

Comoedien, Curen, Correctionen. Ulms Fundenkinder in der Frühen Neuzeit

By Maria Griemert. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2022. Pp. 184.
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Thomas Max Safley

University of Pennsylvania, emeritus

The somewhat obscure title of Maria Griemert's revised dissertation (Ulm, 2019) might leave some readers puzzled. "Comedies, Cures, and Corrections" speaks nonetheless directly to the larger points the author wishes to make about the care of "neglected" (*unversorgte*) children in the *Fundenhaus* (foundling home) of late medieval and early modern Ulm. Through the regular, public performance of theater, music, and dance, the foundlings and orphans remained visible to the citizenry, a constant reminder of their responsibility to care for these vulnerable young people, and a substantial element of the imperial city's "conscientiousness" (*Bewusstsein*). Through the "cures" it provided, both in its healthcare and in its selection process, the staff of the *Fundenhaus* established themselves as "specialists in the field of childcare adapted to the needs of the society" (159) and as an "extraordinarily early example" (160) of systematic children's healthcare not just to orphans or foundlings *strictu sensu*, but to children "neglected" in any way. Finally, through its broad sense of discipline, which sought to guide these children in a direction of social integration and financial self-sufficiency but resorted neither to savage punishment nor to compulsory labor, the *Fundenhaus* set itself apart from so-called total institutions that became commonplace across the German-speaking world from the mid-seventeenth century. Griemert's work promises thus a genuine enhancement to the historical study of poor relief, especially as it relates to children, which tends to concentrate on the increasing social marginalization and economic exploitation of the needy in the early modern period.

The work itself is solidly researched and cogently argued but, despite its historiographical relevance, oddly unsurprising. The first 137 of its 160 pages present a thematic history of the *Fundenhaus* that begins with a discussion of the physical house from its earliest documentation in the fourteenth century to its practical dissolution in 1811 and final destruction by bombing in 1944. Individual chapters discuss the people – children and staff – in the institution, the finances of the institution, the life within the institution, the discipline of the institution, the healthcare in the institution, and, finally, the end of the institution. The progression of themes reflects the standard interests of scholarship, and scholars in the field will find them familiar.

That is not to say that they will find nothing to give them pause or challenge their assumptions. Each chapter offers something.

The *Fundenhaus* apparently grew out of Ulm's *Heilig-Geist-Spital*, a process of "specialization" noted in other cities at the time, but it developed its own multifunctionality by admitting orphans as well as foundlings, criminal as well as needy youths. The author makes too little of the distinction between foundlings and orphans, which made a real difference in the care they received in the home and the prospects for their integration into society. Nor was that multifunctionality necessarily unique, despite the author's insistence that the *Fundenhaus* represented a "special case" (*Sonderfall*, 140) in this respect. Such hybridity occurred on occasion in other homes in other cities, and a lack of close comparison – the focus here rests relentlessly on Ulm – makes it difficult to know just how "special" the case was.

The *Fundenhaus* depended on a combination of donations, investments, subsidies, and alms to underwrite its structures and functions, like nearly every other social institution of the medieval and early modern periods. One might wish to learn more about how this

endowment was managed, especially given the unique, or at least uncommon, elements the author presents. That it offered corrodies (*Pfründe*) in exchange for capital sets it apart from every other foundling home or orphanage I know, though this recalls the common practice of homes for the aged (*Spitäler*) at the time. Likewise intriguing, especially in a Lutheran city, was the continued practice of offering “intercessory prayers of a religio-transcendental nature” (68), in which the children would pray for the souls of donors (or the dead?) in return for alms.

So it is with the chapter on daily life as well. The lived routines of worship, work, discipline, education, and recreation closely resemble those of other children’s institutions. The *Fundenhaus* worked to prepare its charges for a productive, self-sufficient life, to ready them for eventual integration into urban society. It is interesting to note, given the author’s emphasis on the importance of these needy children within the cultural and social cityscape, that “one did not want to see them in the same schools as one’s own sheltered, bourgeois children” (80). Public displays appear to have been one thing; edifying performances and innocuous amusements made the citizenry feel good about itself. A true mixing of social strata was quite another; it raises a question of just how constitutive these children were of Ulm’s civic identity.

The book’s most intriguing and original aspect comes last: the discussion of sickness, medicine, and death. Although most homes for needy children had separate infirmaries and the “separation of sick children” (114) was by no means limited to Ulm, the *Fundenhaus* evolved into a central institution for the care of children sick in body and mind. It became a specialist to consult in questions of child health and, according to the author, a pioneer in the understanding of childhood diseases as a field onto itself. Again, a broader, comparative discussion that includes other cities and their foundling homes or orphanages might have raised this argument above the level of promising conjecture.

This study of the *Fundenhaus* of Ulm adds a number of facets to the history of poor relief and childcare in the past. Experts may find them stimulating, if not equally convincing, but non-experts may be misled by them. That the *Fundenhaus* occupied a singular position by virtue of its refusal to employ its dependents in industrial work, that it engaged in “*Sanctu-Factur*” (159) rather than manufacture, does not bear scrutiny. Augsburg and Lindau offer similar instances for much the same reasons. The public role of the poor, especially poor children, in the construction and affirmation of civic identity and the role of children’s homes in the historical development of pediatric medicine cannot be finally established on the basis of Ulm alone. This book remains a valuable contribution nonetheless, one that should inspire further research.

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Intervention and State Sovereignty in Central Europe, 1500-1780

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Stephen A. Lazer

Arizona State University

Patrick Milton set himself a difficult task in writing *Intervention and State Sovereignty in Central Europe*. At its core, the book is a study of foreign state interventions meant to protect