

East, where the most common procedure among both men and women is rhinoplasty. He describes a Jewish girl who undergoes the procedure to “pass” as more Gentile. In young men, aesthetic surgery is usually performed before compulsory military service so that they can look like their peers. In some instances, the urgency of disguising racial origins diminished with the dawning of ethnic pride and with greater racial tolerance. More subtle changes in ethnicity were in order. One can look different, but not *too* different. It may be desirable for Japanese people to appear Japanese, but not *too* Japanese. Thus, 32 different operations have been developed in Japan to create a westernized double eyelid-fold.

Throughout the book the evolution of aesthetic surgery is traced from the



Fred Sebastian

quack beauty doctors of the 1880s to the modern, board-certified aesthetic surgeon of today. The designation of this surgical specialty also changed, from “cosmetic” to “esthetic” to “aesthetic,” as the specialty seemed to emerge with a classical lineage. Aesthetic surgeons overcame their low status to attain respectability and even adulation. Contributions from reconstructive surgery are recognized, particularly procedures to restore the collapsed syphilitic nose and the soldier’s face ravaged by war. Surprising contributions are described from well-known figures not generally considered to be “aesthetic surgeons.” These include Ambroise Paré, Theodor Billroth and orthopedic surgeon Jacques Joseph.

There are many graphic descriptions of early surgical procedures. In 1892 Robert Weir brought a live duck into the operating theatre, killed it, and used

its fresh sternum to rebuild the collapsed syphilitic nose of a 26-year-old man. There are vivid reports of paraffin being injected into breasts, faces and other anatomical areas, resulting in dreadful complications. There is a memorable story of a German lad who, after winning a lottery, consulted an aesthetic surgeon with the hope of surgically creating artificial duelling scars so that he could pass as a man of honour. The surgeon refused. Subsequently, the man sought treatment from a barber, who obliged with a straight razor, causing severe damage to the salivary glands.

This is a well-informed and engrossing study of a hot contemporary subject. It will be valuable to plastic surgeons and to other physicians who are interested in a comprehensive history of the cultural and aesthetic side of plastic surgery.

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Food for the soul

Doctors afield

Edited by Mary G. McCrea Curnen, Howard Spiro and Deborah St. James
Yale University, New Haven, CT; 1999
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Nourishment and renewal are the themes of *Doctors Afield*. The stories in this book are told by an eclectic group of physicians who have excelled in the visual arts, music, literature, astronautics, the spiritual life, government, academia, collecting, and fun and games. The least among the stories are merely informative and the best are masterfully written with powerful messages. Almost all are autobiographical, which gives them relevance and helps the reader see the interplay between medicine and the contributor’s parallel endeavour.

There are two biographical sketches that don’t fit the model: those of Carlo Levi and Gertrude Stein. Levi practised medicine, under duress, for only a short

period long after his graduation. Stein failed obstetrics in her final year at Johns Hopkins and never graduated. Some people should never go into medicine, but this is not the book’s message. Thus I would have much preferred that those spots be given to a couple of star physician-writers who could reflect on medicine and creativity. That would have maintained the central theme and provided a much better counterpoint. So, the field in *Doctors Afield* is a little spotty, but there are some very fertile patches.

Eli Newberger is a pediatrician who does weekly sessions on the tuba with the New Black Eagle Jazz Band. He tells us about creative inspiration, the magic of improvisation and its prospect

of mistakes. Mistakes in medicine can destroy lives, but in jazz improvisation they become a platform for new ideas and redemption. Eli’s music has the power to transport him into a state that is not, “strictly speaking, a conscious process.” We learn that the joy and release of his music enables him to deal in his professional life with issues such as child abuse and family violence.

In “A Prescription for Poetry,” internist Rafael Campo provides a window on specific medical problems versus much larger, more complex societal problems. While trying to concentrate on radiographs of a battered woman’s facial fractures he finds instead that he hears the soft, impatient tapping of her husband’s foot outside in the emergency room. “Poetry is there when the last of our gizmos and gadgets fail us; ... it helps us gauge that which cannot be assayed in the blood, to see what cannot be imagined.”

