

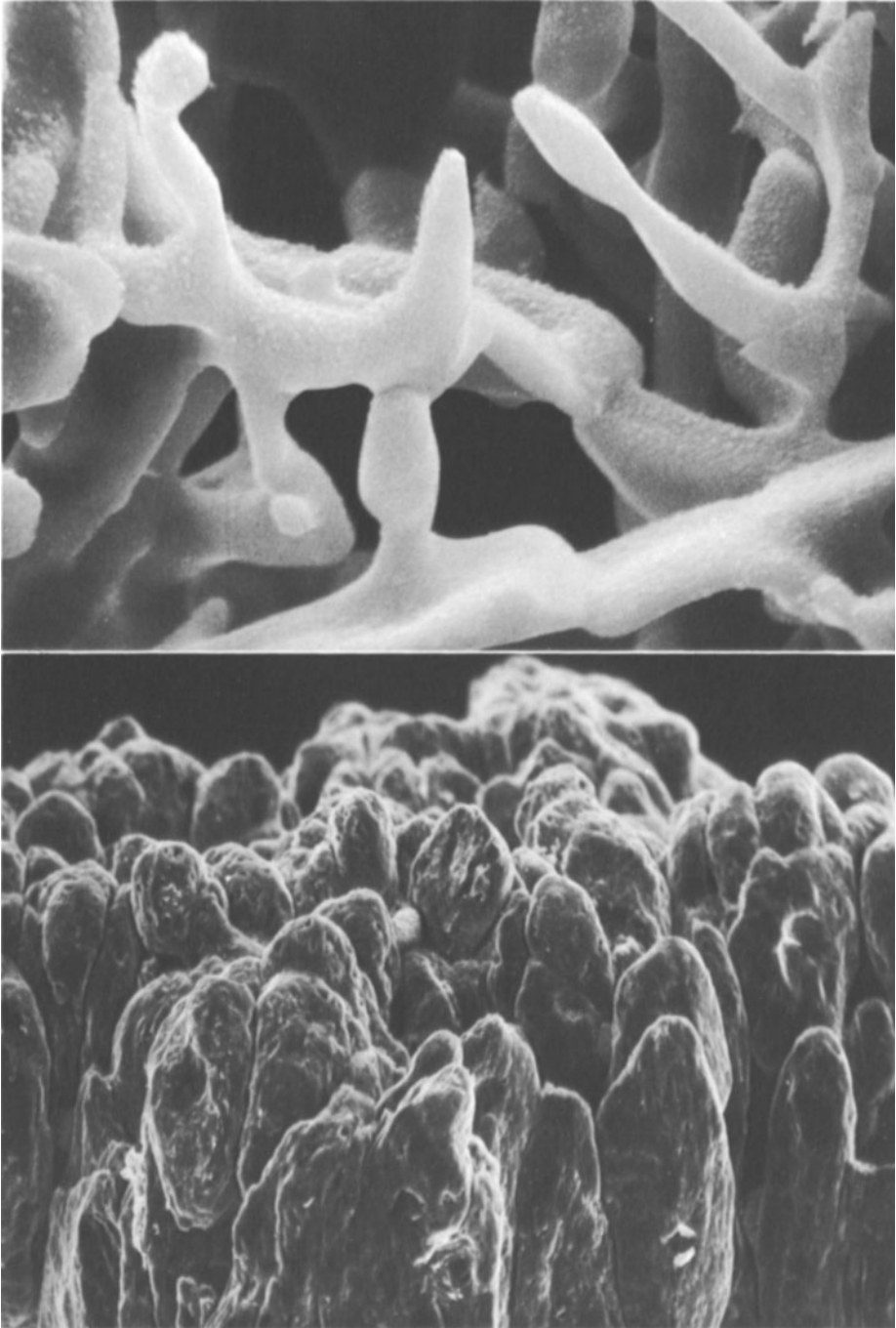
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Precambrian fossil plants. Top: *Witwateromyces conidiophorus* ($\times 5000$).
Bottom: *Thuchomyces lichenoides* ($\times 70$). (Courtesy of Dr. D. K. Hallbauer)

