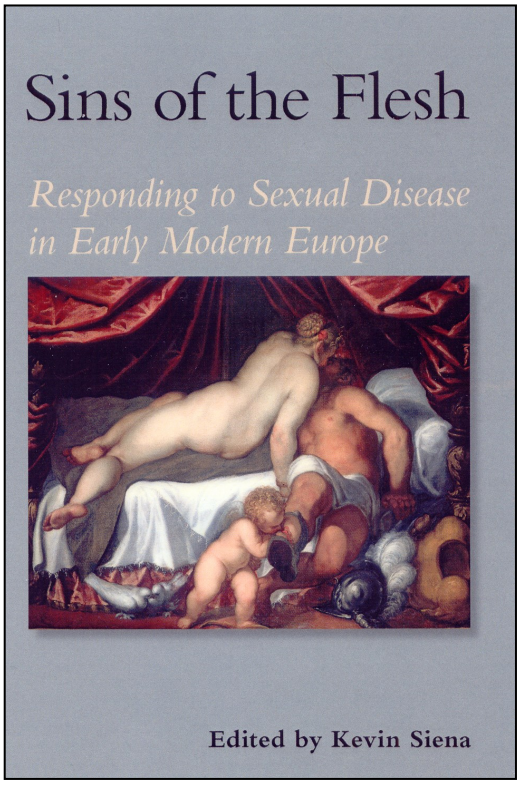
Sins of the Flesh:
Responding to Sexual Disease in Early Modern Europe

Edited by Kevin Siena

Few illnesses in the early modern period carried the impact of the dreaded "pox," a lethal sexually transmitted disease usually thought to be syphilis. In the early sixteenth century the disease quickly emerged as a powerful cultural force. Just as powerful were the responses of doctors, bureaucrats, moralists, playwrights, and satirists. These ten essays gauge the impact of sexual disease on early modern society by exploring the ways in which European culture reacted to the presence of a new deadly sexual infection. Articles about scientific and medical responses analyze how physicians incorporated the disease within existing intellectual frameworks. Studies in literary and metaphoric responses examine how early modern writers put images of sexual infection and the diseased body to a range of rhetorical and political uses. Finally, essays about institutional and policing responses chronicle how authorities responded to the crisis and how these public health responses linked up with wider campaigns to police sexuality.



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