes only passing mention of Leon Battista Alberti’s notion of painting itself as a window in relation to the window as an erotic space.
Wolfthal’s focus for the fourth chapter is the bath, both public and private, and again introduces new imagery that most readers will not have seen, including images of women bathing together. Wolfthal’s effort to attach one such work by Sebald Beham to same-sex desire is admirable, if made difficult by the lack of historical evidence. But here also the book’s divisions become difficult; the focal image in the chapter is a folio with a woman combing her hair, but she stands at two chapters’ distance from Wolfthal’s exhaustive discussion of hair-combing, and indeed, little mention is made of that earlier discussion.

Finally, the fifth chapter centers around images of the street and introduces a truly remarkable image from Krakow of the Punishment of the Unfaithful Wives, dating to about 1505 and depicting St. Stanislaus intervening on behalf of adulterous women who are being forced to suckle puppies as their own children are taken from them and given to dogs to nurse. Contextualizing this astonishing image in terms of a broader category of representations of the street as an eroticized space is truly useful. The painting is no longer only strange and fascinating (though it is still that, to be sure), but becomes instead a portal into a broader context of early modern sexuality. This example is followed by an analysis of the relationship between falconry, street scenes, and homosexuality. As in the case of the Arnolfini Wedding, the analysis of canonical works that have resisted explanation (Petrus Christus’ Couple in a Goldsmith’s Shop and Michelangelo’s Doni Tondo), by associating them with homosexuality in particular, is thought-provoking, but unfortunately too brief to be as definitive as one might wish.

In and Out of the Marital Bed: Seeing Sex in Renaissance Europe will make an excellent textbook for a course on gender and/or sexuality in the Renaissance and also offers new sources and images even to an expert in the field. Wolfthal covers an impressive array of historical and visual contexts for the spaces she describes and explores in detail the many possible ways that a single erotic form could be understood in the Renaissance. Most importantly, the work expands the boundaries of what we consider “erotic” art, an effort that is itself an important contribution to Renaissance studies.

Lisa Regan
Independent Scholar