

Reconstructing Faces: The Art and Wartime Surgery of Gillies, Pickerill, McIndoe and Mowlem. By Murray C. Meikle. Otago University Press, Dunedin, 2013. 262pp. NZ price: \$60.00. ISBN 9781877578397.

Murray Meikle has written a very useful book which considers the work of four of the key figures in early maxillofacial surgery (upper jaw and face surgery, combining dental and surgical expertise), a speciality which marked the beginnings of plastic surgery. All four had close connections to New Zealand. Henry Pickerill was born in England, where he trained in dentistry, surgery and ophthalmology, and had become the head of the Dental School at the University of Otago by the beginning of the First World War. Harold Gillies, on the other hand, was Dunedin-born and trained in England, specializing in ENT (ear, nose and throat). Both men were innovators in maxillofacial surgery during the First World War, repairing the faces of disfigured soldiers. Archibald McIndoe (a cousin of Gillies) was born in Dunedin and Arthur Mowlem in Auckland. Both studied surgery at the University of Otago, with McIndoe going on to further study in the United States. They, along with Gillies, were among those who developed the field of reconstructive surgery during the Second World War. Although Pickerill and McIndoe have received significant publicity for their work, Gillies was a key figure throughout this period. By tracing their pioneering work during the First and Second World Wars, Meikle successfully highlights the work of Gillies and the New Zealand contribution.

Meikle's volume has two aims: to assess both the impact of Dunedin on the lives of these men and 'more importantly, what they actually did to revolutionize the surgical treatment of facial injuries' (p.10). To address the first aim, the opening chapter discusses the development of Dunedin and the Otago Medical School. However, this theme is not only a distraction from the real focus of the book – the impact of these four men in the field of maxillofacial surgery – but also one which proves very difficult to assess. Despite an opening chapter on Dunedin, Meikle does not make a convincing argument regarding the importance of their colonial background in their willingness to innovate. In the case of McIndoe's dislike for military authority (p.126), for example, the reader is left with the idea that this might have been the result of New Zealand egalitarianism. It might equally have been an outcome of his personality type. To successfully argue that the attitudes of these men were the result of their colonial roots would require a contrast with non-colonial surgeons and a very different book. Meikle rightly emphasizes that all these men had strong connections to the University of Otago and that others have commented on the importance of the colonial spirit, but this point might have been made more succinctly. As he notes at the end of his book, fate or luck played an important role in bringing these surgeons together in Britain. Moreover, their surgical skill, their pre-existing areas of expertise, and their personal attributes made them the right men in the right place at the right time. For this reason, the first chapter concerned with Dunedin seems largely irrelevant to the rest of the book.

Meikle has also included aspects not directly relevant to his discussion, such as the original purposes of buildings taken over as maxillofacial facilities during the wars. Much of this material would be better excluded or moved so that it does not disrupt the main discussion or obscure the key focus of the work. The author provides very useful and substantive appendices and this may have been a more appropriate place for material such as the family background of the four surgeons, as well as a discussion of the archives and sources used by the author. Some of the interesting but tangential information might also have been moved to the picture captions (which often just repeat the main text). For example, the explanation for the Medical Corps World War One uniform (p.77) would have gone nicely in the caption for Figure 5.4.

Despite these problems Meikle does a good job of assessing the role of these men in the development of maxillofacial medicine. This is not the first publication to deal with Gillies, Pickerill, McIndoe or Mowlem: each of the first three has at least one published biography, Sandy Callister's *New Zealand's Great War Photography* has highlighted the work at Sidcup,

and there have been a number of newspaper articles written in recent years. It is, however, unique in that it places each surgeon's work in the context of the work of others (thereby emphasizing Gillies' central role) and in relation to the key innovators of their day. *Reconstructing Faces* also places their work within the wider context of early twentieth-century medicine, providing an overview that spans from the Great War, through the interwar period, and across the Second World War years. It demonstrates the changing focus from 1914 to 1918, where Pickerill and Gillies dealt mainly with the reconstructions when bullets and shrapnel had removed tissue and cartilage, through to the Second World War, where Gillies, McIndoe and Mowlem dealt with facial, hand and arm disfigurement (due to bullets, shrapnel and fire).

Meikle clearly explains the development of the field of maxillofacial surgery into plastic surgery. He has a chatty writing style and only in a few places is the writing a little technical for the layperson. This is a readable and interesting study. Meikle supports his writing with a range of black-and-white images, as well as colour plates. Even today, when we expect so much from doctors, the step-by-step facial reconstruction depicted in photograph and drawing still amazes – and the injuries sustained in war still horrify. In support of his discussion he also includes excerpts from original medical notes, a very useful inclusion for those with a medical background but one that needs further explanation for the others. What point is being made by including this type of material and what might readers take from it? Indeed, it would have been useful if throughout the book Meikle had extended his analysis of the primary material he includes. In this way he would have strengthened his examination of the development of this innovative surgery and made the innovation more accessible to the lay reader. This lack of analysis is particularly evident in his chapter on the Guinea Pigs, the group of badly burnt RAF pilots who were treated by McIndoe at Queen Victoria Hospital. A number of the Guinea Pigs wrote war memoirs and Meikle notes each publication in Chapter 9, along with a description of their military career. However, some discussion of how they described their experiences as McIndoe's patients would have been of more interest and relevance.

This is a fascinating, readable and well-illustrated book which brings together the strands of the huge New Zealand contribution to the development of maxillofacial surgery over two world wars. However, it is also one which would have benefited from refocusing and editing.

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Silences and Secrets: The Australian Experience of the Weintraubs Syncopators. By Kay Dreyfus. Monash University Publishing, Clayton, 2013. 305pp. Australian Price: \$34.95. ISBN 9781921867804.

In the late 1920s, the Weintraubs Syncopators were Berlin's hottest jazz and cabaret band, with a reputation built on instrumental virtuosity and versatility (up to half a dozen instruments per member) and elaborate musical/physical comedy. As co-founder Stefan Weintraub recalled: 'We didn't just sit on stage and play our music. We performed the music as a pantomime or a comedy show. We became a so-called number, a variety number' (p.3). Their partnership with Friedrich Hollaender gave them an entry into the new medium of sound film, most famously as the onstage backing band for Marlene Dietrich in *The Blue Angel* (1930). But a predominantly Jewish band performing proscribed, 'decadent' music had no future in Nazi Germany, and in 1937 an international tour became permanent exile in Australia. Their experience there, characterized by little short of persecution by the Musicians' Union of Australia (MUA) and wartime internment