

CHOLERA AND NATION

Doctoring the Social Body in Victorian England

PAMELA K. GILBERT

How cholera epidemics affected Victorian perceptions of the body and the nation.

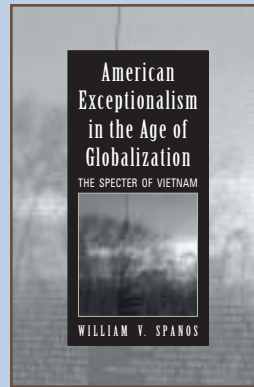
Drawing from sermons, novels, newspaper editorials, poetry, medical texts, and the writings of social activists, *Cholera and Nation* explores how the coming of the cholera epidemics during a period of intense political reform in Britain set the terms by which the social body would be defined. In part by historical accident, epidemic disease and especially cholera became foundational to the understanding of the social body. As the healthy body was closely tied to a particular vision of nation and modernity, the unhealthy body was proportionately racialized and othered. In turn, epidemic disease could not be separated from issues of social responsibility, political management, and economic unrest, which perpetually threatened the nation and its identity. For the rest of the century, the emergent field of public health would be central to the British national imaginary, defining the nation's civilization and modernity by its sanitary progress.

"This is a very skillful example of historically sound literary criticism; it combines attention to narrative with relevant historical contextualization, and offers a detailed account of the literary history of a subject not commonly treated through literature. This is innovative and complements more conventional historical work on the subject of public health and medicine in the Victorian period."
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PAMELA K. GILBERT is Professor of English at the University of Florida. Her books include *Mapping the Victorian Social Body*; *Imagined Londons*; and *Beyond Sensation: Mary Elizabeth Braddon in Context* (coedited with Marlene Tromp and Aeron Haynie), all published by SUNY Press.

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WILLIAM V. SPANOS is Distinguished Professor of English at Binghamton University, State University of New York. He is the author of many books, including *America's Shadow: An Anatomy of Empire* and *Heidegger and Criticism: Retrieving the Cultural Politics of Destruction*.

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