

EXPECTATIONS of Plague Doctors

circa 1645



Hat,
Goat Leather,
symbol of the doctor

Beak 1/2'
Filed with:
juniper berry,
ambergris, roses,
mint leaves,
camphor, cloves,
labdanum, myrrh,
and storax

"The nose half a foot long, shaped like a beak, filled with perfume with only two holes, one on each side near the nostrils, but that can suffice to breathe and to carry along with the air one breathes ... with spectacles over the eyes" (Tibayrenc 680).

"Loimologia" (Hodges)

52 *The Causes and Cure*
Subsistence of their common Causes, particular Regard is to be had to these Causes, and the Manner whereby they affect the People; yet when it is come to this pass, that the Fever it self is productive of a Poison, or somewhat intirely disagreeable, that communicates the same Impressions upon others, without any Concurrence of the first Cause, then such a Fever is truly a Pestilence by Contagion, and all precautionary Regards ought peculiarly to be suited, to prevent its Infection or Spreading; either by keeping the well Subjects clear from the Sick, or destroying the Influence of the poisonous Exhalations, or fortifying the sound against it. But to these Ends, it is necessary to have some tolerable Notion of the Manner how these secret Destroyers are continued, and conveyed to great Distances.

THE most common Manner of conveying and spreading a Contagion, observable in the preceding historical Collections, and which also is the Cause of our present Apprehensions from Abroad, is by infected Persons and Merchandize; it being attested by too many Facts to admit of the least Doubt, that even Packs and Bails of Goods carry the poisonous *Miasmata* about with them; and

Medical Practice

"Take juice of Marygolds, wormwood, Scabious, and Smalladg of each one ounce; choyce of Mirrh, Florentine Oris, Aloes, Sarcocolla, of each one dram; Honey of Roses two ounces: Make of all an ointment, to be used till the sore be perfectly cured" (Riviere 637).

Considered being light-hearted and serene as the pestilence is followed by fear and horror (Nohl 95).

Place living chicken, with the plucked anus on the buboes, to absorb poisons from blood. Or place a glass cup on open wound, bring heat to glass to suck out poisonous blood (Byrne 58).

"CLAUSE 1: The community of Pavia and its council shall provide the sum of 30 florins per month to Master Giovanni de Ventura" (Herlihy 66, Ventura).

[Florin = 3.5 grams gold
~\$55.15/g (as of 1 Mar 2021)
Total: \$5791]

"Doctor Treating Plague Victims"

