

Operation Freak: Narrative, Identity, and the Spectrum of Bodily Abilities

Christian Flaugh

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Christian Flaugh : Operation Freak: Narrative, Identity, and the Spectrum of Bodily Abilities before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Operation Freak: Narrative, Identity, and the Spectrum of Bodily Abilities:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Interdisciplinary look at what it means to be 'other'By AleBeneFlaugh's work is extremely well-written and clear, taking an enormous and courageous leap into combining

disability studies with 'francophone studies.' Spanning the Maghreb, the Caribbean, sub-Saharan Africa and Qubc, the book offers extremely sensitive readings of texts from Cond, to Ben Jelloun, to Godbout. He also offers a stunning account of the field of disability studies today, using cultural studies as a bridge.

In *Operation Freak*, Christian Flaugh embarks upon an exploration of the intricate connection between the physical bodies and narratives that, subjected to all manner of operations, generate identity. The author spotlights such voluntary and involuntary acts to show how discourses of ability, disability, and bodily manipulation regularly influence the production in and of various Francophone texts. Flaugh's foundation is the critical examination of mutually-informing narratives: Francophone novels that hyperbolically signal normative discourses through quintessential "freaks" (*monstres*) such as the Siamese twin, the bearded lady, and the exotic witch; and the related sociocultural master narratives from North America, North Africa, and the Caribbean. Employing disability and freak culture theories alongside studies of identification and narrative, Flaugh's close readings move beyond polarized discussions of "disabled" and "non-disabled" bodies. They expand such discussions to articulate how ability - like identity and narrative - is impermanent. It passes and it is passed throughout a spectrum at the same time that it intersects regularly with various narratives of identity like citizenship, gender, and race. Each chapter reveals how "operation" is a profit-driven identification process informed by abilities and constantly reproduced by surgeons, slave masters, writers, and the "freak" protagonists themselves. An unflinching look at such manipulation, *Operation Freak* illustrates the undeniably visceral relation between bodily ability, identity, narrative, and normality carved onto the body of the freak of culture (*monstre de la culture*).

"Christian Flaugh offers French historians one of the most ethical models so far for understanding the impact of French colonialism and, by extension, many forms of colonialism. Through an examination of the Francophone body in four fictional texts, Flaugh highlights the way in which the fictional Francophone freak exists within a powerful local and colonial discourse of bodily ability. He maps the complex narratives constructing the freak in each of these stories to the ways in which citizenship and identity might be critically evaluated, emphasizing the multiplicity and interconnectivity of the local, colonial, disabled, abled narratives. This is what makes Flaugh's book so powerful and so pertinent its implication for profoundly traumatic physical and psychological human impact on the colonized person for the purposes of shaping identity." *French History*