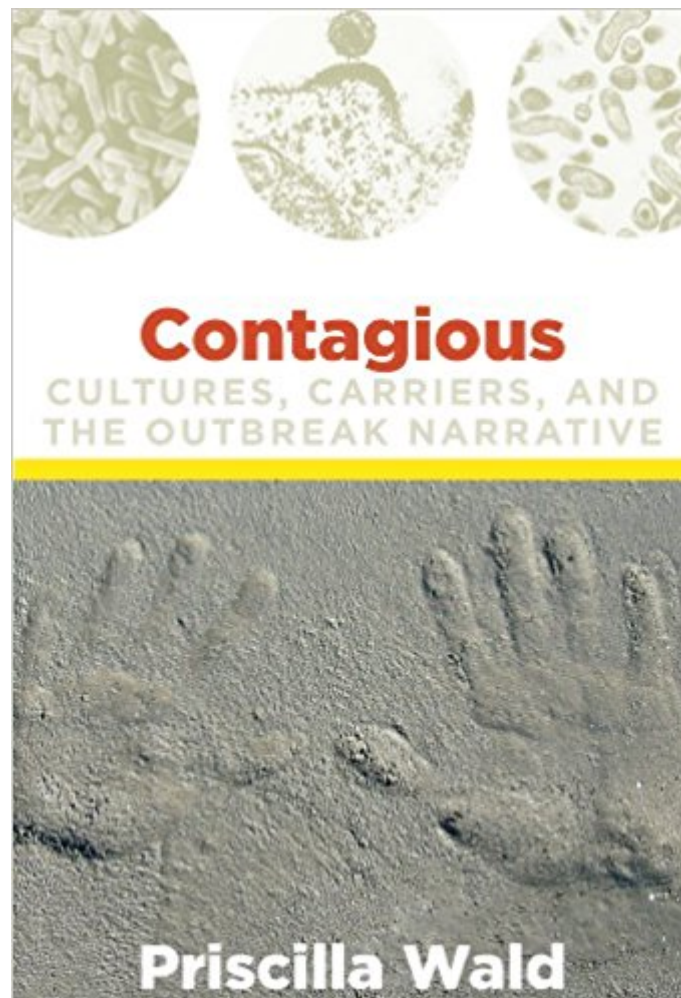




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Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, And The Outbreak Narrative (a John Hope Franklin Center Book)



Synopsis

How should we understand the fear and fascination elicited by the accounts of communicable disease outbreaks that proliferated, following the emergence of HIV, in scientific publications and the mainstream media? The repetition of particular characters, images, and story linesâ of Patients Zero and superspreaders, hot zones and tenacious microbesâ produced a formulaic narrative as they circulated through the media and were amplified in popular fiction and film. The outbreak narrativeâ begins with the identification of an emerging infection, follows it through the global networks of contact and contagion, and ends with the epidemiological work that contains it. Priscilla Wald argues that we need to understand the appeal and persistence of the outbreak narrative because the stories we tell about disease emergence have consequences. As they disseminate information, they affect survival rates and contagion routes. They upset economies. They promote or mitigate the stigmatizing of individuals, groups, locales, behaviors, and lifestyles. Wald traces how changing ideas about disease emergence and social interaction coalesced in the outbreak narrative. She returns to the early years of microbiologyâ to the identification of microbes and âTyphoid Mary,â the first known healthy human carrier of typhoid in the United Statesâ to highlight the intertwined production of sociological theories of group formation (âsocial contagionâ) and medical theories of bacteriological infection at the turn of the twentieth century. Following the evolution of these ideas, Wald shows how they were affected byâ or reflected inâ the advent of virology, Cold War ideas about âalienâ infiltration, science-fiction stories of brainwashing and body snatchers, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Contagious is a cautionary tale about how the stories we tell circumscribe our thinking about global health and human interactions as the world imaginesâ or refuses to imagineâ the next Great Plague.

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Customer Reviews

"Contagious" in this context refers to culture as much as transmission of infectious diseases. But it's interesting to see the parallels between the narratives told about infections and social movements. The story of Typhoid Mary is told in a particularly compelling way. A very worthwhile read.

Excellent Service and Product as listed. Thank you.

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