

## BOOK REVIEW

### **Spare Parts: A Surprising History of Transplants** *by Paul Craddock*

Hardback and other formats, 320 pages  
Fig Tree, ISBN 9780241370254  
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It starts with noses. Noses stick out and so can be cut off - to the pain and shame of their owners. Finding a way to replace them was naturally appealing.

The astronomer Tycho Brahe (1546 – 1610) lost a chunk of his nose as a young man in a sword fight and afterward used a prosthesis. By this time, two Calabrian brothers had developed a technique of using grafts of victims' own skin to re-create something more like the original nose.

Paul Craddock, is honorary senior research associate of the division of surgery at UCL and of the Science Museum, London. His PhD thesis explored how transplants have over the centuries invited reflection on human identity. In this book, he takes the story of transplants through the centuries to the modern period and even beyond.

He sets his historical account of transplants into humans within a philosophical and epistemological framework. The idea of surgical corrections perturbed many that they were interfering with God's will, especially when experiments began using external, even animal, blood donors.

Having discussed the unsuccessful use of animal to human blood transfusion, Craddock describes how current research is looking at stripping other animal organs and tissues of their cellular identify to make them suitable for use in humans. He explains how early surgeons saw a connection between human transplants and plant grafting.

This is a comprehensive work. More than 20 pages of notes and four pages of bibliography testify to Craddock's extensive research. If there is a weakness, it is that he doesn't like to leave minutia out. His use of colloquialisms may not appeal to all.

The book will interest historians of medicine who want to understand the context in which transplants developed. It will also appeal to philosophers who want to see how thinking developed about a procedure that began with myth and has come to be an almost routine surgical procedure.

**Lee Coppack**  
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