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Claire L. Carlin, ed., *Imagining Contagion in Early Modern Europe.* Houndmills, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. $74.95 (hb). ISBN 1-4039-3926-8.

Review by William G. Naphy, University of Aberdeen.

This is an extremely densely-packed collection of essays relating to the diverse and multifaceted way in which ideas and concepts about contagion and contagious "things" were employed in the early modern period. Before examining the individual contributions, some overall observations are perhaps useful. There are fifteen essays in a volume that runs to fewer than 300 pages. As one might expect, the result is that each essay is tantalizingly and frustratingly brief. The content of each essay is uniformly interesting and informative, but the cumulative effect is to leave the reader wanting more detail on each. In other words, this volume quite easily could have been two volumes--with each contributor allowed adequate space to make, sustain, and support an argument. Moreover, in a work entitled "imagining" it is somewhat surprising to find only three illustrations (pp. 109, 114-15). The "imagining" under discussion is very much that of literary imagination--cerebral rather than visual. These brief comments are not meant as criticisms per se, but rather to suggest that what might normally be expected from a collection of essays (eight to nine essays) with this title (heavily illustrated) is not actually in this volume. If, on the other hand, one is interested in the many--largely literary--uses of "contagion" in the early modern period in a host of examples, then this volume is ideal.

The first essay, by Pantin, provides an excellent overview not only of Fracastoro's theories on contagion but also of the very complex and (to modern eyes) bizarre mix of Galenic ideas with contagion: views on the "mechanics" of optics, sympathy, magnetism, atomism (in a qualified and limited sense), and how all these could be melded into a theory that "explained" the seemingly inexplicable behaviour of plague. In particular, the essay examines how Fracastoro was determined to provide a wholly "natural" explanation that did not rely on the intrusion of the "occult." The article is densely packed and commendably clear, though some students may struggle with the (very) few passages in Latin. The article opens by suggesting how ideas of plague and contagion and Fracastoro's explanation could be (and were) squared with traditional Galenic ideas. More space would have allowed this to be discussed more fully and to consider just how successful this synthesis was.

The next essay, by Gagnon, considers ideas about the air (atmosphere) and its living quality (*pneuma*, vital breath). Gagnon makes the point that this is not the same as alchemical ideas (including those of Ficino) about the "spirit of the world" (*spiritus mundi*). These ideas are then linked to Paracelsus within his concepts of signatures as well as micro and macrocosm. Since the "soul of the world" is everywhere, it was integral in any understanding of disease, contagion and--just as importantly--treatment. Thus, "air" brought life but was also the chief conduit of illness in the form of "astral poison." While these ideas may seem strange, Gagnon shows that aspects of them linger: the marketing of "aerated" water (carbonated, mineral water) as healthy is but the most obvious example. As interesting as this essay is, as a result of its brevity it fairly gallops through important aspects of the discussion: Chaldaic oracles (a single page, pp. 22-3), demons of the Jewish Cabbala (less than a page, p. 23), philosophers' theories (also less than a page, p. 24). It is obvious that each informs and propels the essay's arguments but each requires great elucidation.

Beecher's essay, "Windows on Contagion," follows. This is a fascinating discussion of a contagious disease well-recognised in the pre-modern period, lovesickness, which was caused by a peculiar and "interdisciplinary" mixture of the poetic (Cupid's arrows) and the mechanical (through vision and the imprinting of image on the memory). Focusing on this specific illness, Beecher makes exceptionally good use of the limited space available. He discusses in detail Ficino's interpretation and explanation of the disease within the context of a wider discussion of its history from antiquity via the Arabs to the early modern world.

In the fourth essay, Frelick also looks at lovesickness as a contagious disease. However, Frelick's focus is not the dangerous--indeed contagious--power of vision, but rather the ability of texts *about* love to promote the disease (or better, the idea of, and familiarity with, it). In particular, the essay examines the extent to which this literary "diagnosis" of the disease tended to convert the ailment into a class-specific condition--largely something that afflicted the higher social orders. Ficino also features prominently in this discussion. Thus this essay, read in conjunction with Beecher's, provides much of the space for analysis and interpretation lacking elsewhere.