J. E. Vanderplank

Genetic and Molecular Basis of Plant Pathogenesis



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Preface

As befits a volume in the Advanced Series in Agricultural Sciences, this book was written with problems of practical agriculture in mind. One of the ways of controlling plant disease is by using resistant cultivars; and from the wide literature of genetics and biochemistry in plant pathology I have emphasized what seems to bear most closely on breeding for disease resistance. This has a double advantage, for it happens all to the good that this emphasis is also an emphasis on primary causes of disease, as distinct from subsequent processes of symptom expression and other secondary effects.

The chapters are entirely modern in outlook. The great revolution in biology this century had its high moments in the elucidation of the DNA double helix in 1953 and the deciphering of the genetic code in 1961. This book, so far as I know, is the first in plant pathology to be conceived within the framework of this new biology. Half the book could not have been written 20 years ago, even if there had then been available all the literature that has since accumulated on the genetics and chemistry of plant disease. The new biology is the cement this book uses to bind the literature together.

Another feature of this book is an emphasis on thermodynamics. Here too I have been fortunate in the timing. During the past decade or two there has been a quickened interest in the thermodynamics of protein polymerization, which is directly relevant to the substance of several chapters. As a result, biochemical plant pathology will, I believe, take a renewed interest in such old-fashioned topics as the effect of temperature on disease.

Proteins are at the center of many of the discussions. This is appropriate, because proteins are the prime link between genes and other molecules, the twin topics of this book. Within the phenotype, proteins are the great stores of mutational change and the governors of mutational effects; and in chapter after chapter proteins emerge as the substance of the discussion, simply as the logical consequence of the experimental evidence.

Variation in the disease resistance of the host and in the pathogenicity of the parasite feature largely, both as the expression of mutation and as the substance of disease control by plant breeding. Chapter 1 starts the discussion; correlated variation in host and pathogen is seen as the downfall of many resistant cultivars, and uncorrelated variation as a source of stability in resistance. Variation threads its way through the chapters that follow, until Chapter 9 knits the threads together in a

molecular hypothesis of resistance. The hypothesis is concise, precise, and simple. A great source of confusion about vertical and horizontal resistance has been the lack of a clear chemical explanation of their difference; that explanation is now available.

The final chapter is about biotrophic and necrotrophic processes in parasitism. Nearly a century ago de Bary divided fungi into saprophytes, facultative parasites, and obligate parasites. With various subdivisions and rearrangements, and with reference to necrotrophy and biotrophy, this has been a topic of discussion ever since, without great progress. The fundamental error, I believe, was to try to derive specialized parasitism in the shape of parasitic symbiosis from necrotrophy or from saprophytism. The evidence is, however, that biotrophy and necrotrophy have separate origins, and if this is accepted a fresh understanding of the scope of parasitism is gained. This is not just of academic interest; the choice of the sort of resistance to use in plant breeding is partly determined by biotrophy and necrotrophy.

I am greatly indebted to Dr. D. K. Hallbauer, of the Mining Technology Laboratory of the Chamber of Mines of South Africa Research Organization, for photographs of the precambrian fossil plants *Witwateromyces conidiophorus* and *Thuchomyces lichenoides*.

Pretoria, April 1978

J. E. VANDERPLANK

Contents

Chapter 1 Variation in the Resistance of the Host and in the Pathogenicity of the Parasite

1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Systems of Variation	1
1.3	Vertical Resistance with Host-Pathogen Specificity	2
1.4	Vertical Resistance Without Host-Pathogen Specificity	4
1.5	Epidemiological Consequence of Nonspecific Vertical Resistance	8
1.6	Vertical Resistance Without Hypersensitivity	9
1.7	Correlated Variation in Host and Pathogen	9
1.8	Uncorrelated Variation in Horizontal Resistance	10
1.9	Absence of a Host-Pathogen Differential Interaction in Horizontal Resistance	14
1.10	Uniform Ranking Order in Horizontal Resistance	16
1.11	Tests for Vertical and Horizontal Resistance	19

