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originally sited in the genitals, but then altered to the side) refuses to heal and he has excruciating night pains, relieved only by baths and balsams. And the authors peel off layer after layer of Wagner's subtleties to support their case—his verbal puns, for instance, and the association between syphilis and flowers (no reader of Baudelaire or Huysmans would see the flower maidens who try to seduce Parsifal as anything but prostitutes).

To ask for more exploration might seem carping, yet it would make the book even more authoritative. The authors fail to mention one opera at all—Richard Rodney Bennett's neglected masterpiece *The mines of sulphur*—whose denouement is bubonic plague. They could have examined the influence of Wagner's own skin condition (then called chronic erysipelas but probably psoriasis). And in relegating Benjamin Britten's homosexuality to just a footnote they underplay another side to its importance in *Death in Venice*. Thomas Mann, we know, had toyed with making Aschenbach a composer, not unlike Gustav Mahler. Mahler, one of Britten's exemplars, died from endocarditis, from which Britten also suffered but delayed radical treatment until he could complete what was his final opera. In this he finally came to terms with his own homosexuality, which until then he had codified as pacifism or marginalization within the community.

Where it seems to me, this book is less successful is in its two other chapters, one on smoking in opera, the other on AIDS. Both topics sit uneasily with the rest: smoking has sexual overtones, to be sure, but no opera has yet featured its other effects—lung cancer or Buerger's disease. Nor has a major work centred on AIDS, and hence we get a vapid discussion about what it might be like—and, even worse, to use the authors' favourite image, here the Dionysian criticospeak that has so far been held in check by the Apollonian clinical descriptions finally breaks through. Alas, medical historians are a broad church, too often separated by different languages for one to understand the other without difficulty or irritation. But this blemish should not deter

those unversed in the jargon from reading the rest of the book, which is an intelligent and novel approach to one of man's most enjoyable artistic creations.

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John F Hutchinson, *Champions of charity: war and the rise of the Red Cross*, Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, 1996, pp. xxii, 448, illus., £25.95 (0-8133-2526-9).

In spite of its familiar insignia, international stature, popular support, and longevity, the Red Cross has never been subjected to the scrutiny of professional historians. As *Champions of charity* goes far to prove, the neglect hinges on the fact that the Red Cross has a history that it would rather keep hidden. More precisely, it has an image of its past and present that it actively seeks to protect through, on the one hand, the publication of self-serving celebratory histories, and, on the other, the practice of denying professional historians full access to its archives in Geneva. But as John Hutchinson's study illustrates, it is possible to write a scholarly history of the Red Cross movement from outside those archives. Indeed, such research is essential, for, as he reveals, the Genevan enterprise (known until the early 1880s as the International Committee for the Assistance to Sick and Wounded Soldiers) was never able fully to impose its will on the various societies that ultimately came to constitute the Red Cross movement. Although much of Hutchinson's study is concerned with the largely unsuccessful efforts of the Genevans to dominate the movement, the book is as much about the politics of the other autonomous societies, the plentiful records of which are deposited around the world. It is chiefly upon the latter material that Hutchinson draws for this pioneering volume on the rise and development of the movement from the Geneva Conference in 1863 to the Tenth Conference in 1921.

As in his previous publications on the American Red Cross, Hutchinson nicely contextualizes the conflicting and shifting

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emotional and intellectual rationales for the movement. At the same time he explores in meticulous detail the complicated practical politics involved. The heart of the story lies in the irony of the movement's survival, the success of the philanthropic effort to "civilize war" being met only through accommodation to, and then generous assistance of, the militaristic interests of individual nation states. By documenting this "militarization of philanthropy", Hutchinson not only fulfils the book's promise "to help us to a clearer understanding of the relationship between organized charity, war, and the state" (p. 4), but also effectively punctures the internationalist, humanitarian, and pacific image of the Red Cross. The myth is blown as much by the evidence of enthusiastic support for the movement from states such as Prussia and Japan, as by the opposition to it from Florence Nightingale, who shrewdly perceived that it would only encourage the business of warring. Many of the book's excellent illustrations further highlight that the Red Cross ultimately served best, not the cause of suffering humanity, but the patriotic propaganda of belligerents. To oppose the Red Cross became, as in America during the First World War, an act of treason. Only in the aftermath of the Great War were some long discarded pacific and civilian purposes revived, such as disaster relief and the implementing of public health measures. Such goals were advocated by the American Red Cross, which also went so far as to set up an office in Geneva to contest the authority of the would-be Genevan overlords. But until the 1920s, when new agendas and new relations of power came into play, national differences and factionalism continued to dominate.

Whether *Champions of charity* would have been greatly improved if its author had gained access to the archives in Geneva is a moot point. But almost certainly that would have made it a different and less engaging book. For the "courteous stonewalling" (p. 3) that Hutchinson received from the guardians of the official records has not only enabled him to share the experience of some of his historical actors, but has also added great force to, if not

determined, his compulsion to slaughter the "sacred cow" of the Red Cross's image and history. Yet this strength—the passion to lay low once and for all the pacific, international, and humanitarian myths of the movement's making—is also the book's weakness. It leads Hutchinson virtually to indict the Red Cross for sanitizing its past. Scholarly critical disinterest and contextual analysis frequently ally with conventional criticism in an effort to solicit support for an exercise in historical slaughter—a tactic that detracts from the solid weight of the historical evidence. Thus, at the outset the Red Cross is smeared with the "tainted blood scandals in France and Canada" (p. 1), while the book's conclusion reads too much like the case for the prosecution in a trial against the wicked perpetrators of myth. It is here, too, that we are bluntly invited to abandon any lingering fondness for the efforts of the Red Cross; if sufferings on the battlefield diminished over the period, Hutchinson argues, it was due entirely to new drugs and medical technologies.

The effect is to lower the otherwise scholarly tone of the volume and thereby open it to much the same sort of criticism as any would-be polemic in defence of the Red Cross. This is a shame, for Hutchinson's careful unravelling of the politics behind the image-making and self-styled history of the Red Cross is too valuable to be thus squandered.

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Leo van Bergen, *De zwaargewonden eerst? Het Nederlandsche Roode Kruis en het vraagstuk van oorlog in vrede 1867–1945* [The severely wounded first? The Dutch Red Cross and the question of war and peace 1867–1945], Rotterdam, Erasmus, 1994, pp. 544, illus., Hfl 74.50 (90–5235–072–8).

Leo van Bergen's study offers a challenging interpretation of the link between the Dutch Red Cross, the army, and war and peace movements. Though largely focused on questions of organization and internal structure, it also offers insights into the provision of medical assistance.