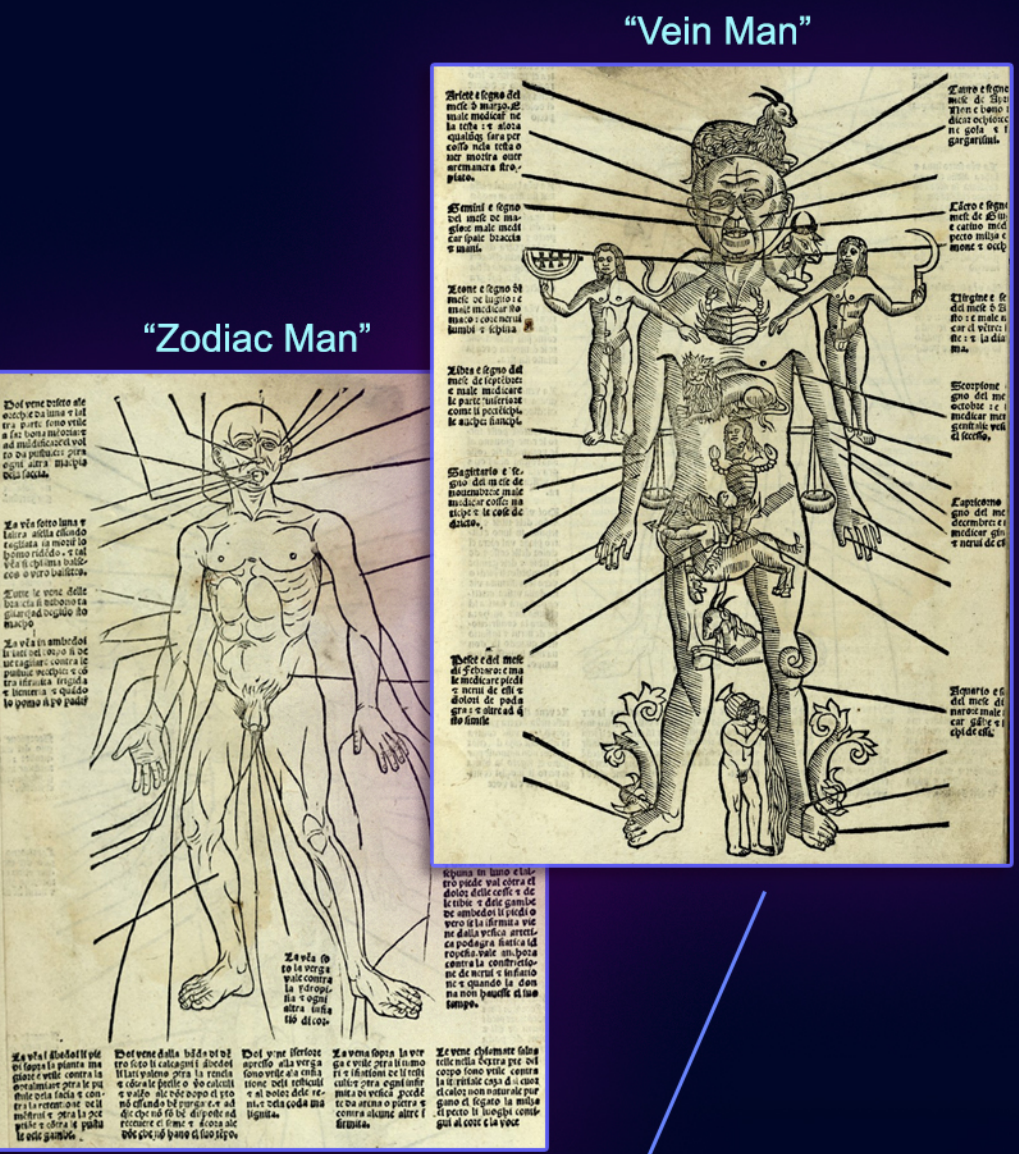


Depictions

"A Physician Wearing a Seventeenth Century Plague Preventive Costume"



"Der Doctor Schnabel von Rom" (Fürst)



Medical Knowledge

"To pursue this Argument, I would willingly dispose the tenour of my speech into this method, 1. to describe the disease, 2. to ascribe the signes, 3. to prescribe the remedie." (Adams 2).

"A pestilential Feaver is caused, when the Humors being corrupted and having attained a venomous quality, doe come to putrefie: And so it affects the Heart by those two meanes videlicet. By a putrid heat and a malignant qualitie" (Riviere 612).

"The Causes of Pestilential Feavers, are some Internal, others External: and the Internal are some Immediate, others Mediate. The Immediate Cause of this Disease ... is a corruption of the Humors, joynd with putrefaction. From the Corruption they acquire an evil and venomous Quality and from Putrefaction the Feaver is bred" (Riviere 613).

Medical Bag,
Often contained:
canteen (w/wine or water),
pouch for food,
candles, wicks,
flints (to light condemned housing afire),
rags, official medical paperwork,
city contract for work
vellum (for counting the dead)



Gloves,
Moroccan Leather

"The ... gloves are also made of the same skin [as the boots]" (Tibayrenc 680).

Cane,
To manipulate items from afar,
defend against crazed patients

"Under the coat we wear boots made in Moroccan leather (goat leather) from the front of the breeches in smooth skin, the bottom of which is tucked into the breeches" (Tibayrenc 680).

Moroccan leather boots,
Breeches tucked in

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HIST110

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IEP I – Expectations of Plague Doctors

The second pandemic of bubonic plague—the black death—occurred in fourteenth-century Europe. However, at least a dozen more smaller waves continued to decimate Europe up through the late eighteenth century. Dr. Charles de Lorme is posited as the first to describe the *Medico della Peste* outfit around 1619 in Italy. While variations of this outfit were worn, no substantial evidence could be found that the beak mask was or was not worn.

This individual exam project began intending to discover plague doctors' expectations and concluded with the data describing several class themes. The found themes include unexpected relationships, belief and medicine, shift boundaries of professional and amateur treatments, and public health. Specifically, the first two themes were found while uncovering the prevalent combination of medical treatments with stern advice on virtue and vice, including “stinking breath and flattery, disease 18” (Adams). Of which most are rather rude assumptions about anyone, let alone the doctor's active patients. The third theme of shifting professional and amateur treatment was realized in multiple sources stating that Europe was being flooded with *empirics* or amateur and inexperienced doctors (Rosenhek). Several of the *vademecum* included irritated forewords, introductions, and letters from the authors directed at said beginners. The final theme, public health, most interestingly, was in a plague doctor contract between Giovanni de Ventura and a small Italian town. As described on the infographic, a considerable sum was negotiated, but left out was a dozen other clauses including that the doctor is paid in advance—

and incredibly, this negotiation happened months before the town had a single case of the plague (Ventura).

From the beginning, the infographic design with the doctor in the middle was evident, but it was decided later to split the infographic into the sections—knowledge, practice, depictions, and equipment—after looking at the data. The knowledge section contains artwork or quotes from period sources describing what the doctors were supposed to know. Likewise, the practice section houses the doctors' thought-provoking paths to follow to heal their patients, including an actual page from Nathaniel Hodge's observations of the 1665 plague in England (Hodges). The depictions section was enticing from reading so many non-academic sources refuted the whole outfit as a ruse or an invention after the fact. The depicted doctor wearing the light-colored outfit was credible in its original descriptive origin; however, it was painted much later (*Physician*). Lastly, the equipment section was mostly based on source material, but some of it was speculation based on the doctors' general knowledge during their days with victims.

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