sixteenth centuries, it shifts to take place between the elite, the *popolo*, and the Medici family. Traumatic, catalytic events, in Najemy's analysis, proved decisive in the transition from one group of antagonists to the next as well as in altering the nature of Florentine politics. The rebellion of workers and artisans in 1378 and the brief radical, guild republic that followed it, he argues, put paid to any future thought of a political alliance between the *popolo* and laboring classes against the elite. The radically popular government that emerged in 1527, following the third expulsion of the Medici from Florence, and the catastrophic ten-month siege of the city that ended its rule, correspondingly destroyed any illusions of an alliance between the *popolo* and the elite against the Medici. On each occasion, fear and hatred of rule by social inferiors drove first the *popolo* and then the elite into political choices they had tried to avoid. The *popolo*, at the end of the fourteenth century, accepted the neutralization of the guilds and a corrupted electoral system dominated by the elite as the price to avoid political concessions to the disenfranchised workers. For their own part, the elite recognized the need for adopting the style, if not the substance, of *popolo* culture in order to preserve their power. By 1530, however, fear and detestation of the government of the *popolo* drove the elite into a final "fateful embrace" with the Medici that spelled the end of the republic and the institution of princely government.

Based on wide reading of the available secondary and printed sources, *A History of Florence* represents the achievement of a lifetime's devotion to the study of the city. Moreover, Najemy's categories of analysis should provoke debates and conversations for future lifetimes. In particular, the distinctions that he makes between the elite and the *popolo*, and the question of the extent to which internal, self-sustaining political dynamics operated independent of the social conflicts that serve as the driving force of Najemy's argument deserve attention. Magisterial in its style and unrivalled in its substance, *A History of Florence* will provide an essential point of reference for scholars and students of Florence for decades to come.

NICHOLAS SCOTT BAKER, *Macquarie University*

Kevin Siena, ed.

Sins of the Flesh: Responding to Sexual Disease in Early Modern Europe

Toronto: Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2005. Pp. 292.

This collection takes on an important brief by focusing its varied essays on Europe's responses to venereal illnesses in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The seem-

ingly vague term proposed in the book's subtitle—sexual disease—is intentionally indeterminate, since the editor hopes to confront received interpretations of the disease known as syphilis, beginning with the term itself. The contributions aim not only to problematize the already vexed word *syphilis* and its several synonyms, but also to illustrate how a constellation of other conditions which we would now assume to be unrelated (leprosy, sodomy, prostitution, poverty) was implicated in premodern understandings of the pox. This collection espouses the constructionist view that historians should not hope to interpret the pox as a specific medical condition, proposing that the disease(s) known as syphilis should be seen in context and interpreted according to the categories and associations contemporaries assigned to it or them.

The collection is designed to interest a broad readership by assuming a comparative and multidisciplinary stance. The bulk of the essays come from historians of Italy, followed by scholars of English literature, and historians of other areas (England, Germany). The concern among the historians is to approach the response to sexual disease in ways that intentionally muddy the waters of simple reception history: they present research here that challenges universalist claims about the pox that often assume commensurability across time and space.

Jon Arrizabalaga shows that debate among learned physicians after the new disease surfaced in the late fifteenth century was vigorous, and that consensus over contagion and transmission was slow to develop. Prescriptions among these physicians for coping with the disease thus failed to find common ground in the early years, leaving little medical agreement on practical therapies. David Gentilcore's study of charlatans puts right several misconceptions about the medical marketplace in seventeenth-century Italy. He argues that Italians could choose from a range of licit professional healers; the idea that only quacks specialized in remedying the pox is disproven by evidence from his database of charlatans and illustrates how Italian attitudes differed from those in England, where shame surrounding the disease pushed sufferers to seek cures through illicit and unconventional channels. Laura McGough investigates Venice's response to the intertwining dangers of beauty and disease in the person of the prostitute, an agent of both biological and moral danger associated with the pox from the beginning. She follows the development of reform institutions (the *Convertite* and later the *Zitelle*) as mechanisms of social control. Mary Hewlett's piece on sodomy trials in Lucca proves that authorities exploited the fluidity of syphilis to cast their net wider in pursuing sodomy, a long-standing social concern made more urgent and visible by the French disease. Domenico Zanrè's survey of Italian literary responses to the pox echoes the historians' concerns by focusing on

its multivalency: it proved a durable topos because authors could deploy it playfully, seriously, or accusatorily based on their literary purposes or even their own experience. The articles on Italy demonstrate that the social ills and physical symptoms associated with the disease were in fact kaleidoscopic, and the opportunity for both authorities and sufferers to turn a liability to their occasional advantage emerges as a recurrent theme. This same conclusion reappears in Darrin Hayton's chapter on the German astrologer Joseph Grünpeck, who tried to leverage his readings of the stars and subsequent publications on syphilis at Maximilian I's court.

