

encouraging a sturdy research tradition, imploring naval surgeons to pursue scientific interests whenever they had a chance.

Improvements in nursing and hospital facilities mirrored advancements in civilian medicine during the latter part of the century, and successful attempts in reducing (although not eradicating) the drunkenness problem meant that, by the beginning of the twentieth century, naval medicine was no longer the grim business it had once been, even though its reputation continued to lag behind.

*Surgeons of the Fleet* both confirms stereotypes and reveals new dimensions to the men who became naval surgeons and the work they undertook. That their lives were tough and their work erratic will not be surprising to readers; but by drawing out the context they were operating in, economically and professionally, McLean breathes new life into an area of medical history which has long been associated with macho and triumphant histories of old. Written to appeal beyond an academic audience, it is a clear and accessible read – although there is a tendency throughout for the reader to be rather bombarded with names, dates and statistics. Additionally, given McLean's assertion that 'naval surgeons were certainly required to be ingenious' (p. 46), the interplay between innovation in military and civilian medical cultures might have been more closely interrogated, particularly the impact of the former upon the latter. However, any unanswered questions are not necessarily flaws in McLean's work, instead they are an invitation for other medical historians to embark on their own journeys into this still relatively unexplored, but intriguing historical field.

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**Nadja Durbach,** *Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press,

2010), pp. xiii + 273, £27.95/\$39.95, hardback, ISBN: 978-0-520-25768-9.

Historiographically speaking, the study of freak shows morphs from that of monsters (teratology) to the identity politics of race, class, gender, ethnicity, and disability of the late twentieth century. The trope – with freaks as 'key to the production of the categories of "the self" and "the other"' (p. 17) – is by now fairly worn, but Nadja Durbach makes a good show of it in five engaging and illustrated chapters focused on, in turn, 'the Elephant Man', 'the Double-Bodied Hindoo Boy', 'the Hairy Belle', the would-be 'primitive' Aztecs and 'Earthmen', and finally, 'Cannibal King' (for the further locating of the freak show within the larger history of Victorian and Edwardian entertainment and commercialised leisure, as well as British labour, social and economic history). Durbach has nothing to say on the etymology of 'freaks', but she makes it clear how in nineteenth-century British culture they became a potent source for the making up and corseting of what it was to be 'human' – be it in terms of body shape and size, colour, sexuality, and distinctiveness from those further down the chain of animal forms. Hence, freaks also served powerfully for the emerging-as-dominant evolutionary discourses of the second half of the century – of humans, races, and civilisations. Middle-class scrapbooks were lovingly filled with their photographs, suggesting how the nomativities were recreated and consolidated in domestic settings.

Durbach suggests that the images sold something else as well: the very idea of images as a means of mass communication. As intriguing is the material she provides on the culture of the freak show itself – its rise and decline, and the various fates and fortunes of the impresarios and 'freaks' alike: for example, if, like me, you uncritically consumed Frederick Treves' famous essay on the Elephant Man – and had it compounded, oddly enough, in David Lynch's film version – Durbach's first chapter will lift the scales from

your eyes. The Elephant Man (Joseph Merrick) may have had a hard time of it in the freak show trade from which Treves 'rescued' him, but he at least had the camaraderie of his fellow freaks, a degree of privacy, and the dignity of earning his own income. It was a different story in 'the elephant house' in the London Hospital (as it was popularly known in the medical culture of the 1880s): he was not only transformed into a piteous subject of Victorian philanthropy, but made a spectacle for the prying, prurient eyes of doctors and their friends, with no modesty spared. Treves frequently photographed Merrick in the nude and made his life sufficiently unbearable that Merrick willingly delivered himself to the workhouse and, after once again being captured by Treves, took his life in despair. Of course, from at least as far back as the sixteenth century, the 'spectacle of deformity' was as much within medical as it was in popular culture – think of the collecting and display of 'anomalous' body parts undertaken by John Hunter in the late eighteenth century; but in the nineteenth century it was increasingly in that context – with the 'objects' alive, rather than stuffed or pickled – that it found legitimacy. By the mid-twentieth century, with virtually all culture medicalised, it was in the medical arena alone that it survived: as one of Durbach's sources suggests, the freak show that so benefited the medical profession, may have met its decline through the very act of appropriating its wares.

However, Durbach's study is far from tending to the naïve view that doctors themselves make their own culture; as her other chapters also submit – albeit less with regard specifically to the culture of medicine – what the history of the freak show revealingly illuminates is the production, reproduction, and negotiation of dominant values and epistemology in relation to wider socioeconomic and political change. This surely is no less with regard to exhibiting freaks historically – as the epitome of the study of the Other – although on this and how it has served our own self-fashioning culture

of ostensible self-fashioners, the *Spectacle of Deformity* remains silent.

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**Thomas Schlich,** *The Origins of Organ Transplantation: Surgery and Laboratory Science, 1880–1930*, Rochester Studies in Medical History, Volume 18 (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2010), pp. x + 355, £45.00, hardback, ISBN: 978-1-58046-353-9.

Thomas Schlich starts his *Origins of Organ Transplantation, Surgery and Laboratory Science, 1880–1930* with a critique of the historiography of this surgical field. He notes that while the first transplant surgeons had been initially well aware of the novelty of their practices and concepts, they soon forgot these were new. Moreover, he argues that the historiography of organ replacement has since de-historicised, perhaps not the actual practice, but certainly the concept. The prevailing perception, so he shows, blends ahistoricity with sentimentalism. It regards the idea of organ transplantation as one of mankind's ancient dreams, a medical development awaited for centuries, a timeless and spaceless logic. Schlich rightly rejects this perception: he notes that most accounts were written by transplant surgeons who had had no training in historical methodology. But he equally criticises the few historians who did tackle the subject for embracing the conceptual basis of modern transplant surgery as an unproblematic given. Nevertheless, he does not regard the ahistorical perception of organ transplantation as a simple product of ignorance, mistake or negligence; rather, he points at its ideological function: promoting transplant surgery (perhaps against the backdrop of its early failure to deliver on its promise).

Schlich's intention is to re-historicise organ transplantation. The fact that he starts with a critique of the existing historiography is only