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archive keeping and discipline in houses of the Military Orders—the subject of Part III—will interest those studying institutions of care and relief, through comparative emphasis on the variety of organizational tasks which underpin the ability to support and deliver care to the poor and needy. Some of the Houses were formidable institutions which became involved in diplomatic and state-building ventures, and especially at Europe's borders. Material from Bohemia and Frisia, studied by Karl Borchardt and Johannes Mol respectively, extends the study of the Orders into new regions. The students of the Military Orders have traditionally been more aware than most scholars of the material aspects of existence in warfare and fortification, financial support and architectural setting. This volume continues the trend of alertness to material culture, which is also emphasized in Jonathan Riley-Smith's introduction and applied in articles such as those by Sven Ekdahl on Prussia and Fotini Karassava-Tsiligiri on Rhodes.

The Military Orders—like most medical and welfare institutions—were complex bodies which attracted the idealistic but also bred institutionally overbearing officers. They attracted pious donors but were also used by patrons to achieve awkward and demanding objectives. An overwhelming amount of their energy was spent on maintaining their lands, estates, and dependents as great corporate landowners.³ Evidence of their medical and welfare activities appears in most cases studied here to have been only a small part of their business. If their “mission statement” was indeed “fighting for the faith and caring for the sick”, then their move into arenas far from the Levant and its pilgrims was bound to erode the second part of that dictum. Yet the pious association, and the motivation which it could elicit in those who joined the Military Orders were clearly appreciated by European rulers over centuries. Christoph Maier demonstrates the roles that some Houses could continue to play even in areas

which were reformed and which closed down religious houses in the sixteenth century, while Johannes Schellakowsky demonstrates the Orders' rulership within the Prussian state in the eighteenth century.

Helen Nicholson has edited well this volume of diverse pickings, which no review can summarize. It rewards consultation not only by medieval historians, but by those interested and intrigued by the viability and malleability of institutions of care and relief.

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¹ Malcolm Barber (ed.), *The Military Orders. Fighting for the faith and caring for the sick*, Aldershot, Variorum, 1994.

² Ronnie Ellenblum, *Frankish rural settlement in the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem*, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

³ See, for example, the evidence in Dominic Selwood, *Knights of the cloister: Templars and Hospitallers in central-southern Occitania, c. 1100–c. 1300*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 1999.

Daniel Schäfer, *Geburt aus dem Tod. Der Kaiserschnitt an Verstorbenen in der abendländischen Kultur*, Schriften zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte, no. 20, Hürtgenwald, Guido Pressler, 1999, pp. 301, illus. (3-87646-089-1).

There are not many books on the human corpse's significance in the different periods of medical history and in the development of scientific medicine. This is to be regretted, particularly since, with its links to people's beliefs and superstitions, the topic is an important cornerstone of the cultural history of medicine.

Therefore Daniel Schäfer's book is welcome. Drawing on theological, legal and medical textbooks, he describes the history of post-mortem Caesarean section from Antiquity until today. This is done in ten chronologically ordered chapters. According to the sources examined, the author points

out several reasons for the measure: the salvation of the unborn child's soul (theological), questions of the law of succession (legal) and last but—since about 1800—not least, the saving of the child's life. While the nineteenth century saw an increase in post-mortem Caesarean sections, this measure was more or less abandoned in the twentieth century due to the increase in early Caesarean sections on living women. Using recent cases, Schäfer wants to show “birth out of death” as a fascinating and timeless phenomenon.

Although basically a promising project, Schäfer's book is disappointing. The first problem is the insufficient and far too short introduction: the author's main reason for writing the study was that no equivalent publication existed. Although Schäfer provides many references to cultural and social history, he does not give any further explanations of the deeper reasons for historians' interest in the topic. Consequently, the reader gets no information on important issues such as how corpses are dealt with in history, the question of gender, and people's traditional beliefs with regard to death and dying, birth and rebirth. Besides, the methodology is not explained, the study's aims are not sufficiently described, and neither the content and characteristics of the sources nor the ethical debates dealt with in the last chapter are discussed.

