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culture, colonialism and a hybrid political system, and lastly Marxism with a mixed culture and racial base. The author has drawn on a computer bank of references covering some eight thousand observations on famines over the past six thousand years.

The extreme difficulties inherent in recording and analysing famines are recognized. Ten pages of various definitions of famine are given, a good working precept being "a protracted total shortage of food in a restricted geographical area causing widespread disease and death from starvation". The lack of detailed research on famines is not really surprising. In the acute situation no researcher can coolly investigate the conditions and attitudes of those starving when the predominant action must be the alleviation of hunger and prevention of death.

Part IV considers food, population, policies and strategies in relation to the prevention of a world famine. Using clear diagrams, lists, and graphs predominantly derived from United Nations sources the author discusses food availability and distribution, world food/population balance, and the world's carrying capacity (i.e. the ability of a place's resources to support a given way of life). He concludes that until humans recognize the importance of the well-being of all humans, and the environment is regarded as a responsibility rather than an economic opportunity, famines will signify that the carrying capacity of an environment has been exceeded.

In the last chapter 'Policies and strategies' and the Epilogue, Professor Dando considers the Malthusian population theory and social policies, the "lifeboat" ethic, the triage ethic, and the Golden Rule (do as you would be done by) as possible policies that may be used by those in power. He is particularly concerned about current United States food policy which must have a powerful influence on the world situation. There are too many unknowns for the carrying capacity of the world to be quantified. However, Professor Dando has shown the role that humans play in moulding their physical and social environment, and places famines within their proper perspective of cultural decision-making. This book is a valuable contribution to the literature on food problems and famine and of interest to all those who are concerned about hunger in the world.

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MICHAEL HOWELL and PETER FORD, *The true history of the elephant man*, London, Penguin Books, 1980, 8vo, pp. 223, illus., £1.25 (paperback).

The basic outlines of the life of Joseph Merrick, the elephant man, have long been known, above all from the short memoir published by Sir Frederick Treves in 1923. In 1884 as a young surgeon at the London Hospital Treves found Merrick being exhibited at 2d. a time as a freak in a vacant shop in Whitechapel. A man in his early twenties, Merrick was suffering from acute neurofibromatosis. The bone structures of his right arm and both legs were misshapen and extended, he had great bosses of bone growing out of his skull, and over much of his body his skin was pendulous, hanging in great folds.

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Treves took some medical interest in Merrick, exhibiting him before the Pathological Society of London, before Merrick was whisked off on the English and Continental freak-show circuits. Robbed in Brussels, Merrick got back to England with no identification but Treves's visiting card. Treves befriended him, arranging permanent lodgings in the London Hospital where he became the ideal object of Victorian philanthropy (blameless and harmless), visited by society ladies, taken to the theatre and for holidays to country estates, before dying prematurely aged in 1890.

This well-researched and level-headed book – easily the best offering in this year of the elephant man – has brought to light much revealing new material about Merrick's life, particularly his family background and his days in the Leicester workhouse. In contrast to Bernard Pomerance's glib play *The elephant man*, Howell and Ford show there are no grounds for believing that Treves used his patronage of Merrick, and Merrick's advance to celebrity status, as leverage for the furthering of his own career. Neither is there evidence that Treves's interest was fundamentally prurient, or coldly clinical. Though Treves undoubtedly saw Merrick through certain stereotypes (a man deformed in flesh but pure in soul), he took great pains to bring what little comfort he could to the pathetic life of a man inevitably cut off from being normal; not least, Treves spent much time acting as interpreter of Merrick's distorted speech.

Merrick's life passed through four stages, once his incapacity had left him unfit to earn his living by ordinary labour: as an inmate in the Leicester workhouse; as an exhibit in freak shows; as an exhibit before the doctors of London; and as a patronized object of philanthropy in the London Hospital. What repays some pondering is that easily the most hateful to him was life in the workhouse. Though condemned to be gawped at, he showed no bitterness to those who exhibited him or those who stared. He had words of kindness for the fairground operators (who at least treated him warmly and secured him a good living) and was continually grateful to his society benefactresses and towards Treves.

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LUIS S. GRANJEL, *La medicina española renacentista*, (Historia general de la medicina española, vol. II), Salamanca, Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1980, 8vo., pp. 289, illus., 750 ptas. (paperback).

Professor Granjel has again provided us with a very clear and workmanlike textbook on Spanish Renaissance medicine, based on literary as well as medical authors. The result is very much internalist history, not only in its unsophisticated discussion of the social and economic background, but also in its exclusion of non-Spanish doctors at the imperial court, like Baersdorp and Caballus. It is lavishly illustrated, but it is unfortunate that there is no index of plates, for several lack identification, and the quality of their reproduction is not always good. A comparison between text and plates shows several small errors in the dating and transcription of titles, but these minor criticisms should not obscure our debt to the author for the copious and detailed information he has provided. For no other area of Renaissance