

Rubin charts the contours of these later changes in chapter 3, “Jews: Familiar Strangers,” and chapter 4, “Women: Sometimes Strangers in Their Cities,” where she explores the telling exceptions to full belonging. Jews and women were always embedded within cities but also always exceptional categories of persons over which sovereign power was exercised differently. Medieval Jewish communities in many European cities, even to this day, remain a haunting presence, indicative of the vital, integrated role that Jewish communities played in most thriving medieval urban communities, where synagogues existed alongside parish churches, where Jews and Christians, and in many Mediterranean cities and towns Muslims, lived together sharing streets and spaces. As Rubin states, “the position of Jews in their cities [was] one of utter embeddedness and yet of not-quite-full enfranchisement” (57). And “this blended into a tentative but intimate familiarity. It was an arrangement both fragile and enduring” (58). Indeed, many scholars, Rubin herself included, have traced how this fragility was negotiated and when—especially in moments of economic constriction and political and religious anxiety—it collapsed. By the late fifteenth century, when cities of northern Europe had systematically expelled their Jewish communities, cities in southern Europe either forced Jews to endure conversion or expelled them too.

With the same acuity, Rubin analyzes the role of women in cities and offers another yet different exploration of an exceptional category of difference defined by the experience of gender. Although women’s labor was “essential to the collective thriving,” women were also seen to possess qualities that “justified their exclusion from full participation in urban life and its benefits” (71). Like other types of difference, women’s exclusion existed in degrees and was tied to the household as both a unit of labor and production (of children and of goods) and to marital status, economic position, and permissible degrees of independence. Religion, foreignness, and class also affected women’s status and determined access to occupational opportunities, social networks, and degrees of franchise within urban communities. Although “women remained in families and homes, [they were] also in a state of troubling strangeness” (90).

Throughout, Rubin demonstrates the ways that communities chose to constitute themselves and how this changed overtime, particularly in negative and restrictive ways when social conditions worsened. There is a sense that other choices could have been made, other forms of communities imagined. This is a possibility that hangs in the air; a powerful teaching moment for all who read this book. As Rubin argues, “exclusion and separation are never about a sole group and its attributes, but are related to a vision of power and privilege that affected everyone” (96). Our present is filled with many urgent questions, heightened only more so by the COVID pandemic and the further polarization of many of our communities as a consequence. Rubin shows us just how much we have to learn from looking probingly at the past, especially the medieval past, to consider differences, and what a different future might entail.

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BARBARA J. SHAPIRO. *Law Reform in Early Modern England: Crown, Parliament and the Press*. Oxford: Hart, 2019. Pp. 280. \$90.00 (cloth).
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Among the classic questions of legal history is why the law changes. While early modern English jurists sometimes liked to pretend that the common law was unvarying, change was a constant. In her new book, *Law Reform in Early Modern England: Crown, Parliament and*

the Press, Barbara Shapiro surveys the period from the reign of Henry VIII to the eighteenth century to understand how change was sometimes the result of explicit attempts at reform. Shapiro defines her subject expansively: law reform is whenever “some person or group criticized some aspect of the legal system and proposed remedies” (3). The purview of *Law Reform in Early Modern England* is therefore broad, covering demands for change in substantive and procedural law across English courts. There were, according to Shapiro, two broad groups of reformers during the period making these criticisms—moderates and radicals.

It turns out these people had a lot to complain about. Shapiro’s long-term perspective reveals the dismal frequency with which the same complaints are repeated. The cost of the law is always too high and the length of litigation too long—sound familiar? But there were also complaints specific to the time, especially concerns over imprisonment for debt. This raises the second question that guides Shapiro: Why does reform fail or take hold only slowly? The answers that she develops are the culmination of Shapiro’s decades-long project to understand law reform in early modern England. To that end, the chief contribution of the book is to uncover the terrain in LIDAR-level detail for future scholars.

Shapiro unfolds these details chronologically, beginning in the reign of Henry VIII and then mostly by regnal periods. As her survey progresses, sometimes bigger themes and continuities are underlined. The chapters themselves are subdivided into topical surveys of the many aspects of law reform and varieties of complaint. Though the book is ostensibly focused on England, there are occasional ventures to Wales and Ireland.

Shapiro’s analysis rests on two major bodies of sources: parliamentary records, and treatises and pamphlets from what other historians might call the “public sphere.” Shapiro discovers that parliament discussed law reform quite a lot over the centuries while also failing to pass much relevant legislation. This disjunction between the volume of speechmaking and actual reform is a puzzle. Her solution is that parliament lacked the institutional capacity to remedy many of the legal problems of the time. Moreover, the reformers themselves were seldom in agreement. Radicals especially were divided among themselves, appearing suddenly as a group in 1642 with little attachment in the book to the longer history of radicalism (105).

