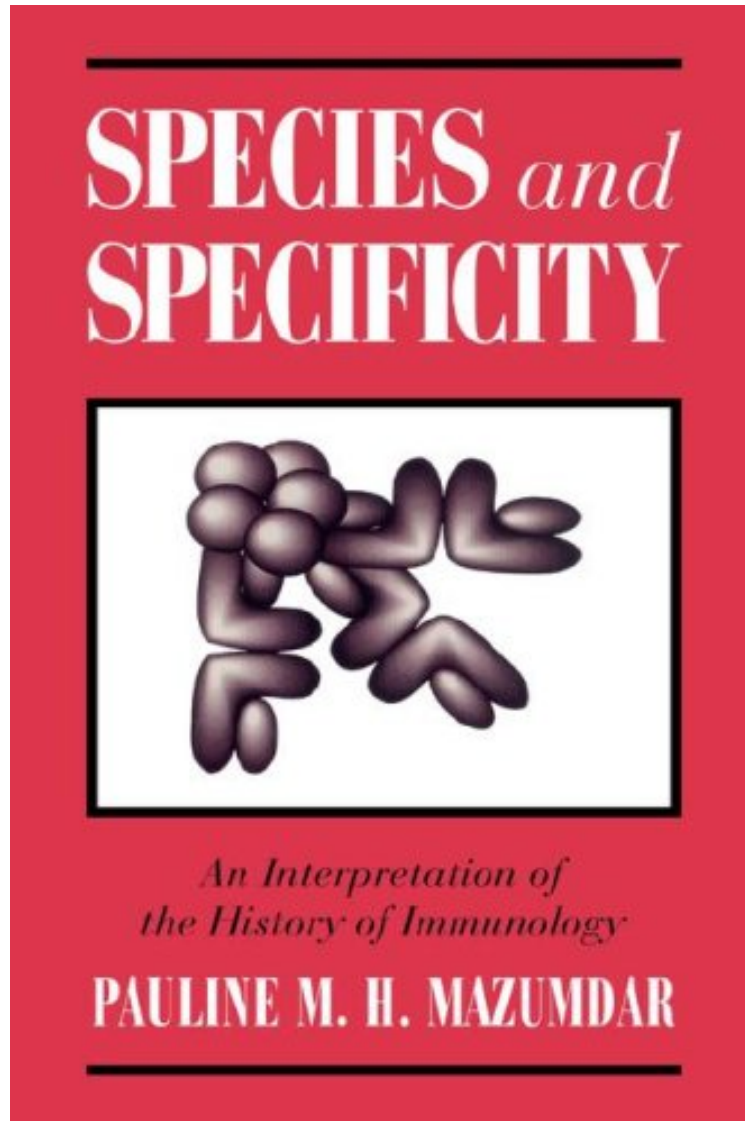


Species and Specificity: An Interpretation of the History of Immunology

Pauline M. H. Mazumdar

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Pauline M. H. Mazumdar : Species and Specificity: An Interpretation of the History of Immunology before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Species and Specificity: An Interpretation of the History of Immunology:

In the first hundred years of the history of immunology, the question of species and specificity were the core problems of research and practice in immunology. The old botanical dispute about the nature of species, which has its roots in the classical Western thought of Aristotle, reappeared in the late nineteenth century in the disputes of bacteriologists, to be followed by their students, the immunologists, immunochemists, and blood group geneticists. In the course of this controversy, Mazumdar argues, five generations of scientific protagonists make themselves aggressively plain. Their science is designed only in part to wrest an answer from nature: it is at least as important to wring an admission of defeat from their opponents. One of those on the losing side of the debate was the Austrian immunochemist Karl Landsteiner, whose unitarian views were excluded from the state health and medical institutions of Europe, where specificity and pluralism, the legacies of Robert Koch and Paul Ehrlich, were entrenched.

"The book is abundantly and well illustrated with many photographs...ends with an interesting exegesis on the rhesus (Rh) controversy." Fred S. Rosen, *Nature*"Mazumdar analyzes the philosophical controversy associated with immunology during the late 19th and early 20th centuries: whether immunology and by extension most life processes, represented a continuum between species, or whether each species was unique....An excellent, in-depth analysis." *Choice*"The book's argument is admirably clear and is never lost in the wealth of detail that flows from the author's obvious immersion in the sources....Mazumdar's thesis is an important and persuasive one that deserves serious attention from anyone interested in 19th- and 20th-century biology....[T]here is no doubt that readers will come away from this book with a livelier sense of the controversies that have helped shape modern biology, and of their connections across the generations." John E. Lesch, *Science*"Mazumdar has written a valuable history of specific ideas that gives little weight to contemporary continuities of social and intellectual response: her historiographic assumptions thus uncannily mirror Ehrlich's fixed structuralist specificities." Warwick Anderson, *Isis*