Chapter 2 The Gene-for-Gene and the Protein-for-Protein Hypotheses

2.1	Introduction	20
2.2	Why Proteins? Why Polymerization?	20
2.3	Flor's Gene-for-Gene Hypothesis	22
2.4	The Living Host Cell Nucleus in Compatible Gene-for-Gene Combinations	23
2.5	The Gene for Susceptibility and Its Different Roles	27
2.6	Comments Arising from the Possibility of Tandem Duplication	30
2.7	The Gene for Avirulence and Its Different Roles	31
2.8	Susceptibility and Resistance. Neutral Mutation	32
2.9	Avirulence and Virulence	33
2.10	Isozymes	34
2.11	The Hydrophobic Effect. Amino Acids with Hydrophobic Side Chains. Their Interrelated Genetic Codes	35
2.12	Amino Acids with Hydrophilic Side Chains. Their Part in Catalysis	38
2.13	Protein Structures	39
2.14	Protein-Protein Recognition	40

Chapter 3 The Protein-for-Protein Hypothesis: Temperature Effects and Other Matters

3.1	Introduction	43
3.2	The Thermodynamic Problem	43
3.3	Inactivation of Protein Monomers	44
3.4	Effect of Temperature on Resistance to Wheat and Oat Stem Rust and Oat Crown Rust	45
3.5	Temperature and Infection of Tomato Plants by Tobacco Mosaic Virus	49
3.6	The Temperature Effect in Some Other Diseases	50
3.7	Some Seemingly Anomolous Examples Considered.	52
3.8	Temperature Reversal	55
3.9	Conditional Responses to Temperature. Dominance of Resistance as a Test	56
3.10	Protein Polymerization and the Solvent	57
3.11	Osmotic Pressure Differences	59
3.12	Analytical Difficulties Arising from Procedures	62
3.13	Isozymes and Electrophoresis	62
3.14	A Hypothesis About Susceptibility and Resistance	63
3.15	Feeding the Pathogen. Function of Genes for Avirulence	64
3.16	In Fungus Disease, is Wound Protein the Host Protein Involved? The Function of Genes for Susceptibility	66
3.17	Autoregulation of Gene Expression	67
3.18	A Corollary	68
3.19	Comparison with Antigen-Antibody Systems	69
3.20	Peroxidase Production in Infected Susceptible Plants	69
3.21	The Lag Phase in the Resistance Reaction	69
3.22	Uniformity in Resistance Reaction Types. Secondary Effects	70
3.23	Temperature Limits Again. The Genes <i>Sr6</i> and <i>Sr11</i> . Effect of Ethylene	72
3.24	In Virus Disease, Is RNA Replicase the Protein Involved?	73
3.25	Summary and Conclusions	75
3.26	Identifying Gene-for-Gene Disease	79

Chapter 4 Common Antigenic Surfaces in Host and Pathogen

4.1	Introduction	83
4.2	Common Antigens in the Flax-Flax Rust System and Some Other Systems	83
4.3	Coexistence of Complementary and Similar Surfaces	84
4.4	The Intrinsic Experimental Difficulty	85
4.5	Alternative Hypotheses About Common Antigens	86
4.6	Common Antigenic Determinants in Other Than Gene-for-Gene Systems	86
4.7	Common Antigens and Male-Female Recognition in Plants	88

