material especially for lectures, she has missed an opportunity not simply to describe Italian Renaissance consumerism but also to theorize its wider significance.

DENNIS ROMANO, *Syracuse University*

Claire L. Carlin, ed. *Imagining Contagion in Early Modern Europe*. Basingstoke, UK, and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Pp xii, 289.

Early moderns had a heightened sense of contagion, and acted aggressively to counter it. Contagion was material, spiritual, metaphorical, and imagined. Together with expanding scientific views of physical contagion that were alert to the vectors of old and new diseases, broader classical views of contagion were still, quite literally, in the air. Crusades within Europe and voyages off its shores multiplied the number of those perplexing “Others” who might be sources of racial contagion. Fissures in the ecclesiastical edifice were multiplying the perceived forms of heresy and hence the feared sources of religious contagion. Moral contagion had always been a concern, but now carried the extra weight of new categories of immorality: the poor, the weak, the loose-tongued, and all those like prostitutes who had hitherto been tolerated as the lesser evils that staved off untold greater ones. Honour, whether won by birth or effort, was the index of social health, but never safe from contagion. The dovetailing of humanist and religious ideologies placed an ever-higher premium on the idea of “purity” that was won at the high cost of individual or social effort through hard work, legislation, education or prescription, and was then ever to be defended against the many contagions that could erode it. Purity was the counterpoint to contagion, and expectations for the former arose in lockstep with fears of the latter.

This essay collection emerged in an effort to capture some of these concerns, and its gestation was unusual. These are not simply the selected papers of a conference on the topic, but the commissioned papers that emerged from a consultation and seminar held at the University of Victoria in 2003. Participants crafted and drafted their contributions with the book in mind, and as a result there is less of the haphazard quality that sometimes characterizes conference volumes. The project aims to piece together “the early modern imaginary of contagion,” with essays divided into three areas: Theory, Practice, and Projections.

Five essays on “Theory” set out the key forms that contagion took for early moderns: Greek views of pneumatic transmission as these develop to the end of the Middle Ages with Arabic and kabbalistic elements; Neoplatonic and scholastic notions of the rays emitted by objects and how these shape emotions such as love; the emerging concept of seeds of contagion as framed by Fracastoro; and the new fears of witches as the agents of demonic contagion spreading disease and illness. Most of these essays are by literary scholars, and they probe the interstices of contagion by sight, emotion, air, and blood through texts that highlight the actions of each of these on the others. They demonstrate the intellectual hybridization that characterizes the

gradual movement away from animism and metaphor towards more strictly material or physical understandings of contagion.

Five essays on “Practice” run a broader disciplinary range, and are for the most part more deliberately grounded in particular historical examples. Illness advertised itself and spread through evil smells, and so French doctors used sweet smells or even simply their own smells as a prophylactic against infection. Where contagion was both moral and physical, as in leprosy and syphilis, German authorities turned to isolation as the social prophylactic, forcing individuals into strategies to defend both health and honour. Neapolitans took a particular image of saint Francis Xavier both as a prophylactic but also as a curative in time of plague. Swedish authorities countered the dangerous contagion of religious pietism by reframing it as a pathological problem, quarantining preachers, and applying the healing medicine of advanced theological education.

Five essays on “Projections” presumably look forward, though since some deal with either the subject matter (eg., religious views, syphilis) or the period (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) of the first two sections, their distinct character is harder to determine. Other essays more clearly depart for new fields: contagion in humour and in laughter in particular; the novel as an agent of contagion whose dangers might be mitigated through criticism; and contagion in the contexts of smallpox and inoculation. These work almost exclusively with literary sources and show how contagion continued to be a powerful metaphor in early modern cultural life through the eighteenth century.

The volume aims to be interdisciplinary, but is weighted heavily to literature in general and French literature in particular. Ten of the fifteen authors are literary scholars, and all but two of these are specialists in French literature. This is the area of editor Carlin’s own expertise, and so the selection is not entirely surprising, though it does weaken the claim about the volume’s careful crafting as an interdisciplinary work. More to the point, it blunts that bridge from the Imaginary into Practice that the volume aims to build. Among the most common defenses against contagion was enclosure, and it would have been interesting to see the more of the literary and theoretical contexts of those efforts by early moderns to quarantine Jews, poor, prostitutes, and foreigners, just as they had once quarantined lepers. The self-quarantine by manners against those whose dishonour was contagious, and the protective enclosure of nuns and orphans also deserve attention. Quarantine and enclosure combated physical, moral, and racial contagion and, Foucault notwithstanding, some of the Grand Renfermement’s most telling physical and metaphorical forms were more evident among the Spanish, Germans, and Italians than they were among the French.

This verges on criticizing the book for not following a reviewer’s conception of the subject. Yet it is connected to a more legitimate criticism: there is no introductory essay that sets out clearly what conception of the work the editor and the authors worked with. The subject is fascinating. Many of the articles are superb, learned, insightful, and provocative. The approach to planning the collection as a whole is

exemplary. Yet these very strengths call out for an introductory essay that would reveal more about the mechanics of its careful crafting, and that would integrate the different sections and papers into a whole.

NICHOLAS TERPSTRA, *University of Toronto*