account of the late-sixteenth- and seventeenth-century circulation and publication history of Aretino's works in England. Of primary importance is Moulton's substantiated claim that, following Aretino's death, his political significance and social critique were elided and replaced by a concern for his erotic lewdness.

Moulton's analysis of Aretino's legacy in early modern England is based on the view that the author's "image" involved a "compelling mix of fascination, admiration, and horror" (p. 157). As "Aretine" emerged as an adjective for illicit desire and a range of corrupt sexual practices, many English people roundly condemned the devilish Italian writer. Some others, though, such as Thomas Nashe, defended and celebrated him. Chapter 4 explores in detail Nashe's socially dissident appropriation of the Aretine mantle. The poet's "Choice of Valentines," Moulton argues, draws on Aretino's treatment of female sexual power (warm dildo at the ready) to caution against a loss of masculine authority. The final six pages in this chapter drill down into the poem's manuscript heritage, an obvious source of antiquarian pleasure for the author.

Instead of a formal conclusion, *Before Pornography* closes with a chapter about Aretine eroticism and Ben Jonson's works for the public stage. Returning to the subject of poetry, effeminacy, and national identity, Moulton charts Jonson's transformation from one who scripted appealing, erotically disordered characters to a playwright who sought to dissociate his own writings from effeminate bawdry. The gender confusions and erotic ribaldry that are rife in *Volpone* give way to the stern anti-feminism of *Epicoene*, a rewriting of Aretino's play *Il marescalco* that scrubs away the earlier text's vision of sexual libertinism's effeminizations. It is with his discussion of *Epicoene* that Moulton makes a firm link to the subject of pornography, arguing that it is this erasure of concerns about effeminacy that points to the future development of pornographic representation — a tantalizing end for such a pleasing book.

MICHAEL MORGAN HOLMES, *Toronto*

Georgina Dopico Black. *Perfect Wives, Other Women: Adultery and Inquisition in Early Modern Spain*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001. Pp. xx, 307.

Perfect Wives, Other Women, is a theoretically engaged, highly original study that examines the intensely scrutinized body of the "wife" in three disparate sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish texts: Fray Luis de León's *La perfecta casada*, a 1583 conduct manual from which Dopico Black borrows the "perfect wife" of her own title; Pedro Calderón de la Barca's 1629 wife-murder play, *El médico de su honra*; and *Los empeños de una casa*, a *comedia de enredos* (akin to farce) written in 1683 by the Mexican nun, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, herself a "bride of Christ," as Dopico Black incisively notes. Through a sophisticated integration of cultural history, etymology, and critical theory, Dopico Black uncovers what she calls an "inquisitorial hermeneutic" (p. 12) that connects this wifely body to that of two

other highly contested early modern bodies: the literal “body of Christ” in the Eucharist (so crucial to Counter-Reformation theology), and the body of the converted Jewish and/or Muslim Other (so crucial to statutes governing “*limpieza de sangre*” [“purity of blood”] in the Hapsburg Empire). All three bodies, she says, come into being precisely through a sacramental transformation. But because each of these converted bodies just might retain a “vestigial trace” (p. xv) of its previous essence — what she shrewdly calls “the irksome breadness of the consecrated host, the ‘tainted’ blood of a *converso* or Morisco Other[,] or, finally, the will of the wife, manifested in the desires of her body” (p. xv) — the critical issue for inquisitors of all stripes becomes one of knowing how to “read” the “visible signs” projected by these converted bodies, and more importantly, knowing “what is concealed beneath the surface” (p. 7).

Dopico Black explores these questions in detail over the course of her study. In her chapter on *La perfecta casada*, for instance, she specifically ties Fray Luis’s proscriptions against wandering outside the home and against the wearing of make-up to the early modern preoccupation, especially in Spain, with “being” and “seeming.” His uneasiness toward both of these less-than-perfect wifely habits — which Dopico Black brilliantly connects to his punning on the terms *romero/ramera* [“pilgrim/harlot”] — betrays what she calls “his critical anxieties over reading and misreading” (p. 58): “Outside the interior space to which it is relegated, the body of the casa-da [*sic*] is taken for that of a whore” (p. 89). Likewise, in her chapter on *El médico de su honra*, she contends that Calderón’s perhaps most disturbing *comedia* “stages a radical misreading that results in an innocent woman’s gruesome murder” (p. 111) precisely because her non-virginal status “renders her illegible with respect to sexual transgression,” given that her broken hymen can no longer be read as a sign of illicit penetration (p. 120). Finally, in her chapter on *Los empeños de una casa*, Dopico Black argues that Castaño — the deliberately American *gracioso* (fool) who meta-theatrically disguises himself in women’s clothing and later accepts another man’s proposal of marriage — serves to accentuate “gender illegibility” in such a way as to empower the wifely body “to resist, at all costs, being read as a perfecta casada” (p. 201).

At the same time, however, because Dopico Black’s readings are inextricably tied to questions of legibility and illegibility not just for “inquisitors” within these texts, but also for readers standing outside looking in, each chapter concludes with a secondary rhetorical move that seeks to demonstrate the instability of the texts themselves. Fray Luis’s conduct manual is as guilty, she says, of “Renaissance self-fashioning” (p. 103) as any painted woman herself, and thus serves to undermine, “in its seductive excesses and contradictions, [. . .] the more repressive norms it prescribes for perfect wives” (p. 108). Likewise, because our own reading of *El médico de su honra* necessarily implicates us in Mencía’s innocent death, Calderón’s greatest subversion of the honor code, she says, consists in “letting us, as spectators, walk away with the knowledge that *any* reading, like Gutierre’s inquisition of his wife’s body, that seeks to wed Truth with punishment can only either confirm its own assumptions or betray the adultery of signs on which it has

relied” (p. 163). Finally, somatic illegibility in *Los empeños de una casa* is not so much an indication of Sor Juana’s epistemological anxiety “as it is a kind of refuge, analogous in many respects with the refuge she sought to find in the convent” (p. 200).

Perfect Wives, Other Women will obviously be of great interest to scholars of early modern Spain and colonial Latin America. But, precisely because of its broad scope and theoretical depth, it will also prove invaluable to a wide variety of readers, including feminist critics, performance theorists, and scholars interested in questions of gender and ethnicity. (Some readers unfamiliar with Spanish, however, may have trouble occasionally with Dopico Black’s intermittent incorporation of Spanish terms into her discourse.) This is a well-written, highly readable study that provides fresh insights into subjects ranging from the political discord between “Old” and “New” Christians on the Iberian peninsula to the “feminization and even hystericization of Amerindian bodies” (p. 202) in the New World, and to the need to rethink critically “traditional histories that ascribe Spain a belated modernity vis-à-vis the rest of Europe” (p. 213). Moreover, unlike so many other contemporary critical works —many of which unfortunately offer readers little more than a series of loosely substantiated theoretical claims — *Perfect Wives, Other Women* is thoroughly grounded in detailed textual analysis. Dopico Black comes close to apologizing for this grounding in her conclusion, when she comments on what she calls her “belated deconstructive critical practice that privileges moments of textual illegibility and sites of semiotic instability” (p. 214). But this methodological justification is entirely unnecessary. Her close readings amply speak for themselves. We need more, not fewer, books like *Perfect Wives, Other Women*.

BRUCE R. BURNINGHAM, *University of Southern California*