Chapter 5 Other Large Molecules in Relation to Gene-for-Gene Disease

5.1 Introduction 90

5.2 DNA 90

5.3 RNA 91

5.4 Glycoproteins 92

5.4.1 The Nature of Glycoproteins 92

5.4.2 Membranes and Membrane Glycoproteins 93

5.4.3 The Carbohydrate Determinants of the ABO Blood Cell Types 93

5.4.4 One Gene-One Glycosidic Linkage Hypothesis 93

5.4.5 Glycoproteins and the Elicitor Hypothesis 94

5.4.6 An Active Glycoprotein from *Phytophthora megasperma* var. *sojae* 94

5.4.7 A Thermodynamic Objection 95

5.4.8 Elicitors Are Unspecific 95

5.5 Polysaccharides 96

5.6 Lectins 97

5.7 Phytoalexins 98

Chapter 6 Population Genetics of the Pathogen

6.1 Introduction 100

6.2 Directional Selection Towards Virulence 100

6.3 Stabilizing Selection Against Virulence 102

6.4 Nonallelic Virulence Interaction in Stabilizing Selection . . 103

6.5 The Environmental Effect in Nonallelic Interaction Between Virulence on Genes *Sr6* and *Sr9d* 104

6.6 Dissociation of Virulence Through Repulsion 105

6.7 Association of Virulence as an Indirect Consequence of Repulsion 106

6.8 Evidence for Nonallelic Virulence Interactions in Some Other Diseases 108

6.9 A Hypothesis About the Nonallelic Virulence Interaction . . 109

6.10 The Second Gene-for-Gene Hypothesis 111

6.11 The Commonness of Weak Resistance Genes 112

6.12 The Use of Weak Resistance Genes 113

6.13 The Gap in the Use of Vertical Resistance in Plant Breeding . 114

6.14 A Guide to the Use of Vertical Resistance 115

6.15 How to Improve the Performance of Vertical Resistance . . 116

6.16 The Durability of Vertical Resistance 117

6.17 The Effect of Vertical Resistance on Epidemics 118

Chapter 7 Horizontal Resistance to Disease

7.1 Introduction 120

7.2 Horizontal Resistance Not Disguised Vertical Resistance . 121

7.2.1	Hypothesis That Horizontal Resistance Is Buried Vertical Resistance	121
7.2.2	Hypothesis That Horizontal Resistance Is Massed Vertical Resistance	123
7.3	Examples of the Rapid Accumulation of Horizontal Resistance	123
7.4	Polygenic Inheritance	126
7.4.1	Confusion About Polygenes	126
7.4.2	Discontinuous Variation and Qualitative Characters; Continuous Variation and Quantitative Characters	126
7.4.3	Polygenic Variation	126
7.4.4	The Untrue Converse	127
7.5	The Number of Genes Conditioning Horizontal Resistance	128
7.6	The Anonymity of Horizontal Resistance Genes	129
7.7	Specificity in Horizontal Resistance	130
7.8	The Vertifolia Effect	131
7.9	Resistance and Loss of Fitness	132
7.10	Epidemiological Effects of Horizontal Resistance	133
7.10.1	Effect on the Infection Rate	134
7.10.2	Delay of the Start of an Epidemic	134
7.10.3	Contraction of the Scale of Spread of an Epidemic	134

Chapter 8 Selective Pathotoxins in Host-Pathogen Specificity

8.1	Introduction	136
8.2	Some Diseases Caused by Selective Pathotoxins	137
8.2.1	Victoria Blight of Oats	137
8.2.2	Southern Maize Leaf Blight	138
8.2.3	Eye Spot Disease of Sugarcane	138
8.3	Selective Pathotoxins Unconnected with Gene-for-Gene Systems	140
8.4	Evidence for Horizontal Resistance	141
8.5	Horizontal Resistance with a Threshold	142

Chapter 9 A Molecular Hypothesis of Vertical and Horizontal Resistance

9.1	The Hypothesis	143
9.2	Catalysis the Transformer and Eroder of Qualitative Variation	143
9.3	Vertical Resistance: Qualitative Variation	145
9.4	Horizontal Resistance: Quantitative Variation	145
9.5	Vertical Resistance: Reciprocal Host-Pathogen Variation in the Same Class	146
9.6	Horizontal Resistance: Host-Pathogen Variation of Different Kinds	146

Chapter 10 Biotrophy, Necrotrophy, and the Lineage of Symbiosis

10.1	Introduction	147
10.2	Necrotrophy, Biotrophy, and Biotrophy-Necrotrophy Sequences	148
10.3	The Lineage of Symbiosis	150
	References	152
	Subject Index	165