This speaks to a larger characteristic of the study: important historiography is sometimes cited but not tightly woven into the narrative. At points, this detracts from the analysis as when Shapiro discusses the public circulation of information and its reception with only passing reference to the voluminous work on the public sphere. Some recent scholarship on law reform is missing, especially accounts of Edward Coke’s activities and discussions of the Reformation’s effect on the law. Occasionally these oversights weaken the contextualization of reform, such as in the lengthy sections on criminal law reform with its robust historiography.

There is also one explicit omission. Shapiro intentionally avoids discussion of “judge-made law” because of “judicial reluctance to frame their decisions as reform” (8). Yet the tenures of Sir John Fyneux and Lord Mansfield, both important judicial reformers, bookend the period. These judges, of course, did not need to present themselves as reformers, mobilize public opinion and parliamentary support. They were different sorts of reformers who worked every day within a close, guild-like profession with the power to solve practical problems brought before them. The significance of Shapiro’s downplaying of this source of reform is that the larger story of legal change may be missed. There is a nagging possibility that reforming measures in parliament failed because, for most litigants, the law worked most of the time. Judge-led reform may have kept the legal system adapted enough to stave off either fundamental reform or even more modest measures.

Shapiro, however, does an important service by pointing to another story: how does parliament eventually become the central forum for law reform? There must be more to parliament’s institutional weakness than “frequent prorogations . . . and factional differences.” (190). What institutional transformations were needed such that by the nineteenth century, Victorian parliaments could drive wholesale change in the legal system? Part of the story, for example, must

relate to the coalescence of outside pressure groups. It is hoped that Shapiro's foundational research will inspire others to pursue these investigations.

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ALANNA SKUSE. *Surgery and Selfhood in Early Modern England: Altered Bodies and Contexts of Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. Pp. 201. \$99.00 (cloth).
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In *Surgery and Selfhood in Early Modern England*, Alanna Skuse considers “how anomalous bodies shaped and were shaped by . . . beliefs about the nature of embodiment, about soul and body, and about personal identity” (2), situating altered bodies within theological, philosophical, and pragmatic debates over monist and dualist understandings of the body and soul. The book adds to the understanding of early modern bodily alteration, impairment, and disability, and deftly shows the variable and changing relationships between them.

This is Skuse's second book, following the excellent *Constructions of Cancer in Early Modern England* (2015). It shares with that text Skuse's interest in themes of embodiment and selfhood, clear writing style, and close attention to a variety of print sources. But here Skuse takes more adventurous steps to integrate readings of a wider range of bodily phenomena, and to draw from new theoretical approaches. In doing so, Skuse offers early modern studies an important engagement with insights and research questions from contemporary phenomenological and disability studies, and scholars of those fields in modern and contemporary circumstances a necessary historicization that is most provocatively set out in the conclusion.

Surgery and Selfhood is structured in six chapters that concentrate on a specific alteration” In chapter 1 Skuse engages with early modern views of castrati identity, sexuality, and masculinity. She takes a nuanced approach to understanding the extent to which the impairment imposed on the boys in order to preserve their singing voices could be considered disabling. For some it was the ticket to fame and fortune, but it also subjected them to slurs on their masculinity and allegations of improper sexuality, including “public wrangling over the castrato's right to marry” (31).

In chapter 2, Skuse's attention turns to mastectomy, and she argues for a lack of public visibility of “sexually altered female bodies” that stands in stark contrast to the “hypervisible and overdetermined” castrati (36). Mastectomy procedures appear in surgical textbooks, and the effects in ethnographical works on temporally and geographically far-flung Amazons, but not in the dramas that brought Amazons into domestic view, or in published stories of real-life survivors of the operation. Here, Skuse utilizes Julia Kristeva's conceptualization of “abjection” to take some of the material from *Constructions of Cancer* further. Though Skuse closes this chapter with a note that “stories of surgically altered bodies were almost always stories of male bodies” (55), there is an important exception made in chapter 5 for a close reading of Lavinia's mutilation in *Titus Andronicus*. Though Lavinia's amputation is not performed by surgeons, Skuse argues that her experience and use of the staff as a prosthetic can “be illuminated in new ways by a closer appreciation of the practical and ideological aspects of limb prostheses in early modern England” (82). In turn, Lavinia's representation as amputee can offer insight on “sexuality, embodiment and sociability” (98) in limb loss to accompany the growing scholarship on early modern amputation, prosthetics, and disability.

Some of chapter 3 has previously been published as an article (“‘Keep Your Face out of My Way or I'll Bite off Your Nose’: Homoplastics, Sympathy, and the Noble Body in the Tatler,