Moving from the continent to England, literary matters predominate. These contributors largely examine preoccupations with blame and scapegoating; the disease became an opportunity to sharpen (or at times expand) a critique of French society. Roze Hentschell argues that the French nation and the disease named for it became conflated as sites of degeneracy, and clothing flagged this fact. She suggests that the slump in the English cloth trade at the dawn of the seventeenth century facilitated a displacement of anxieties onto the craze for foreign fashions. Diane Cady's offering follows similar logic in her examination of the valencies of language surrounding the pox. Infiltrations of French into the English lexicon came to be seen as pathogenic as well as feminine, and contributed to anxieties over linguistic, social, and biological pollutions. Jonathan Gil Harris proposes that scholars embrace the confusions and anachronisms in the term *syphilis*; to Harris syphilis is a "pathotext," a "changing object of discourse diversely constituted within different knowledge systems." He proposes that the word *syphilis* is a palimpsest, and in its very trickiness it becomes a richer term than some of the others we have adopted. This reading, though at times opaque, is useful in the way it confronts rather than elides the difficulties of nomenclature and historicity. By challenging the ways that both historians and literary scholars frame sexual illness, Harris opens a debate that might prove useful in bridging disciplinary approaches to this subject.

Siena's own essay expands on his earlier work on London hospitals; here he takes on the connections between poverty and the pox, and the hospitals' conflicted position towards their charges, which he sees as balanced between scorn and mercy. Indeed, as Siena points out, the contributions on England reveal a more rigidly moralistic response to syphilis than in Italy. Both England and the continent responded with moral and social tools, though the discourses around the disease tended in England to emphasize shame, while—as Gentilcore and Zanrè illustrate—the Italian attitude was mercurial, likely to inspire a range of reactions. Exactly how and why responses differed across Europe needs further investigation, and the chapters of this collection gesture toward some interesting possibilities. We can hope that with

further research and more efforts like this one to cross geographical and disciplinary boundaries, an increasingly nuanced understanding of moral and social responses to contagion and disease will emerge.

JOHN GAGNÉ, *Concordia University*

Collected Works of Erasmus, Volume 36, Adages IV iii 1 to V ii 51

Translated and annotated by John N. Grant and Betty I. Knott, edited by John N. Grant. *Collected Works of Erasmus* 36
Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006. Pp. x, 677.

This is the sixth and last volume presenting the *Adages* in the *Collected Works of Erasmus* (CWE); an introductory volume, which will be released as CWE 30, is still in the course of preparation. Like every volume in the whole CWE series, this one is handsomely produced, translated and annotated to a very high standard; like the preceding volume of the *Adages*, CWE 35 (reviewed in *Renaissance and Reformation* 29.1 (2005): 125–127), it has the advantage of following the edition of the Latin text of the same adages in the Amsterdam *Opera omnia* of Erasmus (ASD). As in CWE 31 and 35, and in contrast with the intermediate volumes of the *Adages*, the notes are, helpfully, presented at the foot of each page.

Most of the adages in this volume were added by Erasmus in editions of the *Adages* after the fundamental one of 1508, and some of them repeat earlier material. For instance, IV ix 99 (*in herbis* “in the blade”) repeats II ii 89 with different examples, as Erasmus admits rather defensively, and IV x 9 (*eadem queri* “make the same complaint”) repeats material from IV viii 88 (*concinere* “to sing in concert, to agree”). There are few substantial essays among them, an exception being IV v 1 (*ne bos quidem pereat* “not even an ox would be lost”), which has some interesting autobiographical reflections on scholarship and patronage. There are, indeed, few of the best-known adages of any length: of the 119 adages in William Barker’s selection (Toronto, 2001), only four are selected from the range which appears in this volume. Erasmus had perhaps used his best material by the time he came to write the later adages.

Translation and commentary can hardly be faulted. I suspect that at IV iv 54, when after references to dancing bears and performing monkeys, Erasmus complains that a boy or girl may be brought from place to place, *gesticulationes ineptas edoctum* “taught to act in a silly way,” and that *vnus puellae calamitas alit ocium quatuor aut quinque robustorum nebulonum*, the sturdy wastrels whose leisure time is occupied