periodizations which are too pronounced to be credible. By 1915, for example, with the advent of the "psychopath", we have already reached the third phase of eugenic criminology in the twentieth century. Such *caesuralism* leaves her unable to understand why, despite an evolving terminology, attitudes towards "feeble-minded women" remain remarkably unchanged between 1870 and 1911, and struggling to explain why New York's first eugenic prison arrived only in 1921, when the discourse was on the wane. The latter perhaps points to the limitations of verbal strategies for understanding state penal policy. Yet throughout, Rafter infuriatingly privileges discourse analysis. In consequence, she is patchy on the wider intellectual context of eugenic criminology, and uninformative on the social setting of New York state between 1870 and 1920, either in detail or in comparison with other states. It is a shame Rafter feels the need to be so constrained by her Foucauldian approach, as this well-written text leaves one in no doubt that she was capable of the systematic study of the records of Napanoch and other institutions she points to the need for in her final chapter.

Instead, Rafter is determined to provide "much more than a look at the past". Underlying her book is a desire to answer contemporary incarnations of eugenic criminology, and to use the history of ideas to "guide us" in this project (p. 237). To the extent that her work suggests that "the concept of the criminal body is a construct" which tells us as much about the categorizers as the criminal, she is successful. Ultimately, however, her Foucauldian approach is again woefully inadequate for the task. We are told little or nothing of what linguistic, let alone political or social, strategies were adopted to counter previous incarnations, and advised only "to approach contemporary biological theories as discourses" (p. 238). Such constructivist relativism leads to a neglect of nature/nurture debates and the conceding of too much ground to hereditarian explanations. Instead of speculating on the possibility of forecasting which foetuses will grow into crime-prone adults, Rafter would have done better to emphasize that criminality is a product of social conditions as much as of "social control specialists" (p. 238). Both her history and her polemic would have been improved by incorporating the insight that criminals are "created" environmentally, as well as definitionally.

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Robert S Robins and **Jerrold M Post,** *Political paranoia: the psychopolitics of hatred*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1997, pp. x, 366, £20.00 (0-300-07027-6).

One tradition that looms large throughout the history of medicine is the attempt to interpret major cultural, political and social events through the study of psychiatry and psychology. Numerous examples come to mind, dating back at least as far as Charles Mackay's *Popular delusions and the madness of crowds* (1841). Since then, prominent authors such as Gustave LeBon, Max Nordau, Richard Hofstadter, and Christopher Lasch have followed this path, to say nothing of Elaine Showalter's well-publicized *Hystories* (1997). Robins and Post's *Political paranoia* is another contribution to this genre, a well-written and at times fascinating look at the way the world of politics is particularly susceptible to paranoid thinking, especially theories of conspiracy and delusions of persecution. In the past, Robins, a political scientist, and Post, a professor of psychiatry, have both been consultants to the US government on matters related to political psychology. Relying heavily on psychoanalytic theories of paranoia, Robins and Post argue persuasively that political paranoia has cursed the twentieth century. The stress that accompanies dramatic and rapid change, the authors contend, makes people vulnerable to the paranoid messages of hatred, suspicion, resentment, and violence spread by unscrupulous political figures like Stalin,

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Hitler, Joseph McCarthy, Pol Pot, Idi Amin, Louis Farrakhan. But Robins and Post do not limit their investigation of political paranoia to simply these obvious candidates. They label as paranoid David Koresh, leader of the ill-fated Branch Davidians who died in a fiery blaze in 1993, Jim Jones, whose 912 cult followers committed suicide in 1978, and movie director Oliver Stone whose film *JFK* (1992) has achieved iconic status among the many Americans who believe their government regularly lies to them.

On the whole Robins and Post's book is a sophisticated discussion of the issue. There is no reason to doubt their thesis that paranoid psychology is deeply ingrained in our biological nature. We are tempted all too often to indulge our suspicions that we are dupes and victims of wilier, sinister persons. The authors are also careful not to oversimplify. For instance, they astutely note that though Senator Joseph McCarthy was adept at playing the game of paranoid politics in the early 1950s, he himself was not a paranoid (p. 223). On other occasions, however, they leave this reader shaking his head. What purpose is served by calling the ingeniously paranoid Lyndon LaRouche "a kind of Allan Bloom gone mad"? (p. 198). And describing the militia movement in today's America as "a reaction against feminism" (p. 214) is surely taking liberties their otherwise sensible and informed approach does not warrant. Indeed, one has to question their liberal and uncritical use of Freudian notions like "projection". Plausible some pyschoanalytic ideas may be, but in view of the recent cogent attacks on Freud's theories the authors need to be more careful. The advice of this reviewer would be to leave Freudian speculation aside as it does not really contribute to their overall argument.

Robins and Post actually end their book with a rather optimistic conclusion, at least for American readers. Paranoid politics with its "hyperemotionality" and "shouting of accusations" does not go very far in the American political system (p. 236). For many of the world's other nations, however, Robins and Post predict a rougher future. Paranoia plays well when states are being divided along ethnic, linguistic, or tribal lines. Perhaps it is because of these global tensions as the new millennium approaches that paranoia is receiving increasing attention. *Political paranoia* is only one of several books about paranoia to appear in the last two years. These include John Farrell's *Freud's paranoid quest* (1996) and Daniel Pipes's *Conspiracy: how the paranoid style flourishes and where it comes from* (1997). All of a sudden paranoia is becoming a hot issue. Is this interest in paranoia simply another case of the "disease of the week" syndrome? Or is it tied to the fact that the term paranoia is going out of fashion within psychiatry, if the most recent editions of the American Psychiatric Association's *The diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* are any indication? Will paranoia begin to enjoy renewed scholarly attention, now that the classical paranoia diagnosis is disappearing from psychiatry? If so, it would be strikingly similar to what Mark Micale has written about the history of the hysteria diagnosis. Ultimately, then, the mere fact of *Political paranoia*'s publication may be as important as what it says

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Matthias Perleth, *Historical aspects of American trypanosomiasis (Chagas' disease)*, Medizin in Entwicklungsländern, Band 43, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 1997, pp. 171, illus., £22.00 (3-631-31063-3).

Chagas' disease or the trypanosomiasis widely distributed in rural South America has a fascinating and little known story, which is closely entwined with the development of medical science in Brazil during the early twentieth century and with its main discoverer Carlos Chagas (1879–1934). In contrast to the sequence and multiplicity of actors characteristic in other discoveries of the time, Chagas himself identified the blood-sucking insects, the triatomine bugs, that transmitted

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