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relationships, whether in the operating theatre or among hospital administrative staff, are often explicit and rarely absent; while even the most innocuous illustrations of waiting rooms, hospital wards, and roof gardens reveal the therapeutic gap that separated the rich from the poor. Nor can the broader context be easily ignored: developments in medical technology, operating techniques, and diagnostic procedures all receive a due degree of attention as do the economic and social changes that, by the middle of the twentieth century, had re-made Philadelphia into the industrial metropolis of the United States.

In sum this book adds yet another thread to the rich tapestry that constitutes the past of one of America's most fascinating cities; every historian of American medicine will profit from a perusal of this absorbing volume.

Simon Baatz, University of Sussex

JEAN THÉODORIDÈS, *Des miasmes aux virus*, Paris, Éditions Louis Parientes, 1991, pp. 378, illus. (2-902474-64-4).

Until now, students of the history of infectious diseases of man, when legitimately anxious for professional information concerning the diseases which are central to their writing, have had no one volume of easily accessible facts to which to turn. Professor Théodoridès, director of research at the CNRS and at the same time among the most prolific of French historians of medicine, has come to the rescue with this handsome volume. In a lucid text, generously supported by a wealth of well chosen illustrations, it combines historical information and up-to-date scientific facts related to both the better and the lesser known infectious diseases of mankind.

In three introductory chapters Dr Théodoridès guides his readers through the development of general ideas in the pathology of infectious diseases—hence the title of the book—from the very early beliefs with their roots in magic and theosophy, to the giant steps towards understanding made in the nineteenth century. Of the remaining five chapters—at nearly 300 pages the majority of the book by far—each one is devoted to a major class of disease agents and the diseases they cause: spirochaetes, bacteria, rickettsiae and chlamydiae, viruses, and finally, and briefly, four “historic” epidemic ailments whose aetiology has never been satisfactorily determined. It is especially the four extensive chapters on individual diseases and their agents which make the present volume valuable as a work of reference. Each entry describes in detail the aetiology of the diseases and the properties of their pathogens, as well as the historical facts of the authors who first described each disease, and those who later isolated and identified its causal agent, and of others who added to the understanding of the disease and, where possible, developed a vaccine.

The numerous illustrations—there are few pages without one—have been chosen and prepared for this volume with great care. Many are reproduced from original documents or publications and as such add immeasurably to the text. Among the rarer items this reviewer particularly enjoyed the nineteenth-century French school class receiving re-vaccination, with the source of the lymph, a live calf, tied down on a table to one side; and the title page of Duchesne's so often forgotten thesis of 1897 with the sub-title ‘Antagonisme entre les moissures et les microbes’, which noted the inhibitory effect of *Penicillium* species on the growth of certain pathogenic bacteria, even *in vivo* in the guinea pig, decades before Fleming's similar discovery and its later practical development by Florey and associates.

In a short concluding section Dr Théodoridès outlines the evergreen questions which continue to be asked concerning the origins of micro-organisms, pathogenic and non-pathogenic. More than fifty years ago, Charles Nicolle speculated on the possible development of saprophytic microbes into pathogens for animals, and then for man. More recently, it is the origin of viruses, unable to replicate outside living cells, which has fired the collective imagination of microbiologists. Such problems promise to be with us for a long time to come.

A subject index would have been a welcome addition to the excellent author index provided, but is perhaps not in the French publishing tradition. In its absence, the reader has to search in

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the bibliography section of each chapter, or in the chapter contents, for individual infectious agents and diseases. It should not detract from the enjoyment of a volume which otherwise impresses by its completeness, and which should be on the shelf of everyone writing on infectious diseases, past and present.

Lise Wilkinson, Royal Postgraduate Medical School, London

GEORGE MORA (ed.), *Witches, devils, and doctors in the Renaissance: Johann Weyer, 'De praestigiis daemonum'*, assoc. ed. Benjamin Kohl, transl. John Shea, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 73, Binghamton, State University of New York Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1991, pp. xcii, 790, illus., \$33.00 (0-86698-083-0).

Widely acknowledged today as one of the key texts of Renaissance demonology, the publication in English translation of the sixth edition (1583) of Johann Weyer's *De praestigiis daemonum* represents something of a landmark. The work itself, familiar to specialist scholars of the period, is both long (584 pages) and complex, and includes much material absent from the first edition of 1563. Now for the first time available in English, its value as a primary source will undoubtedly grow, and a large debt is consequently owed to the editorial team responsible for producing such a fine, free-flowing translation. In addition, the text is accompanied by copious notes on sources and subject matter, with a useful appendix containing a more substantial, though basic, glossary of authors and terms.

The most disappointing aspect of the volume however, which may stem from the group nature of the project, is the introductory essay which I found poorly organized and unconvincing. Apart from the plethora of unfortunate typographical errors, inconsistencies of nomenclature and eccentric or misleading comments, the overall attempt to place Weyer's life and work within the context of his age lacked conviction. Excessive introductory material—much of it out-of-date—detailing the theological, scientific and medical background of Weyer's thought could have been dealt with more succinctly, whilst far too little emphasis was placed upon the need to provide a fresh analysis of the nature and meaning of Weyer's work in the light of recent scholarship. For example, no attempt has been made to assess the contribution of Weyer to later debates on the subject of witchcraft. Nor do the editors make any attempt to elucidate or explain the glaring inconsistencies and lacunae in Weyer's arguments. The traditional depiction of Weyer as an enlightened sceptic and moderate Erasmian is taken at face value and, quite extraordinarily, little attention is paid to Christopher Baxter's persuasive reading of Weyer as an intolerant Lutheran polemicist who wrote *De praestigiis daemonum* as a thinly-veiled assault upon the superstitious practices of the Roman Catholic church.

Despite declarations to the contrary, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the authors here wish to preserve a rather traditional view of Weyer as an enlightened precursor of scientific and medical rationalism whose psychological insights anticipated the work, amongst others, of Sigmund Freud. Such an interpretation has its pitfalls, and I am left with the overall feeling that on this occasion the editors should have employed a specialist in the field to write an introduction to Weyer and his work. Despite such comments, however, nothing can undermine the tremendous achievement of the editorial team in producing such a readily accessible and decently-priced edition of Weyer's classic text. Not only will it prove invaluable to specialists working in the fields of early modern medicine, psychology and demonology, but equally importantly, it will provide a new generation of undergraduate and graduate students with easy access to a seminal text of the period.

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CARLO M. CIPOLLA, *Miasmas and disease: public health and the environment in the pre-industrial age*, transl. Elizabeth Potter, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1992, pp. x, 101, £16.95, \$25.00 (0-300-04806-8).

This latest of Professor Cipolla's tales of Tuscan epidemics offers less of his own interpretation and general context but more of the actual documents. Its core is a series of reports from medical health officials on outbreaks of disease in small Tuscan towns between