

narratives often have on responses to global disease.

The book's first half begins with new material: the introduction explores the literary and mythical underpinnings of epidemiology, while chapter 1 introduces the conventions of the "outbreak narrative". Wald then reconfigures previously published articles exploring issues of gender, race, and social control in relation to such American figures of the early twentieth century as "Typhoid Mary" Mallon and urban sociologist Robert E Park. The book's second half extends her analysis to bridge the entire century, moving from a discussion of the similarities in language featured in public discourse surrounding virology and communism in the 1950s to an examination of how the legacy of earlier disease narratives shaped the ways in which AIDS was interpreted in the 1980s.

Wald follows the lead of such cultural theorists as Paula Treichler, Cindy Patton, and Douglas Crimp, authors who have written extensively on the cultural representations of AIDS. Like them, she is interested in how disease is represented through language, and seeks to show how stories like those of detective mysteries and science fiction films have important and real consequences for the way in which disease threats are imagined, approached, and (ideally) contained. A central idea expressed in these stories is the concept of herd immunity, which represents for Wald a key paradox that helps to explain the morbid fascination that communities have had with "the stranger", "the marginal man", or "the hybrid". Each one, she argues, embodies the uneasy tension between the possibility of biological security, through new genes and immunity, and the menace of a deadly infection harboured by a "healthy carrier".

The scope of Wald's efforts is impressive, both in terms of timescale and interdisciplinary exploration, as is the scrutinizing gaze she brings to her task. She combines a focus on works of popular journalism and science reporting with a keen reading of specialist journals, and merges these with a careful examination of popular works of fiction and

film. Wald brings an analytical ability of surgical precision, carefully guiding the reader through layers of meanings which she teases from her source texts. She also attempts to ground these texts in the unfolding social, cultural, and scientific developments which led to their creation. The result is a richly detailed exploration of the mutually constituting cultural and scientific stories encapsulated in epidemiology, set against the backdrop of twentieth-century US history.

While appreciating Wald's efforts to trace ideas through a diverse range of materials, historians may find themselves wishing for the inclusion of more archival sources. Wald draws upon an impressive array of published and broadcast works, some of which might have been more fully contextualized had the author given greater weight to unpublished archival materials. For example, in her chapter 5 discussion of Randy Shilts's role in the "invention" of the infamous "Patient Zero" character in *And the band played on* (New York, 1987), Wald almost certainly could have gained useful insights from the many boxes of Shilts's professional papers in the San Francisco Public Library's archives.

This is a minor criticism for a work that achieves as much as *Contagious* does. Wald has made a substantial contribution in terms of uniting theoretical insights from such fields as mythology, literature, and film studies, and applying them to the history of infectious disease epidemiology. In doing so, she makes a strong case for the importance of both the cultural critic and of interdisciplinary thinking in the preparation for future outbreaks of global disease.

Richard McKay,

Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine,
University of Oxford

Amy L Fairchild, Ronald Bayer, and James Colgrove, *Searching eyes: privacy, the state, and disease surveillance in America*, Berkeley, California/Milbank Books on Health and the Public, no. 18, Los Angeles, University

Book Reviews

of California Press; New York, Milbank Memorial Fund, 2007, pp. xxiv, 342, £11.95 (paperback 978-0-520-25325-4).

In this book the three authors, all from the Centre for the History and Ethics of Public Health at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, examine the interplay of privacy and publicity in United States public health. How, they ask, was the desire to control threats to the population's health by the reporting of the names of people with diseases to public authorities, squared (or not) with legal and ethical concerns over privacy. The extremely detailed and illuminating analysis, covering the period from about 1890 onwards, studies such medical issues as the reporting of TB, campaigns against syphilis, the collection of information on occupational diseases, and the fight against cancer, polio ("crippled kiddies") and AIDS. All this is placed in the overall understanding of privacy as found in the US constitution and the decisions of the US Supreme Court. The book is plainly the work of exhaustive and wide-ranging research, covering the whole range of differing sites at the federal, state and city levels where Americans interacted with officialdom. It also does a remarkably good job at intertwining specific events, individual careers and campaigns, and broader structures, without losing sight of an overall argument.

What emerges from these stories is a picture of the complexity of the tensions between public and private goods. One finds public officials pushing for the disclosure of names to facilitate statistical production, the isolation and treatment of the afflicted, and the identification of possible contacts. On the other hand, one also finds the afflicted, or their families, concerned about stigmatization, discrimination, and victimization. However, many also saw the need to enrol on state programmes of support. Yet again, medical practitioners are torn between doing the best for their patients, fear for the sanctity of the doctor-patient relationship, and suspicions of public functionaries encroaching on their territory. In the case of occupational health reporting, yet

another dynamic is revealed, with labour unions seeking mandatory disclosure of information relating to accidents and hazards, and commercial organizations attempting to thwart this with an appeal to commercial and employee confidentiality. All this is played out against the broader history of the US state in the period—progressivism, the New Deal, the Great Society, Reagan Republicanism, and Clintonian "triangulation".

Overall, *Searching eyes* does what it says it is going to do, and does it very well. However, the present reviewer would like to have seen some cross-disciplinary and international comparisons introduced to place the themes of the book in a proper context. There has been so much written about privacy and state surveillance by other historians, sociologists, criminologists, lawyers, anthropologists, and so on, that could have been included here. The authors make interesting forays into the development of computing and the Orwellian world of Total Information Awareness, but there is more material on the "dossier society" that could have been discussed. Also the authors never ask how culturally specific the particular US conception of privacy actually is. Many other countries in the world do not have exactly that particular belief in privacy as an individual constitutional property right to be defended via tort. One would also have liked to have had more about the collection and use of medical information by commercial organizations. In Europe such organizations, as well as the state, can be controlled (to some extent) through data protection legislation. In the European context one can imagine liberty through the state, rather than simply liberty against the state, in a way that might put a different light on the story told. This is not an invitation for the authors to write another book but rather to provide some comparative material to see how far the conclusions raised in the book relate specifically to medicine in the USA, or have a wider application.

Edward Higgs,
University of Essex