



The History of Syphilis

Professor Claude Quénel

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From its appearance in Europe at the end of the fifteenth century until its cure with the discovery of penicillin, syphilis has inspired wildly varying--and culturally revealing--theories about its origin, nature, and treatment. In *The History of Syphilis*, Claude Quéтел chronicles five centuries of medical detective work and official management of a virulent disease that quickly became a cultural phenomenon. Quéтел's study is a reminder that modern medical science grew not only from inspired genius but also from desperate speculation. Drawing parallels with the current medical and social campaigns against AIDS, Quéтел notes that the history of syphilis has a surprisingly contemporary resonance.

"Quéтел argues that the war against syphilis was never mainly between science and disease. From the very beginning, it was waged between those who sought to preserve syphilis as a scourge on sinners and those who sought its cure."--Wilson Quarterly

"In its relation to sex and sin, Quéтел demonstrates, syphilis was perhaps the archetypical social disease. The strength of this history is that the author portrays physicians and public officials in a broad social context as they tried to counter popular views of syphilis as being shameful and frightening... Demonstrates that our present concern with AIDS has not shifted this debate significantly."--Journal of the History of Sexuality

"This book is two books in one. It traces the history of the medical conceptualizations of syphilis and the attendant therapies for the disease from its first appearance in Europe during the 1490s until the present. But it also charts the cultural representations of syphilis over a period of five hundred years. Contemporary French scholars excel in the study of this aspect of medical history, and Claude Quéтел is clearly among the finest."--Historian

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