In “The Singing Endocrinologist,” Alice Levine tells us that early in her

training she observed the energy and efficiency her two careers provided: “diversions made studies easier, not more difficult.” Like Anton Chekhov, who saw medicine as his lawful wife and literature as his mistress, Levine likens a career in music to climbing in sand, whereas medicine is always there, reliable. Both careers are about communicating, and she successfully fuses them into a rewarding life.

The section on spirituality is timely, moving and courageous. In the 19th century, Oliver Wendell Holmes argued strongly for a rational base for medicine that excluded religion. Today in Boston, Ray Hammond and Gloria White-Hammond, with a mission to “serve others as we are led by the Holy Spirit,” have transcended barriers of class, gender and race to produce a modern-day miracle. Among other things, their coalition adopts gangs. Guess what has happened to the murder rate in Boston? I am sure that Holmes would be impressed.

Alan Mermann, in “Looking for the Red Line,” and John Young, in “Priest in the Prison,” are equally convincing on the need to appropriately access the soul to sustain the doctor and heal the patient.

There are lessons to be learned from careers in the visual arts. Andrea Baldeck, an anesthesiologist, was so fulfilled by her photography career that medicine lost out. Sir Roy Calne, a pioneer transplant surgeon, used his surgeon’s eye for anatomy as a stepping stone into the world of art and then got lessons from one of his patients, a noted Scottish artist. Wayne Southwick discovered the connection between orthopedics and sculpture and used his second career as a successful bridge into his retirement.

“Getting Famous,” by Michael LaCombe, an internist from rural Maine, is the piece that I liked best. His journey as a physician-writer has not been smooth and effortless. He reveals this in a wonderfully literate manner and packs in a whole lot of good advice along the way.

Read *Doctors Afield*. You will be nourished and renewed.

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Lifeworks

Marrying the coats

Until Jan. 16, 2000, the Confederation Centre Art Gallery and Museum in Charlottetown showcases traditional and modern designs and techniques in rug hooking, sometimes called North America’s “one indigenous folk art.” *The Marrying of*



Anna MacLeod, *Colour Wheel*, 1997. Hooked rug; wool. Each edge measures 40.6 cm

the Coats features the work of rug hookers from across Prince Edward Island, including 80-year-old Anna MacLeod, who in her 60 years of rug hooking has carried on the tradition of “the marrying of the coats,” a process in which torn-up coats are dyed to provide a consistent background colour for large rugs. *Joe Smith and the Spectacular Brennan Rug* features arguably one of the most impressive rugs ever created on the Island. In *Bricàbra* Nancy Edell of Nova Scotia combines rug hooking with other media, including painting and animation. For more information on these and other exhibits, visit the gallery’s Web site (www.confederationcentre.com/exhibs.html).

Mentor times two

In Halifax, The Art Gallery of Nova Scotia remembers two artists who exerted a presence in the visual arts in the province both through their work and through their influence on younger artists. Born in Halifax’ north end, John Cook (1918–1984) was a prolific and unselfish painter of Nova Scotia’s rural and urban landscapes and an energetic teacher who cared little for the established institutions of art. Born in New Brunswick, Donald Cameron Mackay (1906–1979) worked as war artist, illustrator, printmaker and painter over a career that spanned 50 years. Principal of the Nova Scotia College of Art from 1945 until 1971, he was by his own admission of an “ultra conservative” stamp. The parallel and yet disparate careers of Cook and Mackay largely defined the horizon for serious artists in Nova Scotia until the 1970s. *John Cook: Artist & Teacher* and *Donald Cameron Mackay: Artist & Teacher* continue at the gallery (www.agns.ednet.ns.ca) until Jan. 16, 2000.



John Cook, *The Little Boats of Indian Harbour*, 1967. Oil on masonite, 50.5 x 76.0 cm



Donald Cameron Mackay, *Landscape, Herring Cove*, c. 1950. Oil on canvas, 61.1 x 76.1 cm