In Closson's essay, the fifth in the volume, the first section (on theory) ends with a dramatic change of tack moving from love as a contagious illness to the effect of the demonic. While the discussion of lovesickness may seem peculiar, the essay focuses on the "natural," as did the two before. This essay considers the widespread belief (voiced in the *Malleus Maleficarum* and elsewhere) that "there is not bodily infirmity…which cannot be caused by witches" (p. 64). The heart to this essay is an analysis of how early modern physicians and others were to be able to diagnose a demonic (rather than natural) cause for love. They key element in this was the extraordinary: when no other explanation could be found for the "symptoms," a "demonic diagnosis" was possible. The essay ends, impressively, with an examination of Yvelin's successful and effective undermining of Satan's role in disease (possession). Yvelin stressed that diagnoses of the demonic were incorrect and the disease (affliction) was natural; even if possession were true, it would simply be best to ignore the demon(s), who will eventually get bored and go away.

The first section of the book introduces many theoretical ideas about contagion. However, there is a thread about "image" and "vision" running through the first four essays, which is lacking in the fifth. This does leave the demonic rather dangling at the end of the section. Moreover, the close and complementary focus of the essays by Beecher and Frelick suggests that a pairing of articles might well have overcome some of the disadvantages of so many short essays in a single volume--many perspectives and voices but less diversity of foci.

The second section, on practice, begins with an essay by Cazes on Montaigne. Any discussion of contagion, especially via the air, needed to include a discussion of how this operated in practice, as well as how one might identify dangerous, potentially contagion-causing, air. Smell became a focus for discussion. One could avoid looking at or touching something infected, but smells were ubiquitous and unstoppable. Cazes examines Montaigne's advice on and ideas about smells (and how to avoid them--in particular, the value of the moustache as a filter or mask against smells). Tightly focused on a single case study, this excellent article is especially useful for any teacher who has struggled to explain ideas behind pomanders and medical "beaks."

Hammond's essay, which follows, shifts the focus from France (Romance-speaking areas have predominated thus far) to Germany. The essay looks at communal responses to illness, especially contagious diseases. Those with a contagion were not only able to spread the disease but were also seen as polluted, dirty. The result was an increasing emphasis on separation, confinement, and quarantine for those with any ailment which might be contagious. At the heart of the essay is a case study of a midwife in 1550s Augsburg; this tight focus does work well with the limited word space.

The eighth essay considers the role of the mass-produced print of a miraculously curative portrait of St. Francis Xavier, which was so famous that its powers were attested around the globe (especially where there were Jesuits). The print, as an accurate "reproduction" (rather than "copy") of the original iconic image, was able to contain the saint's holiness and curative powers just as the original did. While focused on the practical, this essay ties this second section very closely to the theoretical focus on vision and sight in the first section.

The next essay looks at quarantine, but not its mechanical or magisterial practical operation. Rather, there is a focus on how quarantine and separation were experienced and remembered by individuals. While there is evidence of the pain and anguish caused, there is also a discussion of the sense some patients had that this solitude was beneficial (and not just in keeping them away from the ill or healthy)--even improving. Quarantine could, in this essay focused on literary sources, be embraced.

The tenth essay in the volume, by Lindmark, joins Hammond in directing the reader's attention away from France and/or Italy by considering a very different type of contagious disease in Sweden: religious ecstasy or enthusiasm. This essay highlights one of the strengths (and peculiarities) of the volume. It treats a phenomenon that pre-modern thinkers considered to be a medico-mental problem (i.e., physical and natural) as a disease. However, to the modern reader it seems as disparate from the norm of the volume and this section (which it closes) as Closson's essay on the demonic did in closing the first section. Lindmark's essay does, emphatically, remind modern readers that disease and contagion encompassed a substantial range of phenomena no longer considered ailments. But in so doing, it gives the impression that the volume has tried to discuss any and all possible uses of contagion--even the metaphorical and literary. This is too harsh, but it is, nevertheless, an impression from so many diverse (and divergent) essays.

The third and final section, "Projections," looks at the discussion and diagnosis of syphilis as a lens for examining sexuality. Although early modern physicians (and the general populace more widely) quickly saw syphilis as a venereal disease, they did not see it as wholly "natural"; the disease was seen as a divine punishment for illicit sexuality. However, it could also spread without any immoral connotation (for example, via saliva from kissing infants). The link was the increasing location of the disease in women (especially prostitutes). The essay also focuses on literary sources and stresses the extent to which syphilis was mocked and a cause of ribaldry and humour, suggesting that this is a "laugh-in-the-face-of-death" reaction. Thus, the essay is less about syphilis as a contagion and more about how a society interprets and integrates the disease--and its victims--into its world view.