Consequently, Schäfer's book is a history of ideas and does not convincingly meet the claim of examining cross-references of culture, social history and medicine. Although the approach is restrictive, the representativity of the sources is not questioned sufficiently. Sometimes the conditions in a period are based on just one source: the parish register (*Pfarrbuch*) of the German city of Crailsheim (1470) is used to show that in medieval times the *sectio in mortua* “was normally performed by midwives” (p. 39). Few of the pictures serve for the interpretation of longer historical periods. In addition, Schäfer's narrative

presents post-mortem Caesarean section as a success story and his interpretation is supported by insufficient consideration of recent discussions, for example, in the case of midwifery. Schäfer basically draws on the old topos of the one-sided suppression of midwives in the course of the professionalization of male-midwives without considering new perspectives: even in the nineteenth century, for example, midwives and physicians cultivated a sort of co-operation in the German state of Baden (Franziska Loetz, *Vom Kranken zum Patienten. “Medikalisierung” und medizinische Vergesellschaftung am Beispiel Badens 1750–1850*, Stuttgart, 1993). Besides, even under the new conditions, midwives kept an important position and acquired new areas of work (Hilary Marland, Anne Marie Rafferty (eds), *Midwives, society and childbirth: debates and controversies in the modern period*, London and New York, 1997). Remarkably, these results of recent research can be demonstrated even with Schäfer's material: the author himself often mentions the “collaboration with midwives” (p. 77, see also pp. 80, 81, 91, 127).

The book is also characterized by some weaknesses in style and is not easy to read because the pages are flooded with descriptions of the works of old authorities. These often awkwardly written summaries are interrupted by tremendously long quotations, filling sometimes two-and-a-half pages (for example, pp. 55–7). The notes are detailed but the bibliography is not separated into parts for sources (printed and unprinted) and secondary literature.

In conclusion, Schäfer's book, with the help of an appendix, with pictures of good quality and a useful index of names and locations, delivers the material for deeper discussions on the subject. With regard to analysis, however, its contribution to our understanding of the topic is limited. This is particularly regrettable because today medical history is examined in its broad

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cultural setting, and this also holds true for the discipline in Germany.

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William C Summers, *Félix d'Herelle and the origins of molecular biology*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1999, pp. xii, 230, £20.00 (hardback 0-300-07127-2).

To historians of science, to microbiologists, and to the newer breeds of molecular biologists and geneticists alike, the name of Félix d'Herelle will always bring to mind his coining of the word and concept of bacteriophage. Whether this altogether justifies the bold title of the present biography, perilously similar to that of the classic 1966 volume *Phage and the origins of molecular biology*, is perhaps a moot question. In this account W C Summers examines in depth his studies of bacteriophage and the controversies surrounding their publication: the author's stubborn and lasting attempts to prove his own priority in "discovery" of bacteriophage in the teeth of F W Twort's paper on the same subject published two years earlier. Priority disputes—whatever later generations may or may not think of their importance—were characteristic of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century science, and were often flavoured by chauvinistic attitudes linked to the many political and military conflicts within nineteenth-century Europe. In the end bacteriophage observations became known collectively as the "Twort-d'Herelle phenomenon"; and advocates of Twort's priority included a number of former colleagues of d'Herelle in and around the Paris Pasteur Institute. Twort subsequently busied himself with other problems at London's Brown Institution; whereas d'Herelle wrestled for the rest of his life

with questions of therapeutic uses of bacteriophage.

Félix d'Herelle was born in Montreal in 1873, the son of a French-Canadian father and a Dutch mother. The father died when Félix was six years old, and the mother, considerably younger and left in comfortable circumstances, moved to Paris with Félix and his younger brother, where the boys attended a local lycée. On graduation Félix embarked on travels in South America, where he learnt to speak Spanish; on the return trip by ship from Rio de Janeiro he witnessed an outbreak of yellow fever when twenty passengers and crew died. Calm in the face of danger from little known infectious diseases, d'Herelle returned to Paris in 1890 with no clear plans for further education, let alone any firm ideas for a future career. After adventurous travelling, he finally decided to settle in Montreal, and to pursue a career in bacteriology, in 1897.

At this point, Summers is at pains to remind us of d'Herelle's early and varied achievements: his studies on fermentation, including commercial attempts to produce alcohol from surplus maple syrup in Quebec, and "banana whiskey" from surplus bananas in Guatemala. Fermentation studies appealed particularly to d'Herelle, increasing his self-regarding sense of emulating Pasteur. During the Spanish-American War in 1898 he was asked to assist Mexican sisal growers and the Yucatán Department of Agriculture to develop fermentation procedures in order to dispose profitably of surplus sisal, again by using it for the production of alcohol. The lengthy and detailed explanations of the various fermentation studies are hard on the reader, not helped by a less than sparkling style and a number of sentences where verbs and/or prepositions appear to be missing and the meaning is left to the imagination of the reader, who begins to long for a more succinct presentation and details relegated to notes. Towards the end of his stay in Mexico, and during further travels