discovery by that time. The relatively rapid rise and decline of microscopy between 1660 and 1700 forms the topic of her book.

Fournier states at the outset that her perspective is "resolutely internalistic" (p. 7). Her focus is on "the growth of scientific thought" (p. 7). While some historians would argue that the very definition of what constitutes science must be influenced by social factors, Fournier's definition is apparently all-encompassing, since she includes virtually every bit of microscopic work performed in Europe. Her appendices list every article on the subject published in the major scientific journals between 1660 and 1750.

The appendices are indicative of her encyclopaedic approach. Rather than criticizing Fournier for not writing a more contextual work, let me assess the book she did write. Her account of the technical development of lenses and microscopes was, to this tyro in optics, both clear and informative. Similarly, her account of the earliest uses of the instrument revealed many things and people I did not know, and her account of the technical and theoretical difficulties encountered by early microscopists is masterly.

Fournier's account concentrates on what she calls the "five heroes of microscopic science": Robert Hooke, Marcello Malpighi, Nehemiah Grew, Jan Swammerdam, and Antoni van Leeuwenhoek. She offers both a survey of their work, and topical chapters on "living matter", physiology, and anatomy, the three main areas of research in this era. For atomists, she notes, the microscope offered the potential of revealing the ultimate composition of matter. This was one of Robert Hooke's goals in *Micrographia*; but Fournier's account of this much-studied work does not reveal the impact of the mechanical philosophy on his research agenda.

Her accounts of physiological and anatomical investigations, however, show a sophisticated understanding of the problems and methods involved. Her broadly international perspective allows her to see interactions and connections among widely dispersed researchers, both major and minor; even though her focus is internal, the social framework of seventeenth-century natural philosophy reveals itself as it were inadvertently.

The fabric of life is a useful addition to the historical literature on the life sciences in the seventeenth century. It is well written, and includes an extensive bibliography. To say that it will provide material for other historians to deepen the discussion of seventeenth-century experimentation is by no means to denigrate its significance.

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Sylvie-Anne Goldberg, *Crossing the Jabbock: illness and death in Ashkenazi Judaism in sixteenth- through nineteenth-century Prague*, transl. Carol Cosman, Berkeley and London, University of California Press, 1997, pp. xviii, 303, illus., £37.50, $45.00 (0-520-08149-8).

The Annales school has a long and troubled history of dealing with the "Jews". Unlike the Warburg school, which felt itself to be "too Jewish" so that it was only in the 1970s that one of its last members presented a study of the iconography of anti-Semitism, the Annales school is only now coming to terms with its own history. The shameful treatment of Jewish historians within this school by their closest colleagues during Vichy was quietly repressed after the war when every intellectual in France claimed membership in at least a moral resistance. The work of Sylvie-Anne Goldberg, most recently with the 1994 special issues of *Annales* on *Histoire juive, histoire des juifs*, has begun to remedy this. But, of course, her work, like that of the founders of the school, focuses on the early modern period of European history not on the Shoah. To complement this, we need a study of the social history of Paris intellectual life from 1930 to the present in which the "Jewish Question" and the "Jews" play a real role.

Goldberg is a first-rate historian and it is good to have this 1989 volume on Prague Jewry in English, especially in Carol Cosman's literate and fluid translation. Goldberg surveys notions of illness, death, dying, and burial among the Jews of Prague from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Using communal records and ancillary sources, she provides detailed (and often extensive) quotations from the Hebrew Rabbinic and secular literature of the period. And like much of Annales school work she assumes that the textual evidence is equivalent to practice—which it may or may not be.

As with all Annales school social histories there is a love of minutiae, but there are questions which this level of detail does not articulate. How do Jewish and non-Jewish communities interact on the level of health and illness? Can one even speak of a "Jewish" tradition unshaped by the experience of the Diaspora? What is the role of the non-Jewish context(s) in forming "Jewish" attitudes, especially in terms of the meaning assigned to notions of "cure"? How "typical" or atypical is Prague? It is clear that the Prague chancellery is a central institution for the Empire. Its cultural significance during this period has been well noted. But as Hillel Kieval has argued, one must speak of Pragues rather than of Prague. For there are competing intellectual, social, cultural, as well as (most evidently) linguistic communities during this period. They develop and contest the very meaning of a "Prague" culture. Is the "non-Jew" in the discourse of the periods examined understood as "static" by the "Jews" (much as the Jews are by the non-Jews) even though or especially because they were so radically changing. Here the need for a complex, comparative study of the fantasies of each group of the other and how these fantasies shaped the presuppositions concerning health and illness.

Goldberg's book is a major addition to any study of Jews and their bodies. I was struck by the sophisticated manner in which she used concepts of marginality in shaping her own discourse in this book. My desire in the reception of such studies in the English-speaking world is that one reflect also on their origin, on the role that such studies have in the development of French historiography. This is as relevant as their role in the writing of a new Jewish cultural study of the body.

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Bart K Holland (ed.), *Prospecting for drugs in ancient and medieval European texts: a scientific approach*, Amsterdam, Harwood Academic Publishers, 1996, pp. ix, 105, £39.00, $65.00 (3-7186-5928-X).

In his introduction, adapted from a commentary in *Nature* published in 1994, Bart Holland argues for an interdisciplinary approach to the identification of active therapeutic agents in the early medical literature. The desired outcome is for classicists, historians and pharmacologists to produce a list of candidate substances for further investigation. As in ethnopharmacology, much will rely upon the correct interpretation of the data. The translation of medical terms, the identity of substances used, and the purpose for which they were prescribed are all matters which one expects to be addressed in this book.

John Riddle has written the chapter on Greco-Roman antiquity as a source of new drugs and takes as examples the use of garlic for circulatory problems, autumn crocus for treatment of gout, nettles as diuretics and the plant remedies used for cancer. Riddle points out that nettle (*Urtica dioica*) was recommended by Dioscorides to bring on urination. Its continued use for this purpose in folk medicine has led to pharmacological investigations revealing the presence of a phyto-agent having an action similar to the synthetic intracellular enzyme finasteride, patented by the Merck company and prescribed to treat benign enlargement of the prostate gland.

In his final paragraph the author comments that this is an example of how the ancients