Humour nicely links the previous essay to the twelfth in the volume. This essay also has much in common with Lindmark's piece on enthusiasm as it considers laughter as contagious. Like Lindmark's essay, it also seems to include a use of contagious that is more metaphorical than medical. Both are excellent in demonstrating that both religious enthusiasm (ecstasy) and contagious laughter were viewed and treated as ailments or--perhaps better--conditions needing intervention. Bertrand's essay also nicely links with Poirier on syphilis in discussing how this type of uncontrolled laughter could be interpreted as a window on one's moral interior: revealing, for example, the dissolute while the "cause" (or locus) of the disease could be seen in the burlesque.

Fournier's essay also locates contagion in things: the novel. This essay recalls Frelick's essay in which lovesickness is spread through literary sources describing its causes and symptoms. Novels spread ideas, literally, and these could be poisonous and dangerous. The ability of a novel to impress the reader with ideas and emotions recalls earlier essays (especially the first four) that discuss the impressing of images on the body via the eyes; the essay notes the access point for the novel into the person's interior is also the eyes. However, to the extent intervention is required, it is through the medium of good, wholesome books rather than medicine per se. One can immediately see the first stirrings of censorship based on the danger of immoral writings on the minds of the "young" and "impressionable"; that the latter

terminology survives to the present is instructive.

The penultimate essay, by Greenspan, very strongly complements Lindmark's essay on religious enthusiasm. Greenspan discusses the English Protestant view both of Catholicism and nonconformity as contagious diseases afflicting the body politic. However, some argued that nonconformity was mostly an error, not a "fatal disease," and was best treated with an application of truth, rather than the harsher medicine of excision. Again, the discussion of contagion is more metaphorical than medical, which simply reinforces the view that the pre-modern world made frequent (and not always effective or consistent) use of medical imagery and terminology.

The final essay considers the idea that the very mention or hint of smallpox could actually induce an occurrence of the disease. More obviously, the sight (or the mention of an ill person in a letter, which was visual in its own way) of a sufferer could bring on the disease, recalling the recurring ideas of image, vision, and imprinting seen in numerous essays above. This, in turn, recalls ideas about maternal imprinting and the production of monstrosities. Finally, the essay weaves this through a discussion of how these ideas were advanced for and against inoculation.

These essays combine to produce a fascinating volume. There is perhaps more "imagining" than "contagion," as the emphasis is often upon the metaphorical idea of contagion rather than an actual ailment. However, the volume does show dramatically and persuasively that medical terminology and imagery, coupled with responses making equal use of medicine, permeated early modern society. Plague was a dangerous and contagious disease; lovesickness, religious enthusiasm, and convulsive laughter were certainly never seen as contagions in the same way. Nevertheless, this volume effectively reminds the readers that in a world of microcosm and macrocosm, analogy and signature, these latter contagions were on a continuum of reality rather than a metaphorical use of medical terminology.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Isabelle Pantin, "Fracastoro's *De Contagione* and Medieval Reflection on 'Action at a Distance': Old and New Trends in Renaissance Discourse."

Claude Gagnon, "The Animism of Ambient Air at the End of the Middle Ages."

Donald Beecher, "Windows on Contagion."

Nancy Frelick, "Contagions of Love: Textual Transmission"

Marianne Closson, "The Devil's Curse: The Demonic Origin of Disease in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries."

Hélène Cazes, "Apples and Moustaches: Montaigne's Grin in the Face of Infection."

Mitchell Lews Hammon, "Contagion, Honour and Urban Life in Early Modern Germany."

Rose Marie San Juan, "Corruptible Bodies and Contaminating Technologies: Jesuit Devotional Print and the 1656 Plague of Naples."

Frédéric Charbonneau, "Quarantine and Caress."

Daniel Lindmark, "The Preaching Disease: Contagious Ecstasy in Eighteenth-Century

Sweden."

Guy Poirier, "A Contagion at the Source of Discourse on Sexualities: Syphilis during the French Renaissance."

Dominique Bertrand, "Contagious Laughter and the Burlesque: From the Literal to the Metaphorical."

Michel Fournier, "The Pathology of Reading: The Novel as an Agent of Contagion."

Nicole Greenspan, "Religious Contagion in Mid-Seventeenth-Century England."

David E. Shuttleton, "Contagion by Conceit: Menstruosity and the Rhetoric of Smallpox into the Age of Inoculation."

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